GENDER, IDENTITIES AND EDUCATION

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Sultan Moulay Slimane University
Gender, Identities and Education

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Sultan Moulay Slimane University
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Gender, Identities and Education

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Gender, Identities and Education

Edited by Vassiliki Deliyanni, Artūras Tereškinas, Khalid Bekkaoui, Sadik Reddad, Hayat Naciri

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Foreword

All papers selected in this volume were subject to a rigorous peer-review process. They are reviewed and conceptualized into GIE volume. The papers selected are based on innovation, organization, and quality of presentation.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all authors and thank them all in considering and trusting GIE as the platform for publishing their invaluable work. All reviewers should be also thanked for their careful comments and advice. They have worked hard reviewing papers and making valuable suggestions for the authors to improve their work. We would like to thank the members of the program committees. Also, we would like to express our deepest and sincere gratitude to all the partners of the ERASMUS+ project who helped in the success of this work. A special word of gratitude is due to the President of Sultan Moulay Slimane University for his support. We are also grateful to the vice-president for his help. Finally, we sincerely appreciate the tireless efforts of Dr. Natalija Mazekiené (the Coordinator of the project) for her excellent contributions to make the volume a grand success.

Hayat Naciri
Introduction

This volume “Gender, Identities and Education” raises the issue of gender inequality in education and its impact on individuals and society. A prime motivation for editing this volume was to discuss different approaches to improving the quality of education. Thus, the major conclusion/recommendation of the volume is that the various societies the contributors represent must change attitudes towards gender in a very fundamental way if social, economic and political development and gender equality are to be achieved in education.

Dr. Hassan Zaid, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, and Dr. Ilham Bettach, Mohamed V University, reported that textbooks are important in the formation of children’s gender identity, and showed that the Amazigh textbooks serve to perpetuate the stereotypical gender roles which exist in Moroccan society.

In an inspiring contribution, Dr. Dorottya Redai, Central European University, addressed the issue of intersectional subjectivity constitution and social inequality reproduction in Hungarian secondary education and discussed how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered discourses and practices in a school.

Dr. Monica Porzionato, Central European University, analyzed how the introduction of a series of pedagogical programs aimed at sensitizing children to gender and sexuality in Italy has resulted in a rapidly growing body of discourses which, both explicitly and implicitly, aim at maintaining heteronormativity.

Dr. Lamia Azzouzi, Moulay Ismail University, reported on the socioeconomic situation of Moroccan women in her case study and their awareness of the necessity to change their social situation for their own well being. Through this survey, it has been demonstrated that housewives, today, can enjoy more and more independence, respect and success, thanks to running small businesses.

Dr. Mohamed Jaafari, Cadi Ayyad University, examined a significant feature of gender representation in the discourse underlying the current Moroccan EFL textbooks. He pointed out that multiple gender inequalities seem to persist in the textbooks. The results from the study imply that textbook designers should treat gender representation quantitatively and qualitatively.

Dr. Hayat Naciri, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, shed light on some of the most significant constraints to girls’ schooling in Morocco. She intended to make people in charge aware of the effects of
education and human development; and particularly NGOs regarding the role they can play to fight some negative traditional values to improve girls’ and women’s situation in Morocco.

Dr. Tetiana Lisova and Dr. Yuriy Kovalchuk, Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, presented an analysis of the answers of Ukrainian TIMSS-2011 participants to a student questionnaire in order to find the differences between boys and girls in matters related to Math and Science education. Overall, their results show that these differences are not significant.

Dr. Bouchaib Benzezahf, Chouaib Doukkali University, presented an analysis of the results of a comparative study that set out to explore gender differences in the area of writing among Moroccan high school students. It has been found out that girls steadily out-perform boys in academic areas, and the differences are highly noticeable, thus suggesting a reversal of the traditional gender gap. However, it has also been found out that a peer perception gap persists, with boys refusing to recognize girls’ skills in spite of their higher grades.

Dr. Hindyoussoufi, University Sultan Moulay Slimane, examined how the contemporary Arab-American poet Mohja Kahf challenges the western and patriarchal interpretations of some Islamic cultural symbols like the “hijab” (the veil). In poems like “Descent in JFK”, “Hijab Scene # 7”, and “Thawrah Des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective”, Mohja Kahf offers an interesting counterpoint to challenge hegemonic narratives about Arab-American women rooted in the nineteenth century.

Dr. Souad Belhorma and Hajar Berghabi, University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, aimed to examine how NGOs exchange programs to help female university students reconstruct their social, economic, cultural, and gender identities in different Moroccan cities. They asserted that AIESEC exchange programs served both as tourism opportunities and a learning means.

Dr. Artūras Tereškinas, Vytautas Magnus University, analyzed postsocialist toxic masculinities as an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices characterized by excess and banality. The author emphasizes that fraught with fear and anxiety, Lithuanian politicians attempt to resolve their masculine ambiguities by resorting to dramatic performances of resentment, impetuousness, hatred, and denigration of others.

Dr. Hamid Masfour, University Sultan Moulay Slimane, maintains a practical deconstructionist analysis of the different relevant levels of patriarchal myths questioned in Gilman’s *Herland*, the work revises the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance.
Dr. Tetiana Lisova and Dr. Yuriy Kovalchuk, Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, examine the internal structure of creative self-efficacy construct using unidimensional Rating Scale model. The authors’ study confirmed the known fact about the best women’s ability to develop and improve existing ideas, while men better inherent ability to produce new ideas that differ from existing.

Dr. Oksana Shchotka, University Mykola Gogol Nizhyn State, explores female master-students’ structure of identity (actual and prospective) with leading management orientation. She argues that women with a top "management" orientation are not well aware of their career values and ways of their implementation. In the most cases, prospective identity is devoid of the determining potential, since it embodies current unresolved contradictions in personal and social identity.

Dr. Adel BenYoussef University Souss, asserts that the high percentage of female students in the three stages of education is not a coincidence but rather the fruit of historical developments, sacrifices and intellectual debate and controversy that the Tunisian society had gone through before the establishment of the French protectorate, and during the colonial period until the early years of independence.
Gender Identity in Amazigh Textbooks: Teaching Inequality

Ilham Bettach, Mohammed V University, Morocco

Hassan Zaid, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Morocco

Abstract

Textbooks have a major socialization role; they define gender roles in learners’ minds and play a crucial role in determining their worldview of gender roles in a society (Delamont, 1980). Through exposure to stereotypical materials, children continue to associate personality traits with a particular sex, and consequently alter their behaviors and perceptions to conform to the perceived norm. In order to put the theoretical aspects of gender policy on textbooks into action and get rid of gender role stereotyping and sexism the researchers draw on Sandra Bem’s (1981) ideas on schemas to understand how gender identity is constructed and represented in primary level Amazigh textbooks of first and sixth grade. The main objective of this study was to discover how gender’s social roles are determined by the personality traits depicted in the currently used Amazigh language textbooks. The researchers used content analysis to quantify recurrent patterns and semi-structured interviews to deepen the understanding of gender identity construction in Amazigh classrooms. The results showed that textbooks’ gender representations reflect women and men’s current roles in the Moroccan society.

Keywords: Amazigh textbook, gender, identity, stereotype, sexism.

1. Introduction

Amazigh people are known to be the oldest inhabitants of Morocco and many other parts of North Africa. Therefore, Amazigh, also known as Berber, a Hamitic language of the Afro-Asiatic family, is the oldest language in North Africa (Gross, 1993). Although the presence of the Amazigh varieties was acknowledged some 5000 years ago (Boukous, 1995b, p.18), they had never been codified and the script (Tifinagh) currently used as the Amazigh writing system since
was previously unknown in Morocco. It should be noted that people who speak ‘Berber,’ a foreign prejudiced appellation, prefer to call themselves ‘Imazighen’, in the singular ‘Amazigh’, which means a ‘free man’. The Amazigh varieties stretch from western Egypt to Atlantic coast and from the Mediterranean down to Mali and Niger (Gross, 1993). Amazigh speakers in Morocco are divided into three language areas: Tamazight, spoken is Middle Atlas Mountains, Tashelhit, in the Anti-Atlas Sus Mountains, and Tarifit in the Rif mountains.

According to statistics provided by the High Commission for Planning (HCP, 2004), the overall Amazigh population is estimated at 30% of Morocco’s total population, while Tashelhit, Tamazight, and Tarifit varieties are spoken, by 52%, 31%, and 17% of the overall Amazigh population (Boukous 2011, p. 29). However, the statistics provided by other associations and other scholars estimate the Amazigh population at about 40% (Boukous, 1995; Ennaji, 1997; Tamzgha, 2003), and 45% (Sadiqi, 1997). The lack of agreement among these sources reveals that there are no exact and reliable statistics about the number of Amazigh speakers in Morocco.

Until recently, the Amazigh varieties were all oral and were not used in schools but were only used in informal settings, especially in rural areas. However, over the last three decades, the Moroccan language policy has witnessed influential changes. Indeed, starting from the 1990s, Moroccan authorities have started to change their attitudes from rejection to acceptance, and finally to official recognition. The first changes appeared in the new National Charter for Education and Training (Charte Nationale d’Education et de Formation), released in 1999. The Educational Charter (1999) referred to Amazigh as a national language, and allowed for an ‘opening’ on the Amazigh language in schools. In 2001, the state launched a change of the educational linguistic policy through the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) whose missions are, inter alia, the standardization and promotion of the Amazigh language. In 2003, Tifinaghe-IRCAM became the official graphic system for writing Amazigh in Morocco. In the same year, Amazigh was hastily incorporated in the Moroccan educational system by the Ministry of Education (MEN) in collaboration with IRCAM. More recently, in 2011 Amazigh was recognized as the second official language of Morocco besides Arabic.

In 2003 IRCAM, in collaboration with MEN, started issuing Amazigh textbooks, specifically the “Tifawin a Tamzight” (Good Morning Tamazight) series. By 2008, they designed all the required student textbooks and pedagogical materials for the teachers for all the
six primary school levels. However, we believe that the haste with which the Amazigh was integrated in the school curriculum has repercussions on the quality of the Amazigh textbooks and the teaching of the language. In this article, Amazigh language textbooks will be analyzed from a gender perspective based on Sandra Bem’s conceptualization and measurement of gender-related personality traits (Bem, 1981).

2. Theoretical Framework

At this stage and before we can go any further, a distinction should be made between sex, gender and gender roles. Sex is determined by biology; gender refers to the kinds of social relations commonly attributed to differences between males and females. Biologically, women do not have the same abilities as men; therefore, women will have different opportunities than men. The sexes are fundamentally different and social inequity is continually justified due to these natural differences. The biological determinants of gender have been intertwined with society’s constructs to result in the largely dichotomous gender structure that we have today. So while biology has had some part in the construction of gender, society’s impact on gender is very significant and cannot be ignored. The attitudes repeatedly expressed in textbooks might gradually distort learners’ perceptions regarding stereotypes about both sexes, and exposure to gender biased texts and materials may influence learners’ behavior in such a way as to restrict their social and behavioral roles.

Gender roles are “the assumptions made about the characteristics of each gender, such as physical appearance, physical abilities, attitudes, interests, or occupations” (Shaw, 1998, p. 24). These gender roles develop over time and are reinforced in our culture through the educational system. The gender schema theory as introduced by Bem (1981) proposes that children learn about gender roles from their surrounding culture and the process children go through when constructing their gender roles is an essential part of their knowledge construction. Bem (1981) expands upon the Schema theory by proposing that children develop schemas that define their understanding of what it means to be male or female. Frable and Bem (1985, p. 459) posit that problems occur when schemas cause stereotyping that represses “the full development of the child”. To counter this, Frable and Bem (1985, p. 459) suggest that children should be exposed to “gender-aschematic behavior” through which boys and girls see themselves in a particular type of role and at the same time possess the type of behavior that they would not typically see themselves in.
Most theories of gender role development (including psychoanalytic, social learning and cognitive developmental theory) focus on primary socialization. They deal with how children learn gender identity at the time they become aware of the two sexes having different gender roles and acting differently. Gender socialization and gender role development are influenced by a variety of significant elements such as biology, social constitutions, social interaction and personality. Different theories bring different insights to understand these elements (Lindsey, 2005).

Gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) focuses on the role of cognitive organization in addition to socialization. This theory proposes that children learn how their cultures and/or societies define the roles of men and women and then internalize this knowledge as a gender schema or unchallenged core belief. Children’s perceptions of men and women are thus an interaction between their gender schemas and their experiences. Eventually, children will incorporate their own self-concepts into their gender schema and will assume the traits and behaviors that they deem suitable for their gender.

Gender schema theory indicates that every culture includes assumptions about certain characteristics within personalities of individuals. Bem (1983) used the term ‘cultural lenses’ to define culture’s values/beliefs and due to the influences of those cultural norms and forces, without questioning and altering them, children accept to organize their world. The gender schema theory highlights the importance of schemas in children as they mature. When children grow up their schemas change and through this, they learn different characteristics about their gender which in turn modifies their cognitions (Brannon, 2008). Problems arise when the textbooks’ illustrations and texts contain gender biases and gender stereotypical information. In this study, we drew upon Bem’s ideas on schemas to understand how gender identity is constructed and represented in the Amazigh textbooks. It also aims, by implication, to justify the possible effects of gender role messages on primary school students.

3. Gender and Textbooks: Previous Research

Textbooks frequently portray girls as acted upon rather than active (Fox, 1993). Girls are represented as sweet, naive, conforming, and dependent, while boys are typically described as strong, adventurous, independent, and capable (Ernst, 1995; Jett-Simpson & Masland, 1993). Boys tend to have roles as fighters, adventurers and rescuers, while girls in their passive role tend
to be caretakers, mothers, and princesses in need of rescuing (Temple, 1993). Often, female characters in textbooks achieve their goals because others help them, whereas boys do so because they demonstrate ingenuity and/or perseverance. If females are initially represented as active and assertive, they are often portrayed in a passive light toward the end of the story. Female characters that retain their active qualities are clearly the exception (Rudman, 1995).

Pottker’s (1977) research on elementary language arts textbook analyzed 20 third-grade reading materials (1969-70 school year), which contained approximately 2000 stories, for personality and occupational stereotypes of females. He found that the female characters in the textbooks reflect feminine characteristics which he calls ‘little sister syndrome’. Most female characters in the texts were exhibited as being appreciative, affectionate, charming, attractive, understanding and considerate. Females were helped out in every way in the stories while males were portrayed as smarter and with greater achievement. In family context, the mother was shown to be weak and passive, who was dependent upon her husband’s aid, whereas the father was portrayed as a firm figure and a master of his house. For children, school textbooks are among their first cultural encounters. Since textbooks present a social picture of the outside world to children, representation of gender in elementary textbooks plays an important role to establish children’s gender awareness and self-esteem.

Evans and Davis (2000) conducted a content analysis of 97 fiction stories found in 1st, 3rd, and 5th grade literature textbooks published by MacMillan/McGraw-Hill and Silver Burdett Ginn. Using a modified Bem inventory of eight masculine and eight feminine gender traits, they found that males were often stereotypically portrayed in the stories and that in the older, 3rd and 5th grade textbooks, males were shown as aggressive, argumentative, competitive, and less emotionally expressive than females (p.265). In this study, the researchers used a modified Bem Sex Role Inventory Model with definitions utilized in a gender study by Evans and Davies (2000).

Post 2000 progress in reducing gender bias in textbooks is modest in most countries (EFA, 2004). In the Arab world, Alayan and Al-Khalidi (2010) analyzed gender and agency in history textbooks of Jordan and Palestine. The authors assessed the textbooks from grades 7 to 12 (9 Jordanian and 13 Palestinian books) and found out that males outnumbered females in
textbooks and were portrayed as superior and more capable, creative, productive and generally dominant; women on the other hand were seen as weaker, inferior and dominated.

Recent content analyses of a sample of textbooks studied by Hussain and Afsar (2010) in Pakistan, concluded that “gender bias is still embedded … and the dominance afforded to masculinity and male knowledge continues to be both naturalized and legitimated” (Ullah&Skelton, 2013, p.184). In a study by Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012) four current EFL high school texts were analyzed and they offered the typical patterns of gender bias. 71% of gender-specific text references involved men, 76% of pictures were of males and 82% of those portrayed with masculine characteristics were also men. In another Thai study, Vichit Vadakan (2014) found the usual pattern “…gender stereotypes in textbooks are overwhelmingly evident. Girls and women are relegated to the private (domestic) domain, whereas boys and men… have more visibility…and are also represented in positive roles with positive character traits” (p. 4).

This study utilized Sandra Bem’s Sex Role Inventory to quantify self-attribution of traits, indicative of gender role. Traits were called ‘masculine’ if they were evaluated to be more suitable for men than women in society. Similarly, ‘feminine’ traits were those that were evaluated to be more suitable for women than men. Including the BSRI measure in this analysis suggests that healthy psychological functioning requires both masculine and feminine psychological characteristics.

4. The Study

This study uses a qualitative content analysis as a method of examination of data material (Mayring, 2014). It combines both a deductive and an inductive method of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014). We chose purposeful samples of the language textbooks; particularly Amazigh language textbooks of grade 1 (G1), beginning of primary school, and grade 6 (G6), the ending grade of primary school. The choice of this sample aims at assessing the amount of stereotypes presented to pupils from six to twelve years old. By including these two grades of primary age range, we wanted to see how consistent the amount of gender stereotypes that children are exposed to is. The sampling procedure in our case concerned also the choice of textbooks to analyze. We selected the currently used textbooks “Adlisinu n tmazight” (my Amazigh book) of first grade and “Tifawin a Tamazight” (Morning Tamazight) of sixth grade. “Adlisinu n tmazight” was issued in 2007 by Amazigh inspectors not belonging to the Royal
Institute of the Amazigh Culture to replace the old three first year textbooks, “Tifawin a tamzight” (Morning Tamazight) designed by IRCAM in 2003, each of which focusing on only one of the three Amazigh varieties. “Tifawin a Tamazight” was issued by IRCAM in 2008 for sixth grade students.

We coded the manifest elements that were present in the text and the analysis was extended later to the interpretive reading of the data coded earlier. The approach to content analysis was descriptive. The researchers read the textbooks in the sample and manually wrote down the occurrences of character traits using the coding instruments. We were interested in the presence or absence of particular gender stereotypical traits as Evans and Davies (2000) noted, “If a character exhibited any of the relevant traits, the trait was checked once…The trait was coded only once partly because of the simplicity of many of the stories and also for accuracy of character portrayal” (p, 261).

To obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Amazigh teachers and activists. The interviewees both women and men were purposefully selected to be relevant to the current study (Neuman, 1997). In this feminist psychoanalytic approach to interviewing we intended to allow more visibility to the subjective experience (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002); the focus was not research-oriented but rather respondent oriented (Newman, 1997). The open-ended questions were flexible (Burns, 2000, p.350) and invited a ‘free-flowing conversation’ (Burns, 2000, p.280).

5. Results

5.1. Gender Representation in Amazigh Textbooks

The results of the Amazigh textbooks’ analysis were statistically treated to identify the frequencies and percentages. Masculinity and femininity traits were measured and explored using content analysis method and the portrayal of gender went beyond numbers to further include the qualitative analysis of the results.
Table 1.1 Percentages of Female Characters Exhibiting Masculine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 6</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Traits</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
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<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
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<td>29,00%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
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<td>71,00%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100,00%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100,00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Percentages of Male Characters Exhibiting Masculine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Level 6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>Masculine Traits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>06,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>04,00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>05,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29,00%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100,00%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100,00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in table 1.1 and table 1.2, males were portrayed with typical masculine characteristics more often than females. Males overall were shown as significantly more ambitious (3/6% G1; 0/0% G6), argumentative (4/8% G1; 4/11% G6), assertive (10/19% G1; 22/59% G6), competitive (14/27% G1; 0/0% G6), masculine (3/6%; 0% G6), risk taker (2/4% G1; 2/5% G6), and self-reliant (15/29% G1; 8/22% G6). Females, on the other hand, were
depicted less as assertive (2/29% G1; 4/36% G6); competitive (0/0% G1; 2/10% G6), and self-reliant (5/71% G1; 5/45% G6). All the positive traits associated with traditional concepts of masculinity were displayed by male characters with higher level of frequency in both levels. Females, on the other hand, were clearly less described with the stereotypical masculine traits.

Table 1.3 Percentages of Female Characters Exhibiting Feminine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Traits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Expressive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetuous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panicky</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Percentages of Male Characters Exhibiting Feminine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Traits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Expressive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetuous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panicky</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the stereotypically feminine traits in table 1.3 and 1.4 we can say that females are accorded the real feminine traits that they should possess. Females in both levels (1-6) conform to the gender stereotypes of femininity. They were essentially presented as affectionate (7/23% G1; 3/7% G6), emotionally expressive (10/33% G1; 17/40% G6), feminine (5/17% G1; 1/2% G6), nurturing (4/13% G1; 10/24% G6), passive (0/0% G1; 10/24% G6), tender (4/13%; 0/0% G6). On the other hand, male characters were less depicted as exhibiting feminine traits. They were less described as affectionate (3/38% G1; 0/0% G6), emotionally expressive (3/38% G1; 4/80% G6) and tender (2/25% G1; 0/0% G6). Interestingly, males were described as purely more masculine than feminine while females were presented as more feminine than masculine.

In line with this and to support the results of the textbook analysis three female and three male Amazigh teachers and activists were interviewed. All the six participants mentioned that they are aware of the negative influence of gender inequalities in educational settings. They felt that there are power dynamics (societal pressure) that reinforce gender binary and favor masculine traits over feminine traits in Amazigh textbooks. As for their strategy to challenge gender stereotypes, some of the teachers contend that they intervene when representations are destructive, while others rarely make use of their own knowledge to address instances involving gender inequality in class. Below are the themes that emerged from the data with relevant testimonies from interviews with our participants:

5.2. Gender awareness among Amazigh teachers

When asked about whether they are aware of the negative influence of gender inequalities in educational settings, all participants agreed that they are aware of the gender issues and their influence on pupils. A female Amazigh teacher from Ouarzazate asserts that:

“I am aware of the gender inequality “inequity” in all fields including education…Everything including the colors distinguishing boys and girls...There are deep biases in Amazigh textbooks of all three grades that I teach (first, second and third) and girls are implicitly told in textbooks to be passive....”

When speaking of equality and inequality issues, teachers understand the gender stereotypes in classrooms, curriculum and textbooks that disvalue, alienate and eventually disempower girls. However, they all confirm that gender inequality has never been an important
topic in their general education. A male participant from Ouarzazate explained that gender inequality is not promoted through the teacher-training process. He contends that:

“I am aware of gender stereotypes in Amazigh textbooks, school textbooks in general are bias as they are the social product of the Moroccan society. We are aware yes, but unfortunately our teacher training didn’t prepare us to tackle this issue in classrooms... And nobody tell us to challenge any kind of sexism in textbooks.”

5.3. Exposure to societal influences reinforce gender binary

All the participants reported the importance of the societal influences in framing the gender binary, thus reinforcing the role of Amazigh textbooks in creating deep biases. As a male teacher from Agadir explains:

“…if we look around us we will find that everything is framed around this paradigm of gender binary. People attach all sorts of things to this binarism: occupational roles, social roles, personality characteristics and so on... Stereotypes are embodied in all aspects of life including the school system. Amazigh textbooks rarely expose students to gender equality notions that target both female and male students…the greatest harm is caused by the reinforcement of traditional and societal gender norms.”

Another female participant (teacher and activist) from Meknes brought up the same issue. She points out that:

“…both girls and boys are impacted by gender stereotypes. They are affected academically, personally and socially...society in general does not allow for gender equality, these pupils are themselves aware of their own and each other’s prescribed gender and the character traits and social roles that they should perform.”

5.4. Teacher’s strategies to handle stereotyping

When asked about how teachers challenge gender inequalities embedded in textbooks, the same female Amazigh teacher and activist from Meknes stresses that:

“I am most of the time able to address important social issues in my classroom. I am an Amazigh teacher and activist my work focuses mainly on promoting social justice. Let me say that I am aware of gender issues and I am not afraid to bring my own gender perspectives to the
primary school walls. I attribute social justice values, and I choose to work in an environment that aligns with these international equality standards...I intervene when representations are destructive. To be honest, I don’t rely on textbooks while teaching... the last edition of textbooks was issued in 2008...we are in 2017!”

All the interviewed teachers seem to recognize the flaws of the currently used Amazigh textbooks, however not all of them take steps to challenge gender stereotyping characteristics existing in Amazigh textbooks. A male participant from Marrakech mentioned that he does not engage in conversations around gender equality and if an issue that requires challenging gender stereotypes comes up he does not intervene:

“I mainly rely on classroom discussions and activities to create my own space of learning and teaching. It might happen that I encounter some stereotypical moments in classroom settings but let me say that I don’t have a strategy for dealing with them. I deliver my lesson and rely mainly on the authenticity of information that I give to my students. My role as a teacher stops at teaching and creating a comfortable space for learning. I don’t have much to say on this matter, I believe that it is up to the ministry of education to challenge these traditional gender norms and stereotypes.”

The rest of this paper will deal with the discussion of the results of Amazigh textbook content analysis and interview data analysis in light of the gender literature reviewed.

6. Discussion

The school as a social institution dictates the type of personality trait a female or male student should acquire; it shapes their gender roles, personalities and identities. Textbooks are especially important in the formation of children’s gender. If children see only stereotypical personality characteristics in reading materials, their behavior will certainly be affected by the dichotomous gender structure that exists in the Moroccan society. Besides, Moroccan primary school students may think that this is the way they should behave or react to certain situations, and they may adjust their actions accordingly.

In line with previous research results, the findings of the present study reproduce gender inequality in classroom settings. Biased personality characteristics prevail in both primary level textbooks of first and sixth grade. Through the analysis of the two Amazigh textbooks we found
out that males were shown to possess purely masculine traits. They were presented to be ambitious, argumentative, assertive, competitive, masculine, risk-taking, and self-reliant. Females, on the other hand, are depicted as nurturing, affectionate and tender. It is clear that the male students are socialized towards ambition, competition and self reliance. The male students through textbooks are trained to suppress their feelings and emotions. These meanings are constructed and reconstructed in Amazigh textbooks.

Schematic processing seems to play a part in the development of gender roles. Bem’s theory (1975), for example, indicates that the behavior of men and women is shaped by the stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. In order for men and women to conform to a certain occupational stereotype, they develop certain traits. The results of the study show that men learn to be more self-reliant, decisive, assertive and competitive, which align to their active roles. This idea of men acting in a certain way to conform to the stereotypes of society is portrayed in the current Amazigh textbooks. The male characters in the two textbooks are presented as self-reliant, powerful, assertive, and responsible in prior preparation for his duty as a leader of the family. In other words, the male character is behaving the way he is because the society expects boys and men to fulfill the standards of masculinity. Females, on the other hand, are found to be affectionate, emotionally expressive, feminine, nurturing, and passive which align to their stereotypical gender roles in society. In other words, females are presented in the two Amazigh textbooks as nurturing, affectionate and tender in prior preparation for their future roles as mothers and wives.

Through textbooks children learn how their cultures define the roles of both women and men and then internalize the knowledge acquired as gender schema (Bem, 1993). They encode gender related information to observe and imitate models that are of the same sex. Children’s perceptions of men and women are thus an interaction between their gender schemas and their experiences. Through exposure to Amazigh textbooks gender-related stereotypes, pupils eventually make up and incorporate their own self-concepts into their gender schema and will assume the traits and behaviors that they deem suitable for their gender. As children develop in their environment, they learn what is expected from boys and girls in relation to a range of factors in terms of roles and genders. This develops their gender schema; moreover, what they learn becomes positively or negatively reinforced because of the reward they receive externally
from families, their social interactions and more importantly from textbooks. The roles which they learn through texts and illustrations becomes so a part of their self-concept (Gross, 2005; Bem, 1981). When the self-concept gets assimilated into the gender schema, children learn the contents of the society's gender schema. Due to this schematic development Bem (1981) argues that the child learns to evaluate his or her adequacy as a person in terms of the gender schema. Arguing of the importance and dominance of gender role schema, Bem (1981) suggests that “it becomes a prescriptive standard or guide” as other internal mechanisms such as self-esteem and self-image. This phenomenon of gender role schema becomes a motivational factor that prompts the individuals to regulate their behaviors in order to conform to the cultural definition of maleness and femaleness (Bem, 1981), which perpetuated and maintained through textbooks. Moroccan children from age six encode gender-related information. They observe and imitate models that are of the same sex which they see in Amazigh textbooks. In other words, they take gender-related information that fits well with their gender schemas and apply them. The gender roles, therefore, are created to become hierarchical as a male-advantaged gender hierarchy.

Ideas of gender exist in terms of binary and dualistic expression. Two polarized terms exist: males and females so that one is the privileged and the other its suppressed counterpart (Grosz, 1994). According to Bem (1993), gender polarization organizes the social differences between men and women; male experiences are more valued than female experiences. ‘Androcentrism’ is another way for understanding the gender system; the superiority of males in the textbooks and their experience is the ‘normative’ standard. This male-centeredness suggests that female experiences are seen as deviating from that of males. The biological essentialism assumption argues that the biological differences between the sexes are the causes of the first two assumptions, providing justifications for gender ‘polarization’ and ‘androcentrism’. These three gender lenses, as Bem called them, influence the ways individuals construct social reality, produce gender attributes and perpetuate inequalities between both genders.

While biological factors determine some aspects of gender, gender identity is produced in this interaction between what is biological and environmental. When Moroccan students become increasingly aware of the standard characteristics and behaviors associated with each sex, they begin to form gender schemas which are self-constructed schemas about the traits and behaviors
of males or females (Bem, 1993). As these schemas are self-constructed, their content varies considerably from student to student.

In sum, we can say that Amazigh textbooks are especially important in the formation of Moroccan students’ gender. If children are exposed to only stereotypical personality characteristics in reading materials, their behavior will certainly be affected by the dichotomous gender structure that exists in the Moroccan society. Moroccan primary school students may think that this is the way they should behave or react to certain situations, and they may adjust their actions accordingly.

Findings from Amazigh teachers’ interviews correspond to the findings from textbooks analysis. The majority of both female and male teachers pointed out that character traits are structurally embedded in primary level Amazigh textbooks; they asserted that textbooks reinforce the patriarchal gender division. The usual pattern of women being depicted as passive predominated in the first grade, as the female teacher from Ouarzazate explained that there are deep biases in Amazigh textbooks of all three grades that she teaches (first, second and third) and that girls are implicitly told in textbooks to be passive.

In the same vein, Amazigh textbooks portray women within the contexts of family and marriage holding the positive stereotypical qualities and traits. Females were argued to be tender and caring by nature, hence they are conditioned to be future mothers. The same pattern would recur in almost all data gathered from interviews and textbooks of first and sixth grade. All the interviewed teachers seem to agree that female characters are represented as caring, nurturing and generally passive.

All the six participants in this study agree that the whole environment allows for the stereotypes to exist. They assured that pupils bring their gender construction into their classrooms, and the textbooks through language and pictures reinforce the biases, thus creating an accepting space for gender inequality. The interviewed teachers admit that gender binary paradigm is alarming especially with the absence of a teacher training that challenges gender norms and stereotypes. They stress the need for equipping teachers with the necessary tools to combat gender inequalities.
All teachers were consistent in their responses as they all agreed that biased character traits are reinforced through Amazigh language textbooks and pupils’ identities are manifested in harmony with the social structure of power dynamics. However, they had contradicting views when asked about how they handle Amazigh textbooks’ gender biases. For instance, the female activist from Meknes referred to the complex set of societal factors that construct pupils’ gender identities, which they think are beyond the teacher’s control. Nevertheless, she asserted that she is urged to intervene and fix the inequality only in case the representation becomes distractive.

Some teachers we interviewed claimed that their role is limited to providing favorable conditions for learning and they do not have to combat gender inequity in textbooks. For them it is the Ministry of national education that is responsible for promoting gender fair treatment of women and men. On the other hand, some other teachers adopted a negative attitude towards gender biases in Amazigh textbooks and asserted that he does not even attempt to redress the gender balance in his classroom. He argued that he would not take over the government’s role in ensuring equal opportunities for both genders. Clearly, Amazigh textbooks along with teacher’s attitude come with the risk of deepening gender divisions and producing less confident individuals. Moroccan children are destined in our Amazigh classrooms to wield a high amount of biases and negative influences in later life.

Our study findings call for the government to act with urgency and adopt pro-gender equity reforms in Amazigh textbooks of primary education. Reducing textbooks’ gender bias requires the involvement of policy makers and stakeholders to launch a reform wave that calls for gender sensitivity. Besides training should be mandatory in Teacher Training Programs, it must be provided for, teachers, administrators and local officials.

7. Recommendations

On the basis of the study results the following recommendations for Amazigh teachers and textbooks designers are suggested. The following recommendations for policymakers, textbook designers, and Amazigh teachers derive directly from the findings of this study:

1- A concerted effort is needed to include gender-balanced lessons in the curriculum, and gender equity considerations should be included in the process of textbook construction.
2- Moroccan stakeholders and textbook authors should be made aware of their responsibility to make their textbooks more equitable for both sexes.

3- Teachers should remind their students that they should not be bound to these gender traits in the outside world.

4- In their teacher training, Amazigh teachers need to be equipped with the necessary tools to deal with gender inequality in class settings.

8. Conclusion

Textbooks are especially important in the formation of children’s gender identity. Through textbooks children learn how their cultures define the roles of both women and men and then internalize the knowledge acquired as gender schema (Bem, 1993). The results of this study show that the Amazigh textbooks serve to perpetuate the stereotypical gender roles which exist in the Moroccan society. Therefore, it is at this level that gender equity should be established.

References


Abstract

In this paper I focus on intersectional social inequality reproduction in secondary education and discuss how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered discourses in a school. The data I use for the analysis come from a school ethnography which I conducted for my doctoral dissertation between 2009 and 2011 in a combined secondary vocational-technical-grammar school in a large town in Hungary. The gendered discourses and practices I have identified and the subjectivities they constitute simultaneously create categories of exclusion and allocate people within and outside, leading to a re-inscription of social inequalities in schooling. In this short paper I offer two examples to demonstrate how axes of inequality get constituted intersectionally, and especially how ethnicity, gender and class converge to create student and teacher subjectivities. I argue that gendered discourses in this school constitute binary categories of race/ethnicity and class, and contribute to the formation of students’ subjectivities based on these categories.

Keywords: gender, class, ethnicity, education, subjectivity, social inequalities

Introduction

In this paper I focus on intersectional subjectivity constitution and social inequality reproduction in secondary education, and discuss how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered discourses and practices in a school. For the analysis I use interview excerpts from a school ethnography which I conducted between 2009 and 2011 in Marzipan, a secondary school in a large town in Hungary for my doctoral dissertation at the Department of Gender Studies, Central European University (Redai 2015). My research methods included observation in and out of classrooms, small-group interviews with cc. 90 students and individual interviews with 5 teachers, the school nurse and the headmaster. I argue that gendered discourses in this school
constitute binary categories of race/ethnicity and class, and contribute to the formation of students’ subjectivities based on these categories.

**Theoretical framework**

My analysis of how subjectivities are constituted through discourses is based on a Foucauldian understanding of the subject/subjectivities as constituted through the productive power of discourses (Foucault 1994, 1980). Butler broadens the notion of discourse to include Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ and argues that performativity works not exclusively through language (as according to Derrida) but it is embodied, performed through routine, unconscious bodily actions, “embodied rituals of everydayness” (Butler 1997: 152). Habitus expresses social belonging in a way that is readable by others; it distinguishes between individuals’ positions in social hierarchy (Bourdieu 1984).

Classed, ethnic, gendered and sexual inequalities are re/produced in education, as the vast body of literature in the sociology of education reveals (e.g. Apple, Ball, & Gandin 2010; Aronowitz & Giroux 1991; Apple 1990). In a social system structured by power inequalities between social groups, the distinction between social categories (such as woman/man, Gypsy/Hungarian) is at the same time the hierarchical ordering of these social categories where one group is subordinated to the other. Thus, subjectivity constitution is consequential to social inequalities, in and out of school. School is a central institution in young people’s life, both as an institution and a space where groups of people spend a lot of time together and performatively constitute themselves on an ongoing basis, thus it has an inestimable role in the re/production of social inequalities within and outside the walls of the institution.

Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of cultural capital is a critique of human capital theory and of theories that claim that educational achievement is the direct result of innate academic abilities and talents only. The economic and cultural investment in the child’s accumulation of cultural capital depends on the cultural capital owned by the family. Bourdieu and Passeron (1992: 10-11) claim that cultural capital differences and classed inequalities are reproduced by the educational system. The cultural capital of the school is only transmittable to those already equipped with the linguistic and cultural capital necessary for decoding the contents which implicitly reflect the values, ideological and economic commitments, perspectives and beliefs of the dominant classes. Thus, through offering ‘neutral’ knowledge transmission ‘equally’ to ‘all’
in principle, the education system contributes to the reproduction of the classed distribution of cultural capital and the conservation of the established social hierarchy (Bourdieu and Passeron 1992).

Butler’s gender performativity (1993, 1990) as a model can be applied to analyse how raced/ethnic, classed and sexualised subjectivities get constituted. As Joane Nagel (2003, 2000) explains: “[e]thnicity is both performed – where individuals and groups engage in ethnic ‘presentation of self’, and ‘performative’ – where ethnic boundaries are constituted by day-to-day affirmations, reinforcements, and enactments of ethnic differences” (2000: 111). She adds that “[t]he relative power of various actors in ethnic transactions can determine an individual’s ethnic classification as well as the content and worth of the individual’s ethnicity” (2000: 111). In Hungary, Hungarians constitute the white ethnic majority, and Gypsies are the most numerous (cc. 5-10% of the population) and most discriminated and oppressed ethnic minority. In Marzipan approximately 20% of the students were of Gypsy origin, which is why performative ethnicity constitution was of interest in my research.

School is a highly significant institution in young people’s life – and not only because of receiving an official education. The concept of the hidden or unofficial curriculum is well-known in the sociology of education (see: e.g. Ballantine 2001; Giroux 2001; Apple 1990). It is through the hidden/unofficial curriculum that teachers teach and students learn about gendered, classed and ethnic relations and actively participate in the reproduction of social inequalities.

The school

Marzipan combines the three main types of Hungarian secondary education: vocational, technical and grammar school, in which qualifications for food industry professions such as baker, cakemaker, sweets factory worker, baker/cakemaker-technician, food industry technician and food analyst technician can be acquired, except in the grammar school strand, where students do not acquire a profession. In 2010, cc. 1000 students attended the school, two thirds of whom belonged to the vocational school strand. The proportion of female and male students was cc. 50-50%. The majority of the students had working-class and lower-middle-class parents. According to my estimation, about 20% of the students were of Gypsy origin. Marzipan has a complex hierarchical institutional structure. Besides the most obvious hierarchy of students/teachers/school management/headmaster, there are hierarchies on every level and in every micro-
community in the school: hierarchy among students, and students and teachers within each form; among the different vocations, and among the vocational, technical and grammar school strands; among teachers teaching various subjects and professions and in various streams.

**Intersectional subjectivity constitution and inequality re/production**

In the analytical section of this paper I look at how class converges with ethnicity and/or gender and/or sexuality in the constitution of student subjectivities by teachers. I present two examples for the convergence of race, gender and class to mark the social positioning of Gypsy girls by teachers’ discourses about ‘cultural values’.

**Convergence of race, gender and class in teachers’ discourses about ‘cultural values’**

The following two excerpts are examples of intersectional subjectivity constitution and hierarchy reproduction, through gendered discourses about Gypsy girls. In the first example ethnicity intersects with gender, and in the second it is class and ethnicity that converge to constitute Gypsy girl subjectivity in a White educational institution. I argue that in White middle-class discourses of teachers, raced and classed discourses converge, raced ‘cultural’ values and behaviours attributed to Roma students by White teachers are at the same time constitutive of the class positions of both students and teachers.

In the following excerpt, Anna, a teacher relates a conflict she had the previous year with two of her students. In this case ‘improperly gendered’ behaviour for her means a Roma girl waiting on her boyfriend in an undignified manner, with the boyfriend being the ‘master’, taking advantage of the servility of the girl, and both claiming that ‘this is how it is with Gypsy people’.

This example is a site where, to rephrase Butler, class and ethnicity not only meet but cannot be conceived without one another (1993: 168).

“Feri, he was a Gypsy boy, a very handsome, very amicable child, but quite a rowdy chap. At the second week, he got together with Ági, who was also a very pretty, shapely Gypsy girl. They were very much involved, they moved together during the year. Feri’s mother took responsibility for the girl. (...) And there were situations which were completely unacceptable for me. The school day was over, and Feri walked out of the classroom with his hands in his pockets, and Ági was carrying his bag after him. ‘Because this is how it is with the Gypsies, Miss.’ When Feri dropped something and both were sitting, Ági had to stand up to pick it up.
We argued a lot about it, and the problem was not that I couldn’t make Feri give up the habit, but that I couldn’t make the girl give it up. She insisted that this is how things were done, and it was me who didn’t know it right! (…) I tried to explain to her that she is not his servant, just because they live together, she doesn’t have to serve him. However, the original setup remained.” (Anna, teacher, interview)

Here the couple seems to be in agreement on what the roles of a Gypsy girl and boy are in a relationship. In this situation Anna appears as an older White woman, against whose authority resistance takes the shape of playing out the ‘ethnicity card’: she is assumed not to know ‘how it really is’ with Gypsies. Obviously, Feri enjoys the advantages, and Ági resists the older woman’s intervention, despite the fact that Anna is trying to use her authority to help her achieve a more equitable position in the relationship. Anna finds Ági’s servility and Feri’s dominance excessive, Feri’s behaviour disrespectful, Ági’s disrespectful. Lawler argues that excess and being disrespectful are characteristics attributed to the working class by the middle class, respectability is a key feature of middle-class femininity (2005: 435). Also, today the working class is perceived by the middle class as “embracing archaic and overly rigid gender relations” (Lawler 2005: 437), and the middle class “is positioned at the vanguard of ‘the modern’” (Skeggs 2004: 92). In the above example Anna is trying to do exactly that: act as the ‘vanguard of the modern’, which implies White middle-class values. Being ‘modern’ here also means that Anna was aiming to ‘emancipate’ the girl, instead of challenging the boy’s hegemonic masculinity sold as ‘traditional ethnic’ behaviour. As I argue elsewhere (Redai 2015), supporting girls’ empowerment and agency but leaving hegemonic masculine behaviour unchallenged results in the domination of boys over girls and in girls’ complicity to it.

In the following excerpt Anna talks about Gypsy girls and their reproductive patterns:

“(…) [Gypsy] girls consummate very early. Technically speaking, they somehow make these girls come of age by this, and (…) quite obviously the number one task of these girls is not going to be working in a bakery, but giving birth to children for a long-long time. This is what the family prepares them for (…) and this is what their immediate surroundings expect from them. Well, until [the parents] get the family allowance after them they go to school, but from then on school is not [a priority]. (…) [T]his is (…) a form of livelihood, to give birth to as many children as they can, because the more children they have the bigger the support, and on the
other hand, well, (...) on this cultural level it is a biological expectation and a biological system. (...) If we look around among highly qualified young people with university degrees, then a European or North American person who has spent a lot of years in school, has read a lot and has a great insight into things will not give birth at the age of fifteen, because she expects it from herself that she would only give birth if the child can have its own room, if she can take the child to the doctor in her own car and if she can pay five hundred thousand Forints for a pram.” (Anna, teacher, interview)

Gypsy girls are positioned here as the bearers of their ‘culture’ (see: Yuval-Davies 1997) and as being on a lower ‘cultural’ level than White middle-class women. This is manifested in their assumed attitude to work, reproductive patterns and education levels. Anna practically questions the worth of educating Gypsy girls for a profession by saying that on their ‘cultural level’ the aim is not to work but to have children. Echoing common public discourses, she positions White people as highly educated and middle-class and having few children, and Gypsy people as low educated, low class, having too many children, arguing that on Gypsies’ ‘cultural level’ it is a “biological expectation and system” that they have many children. Excess (in this case excessive reproduction) is also a characteristic projected on the working class (Skeggs 2004). Anna contrasts a vision of a monolithic Gypsy existence with that of a monolithic White middle-class “European or North American” existence. In this comparison Gypsiness becomes a classed category as well, not only an ethnic one, contrasted with a classed category of Whiteness.

Anna uses the discourse of ‘cultural difference’ a lot when talking about Gypsy students. While she takes great care not to appear racist in the interview, it is implied all along that for her ‘cultural difference’ is in fact a difference in hierarchical ‘cultural levels’ between Hungarian and Gypsy families, with the latter being on a lower level. Skeggs argues that in recent discourses ‘race’ has been replaced by ‘culture’, which is a shift from biological essentialism to cultural essentialism. “Whereas nature was used to legitimate racism, now cultur[e] performs this role” (2004: 138). The discourse of ‘culture’ comes in handy for Anna and other teachers, who are only aware that racist discourses on Gypsies are a taboo, but they are not aware that they use the concept of culture in a way that rearticulates race/ethnicity-based hierarchical distinctions.

The reference to ‘lower and higher cultural levels’ also appears as a tool of class hierarchy construction in Marzipan. In the above-cited narrative of Anna, as I have argued, class
and race/ethnicity converge and are mutually constitutive. Skeggs points out that there is an important difference in the discursive construction of class and race/ethnicity and also gender. As opposed to race and gender, nature was never used to construct class categories. Working-class females did get essentialised, but by gender, not class; “the division of labour was much more crucial to establishing and legitimating class inequality than biology” (2004: 138). Nevertheless, eventually classed and raced discourses which reproduce social inequalities and also hierarchical distinctions in positioning in the school, converge in the discourse of ‘culture’ and ‘cultural level’ or ‘cultural difference’.

Educational level and achievement strongly correlate with socio-economic and family background. Students from disadvantaged and lower education backgrounds are likely to attend streams that grant lower qualifications and spend less time in education. Therefore they remain low educated and the pattern is reproduced. Despite the commonplace fact from the sociology of education that schools have a great stake in the reproduction of educational and, consecutively, socio-economic inequalities (see e.g. Ball 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron 1992), Anna talks about education as if it had no responsibility in the perpetuation of low qualification, low socio-economic status, and narrow life prospects. This is a common discourse among teachers: by claiming that their job is ‘teaching only’, they fend off responsibility for the reproduction of social inequalities.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I have discussed how power relations and social hierarchies in Marzipan are implicated in producing raced, classed and gendered subjectivities, and how the production of these subjectivities perpetuates social inequalities on various levels of the institutional structure. I demonstrated how class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality can converge and create well-defined power positions in the school. Although there is a large body of (mostly quantitative) research on social inequalities between students and a large body of (mostly qualitative) literature on the constitution of young people’s subjectivities in educational institutions, the two fields are weakly connected. I have demonstrated in this paper how discourses can be directly implicated in producing raced, classed and gendered subjectivities and at the same time in perpetuating social hierarchies in school and social inequalities inside and outside the school.
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The Discursive Defense of Heteronormativity in an Italian Debate over Gender Education

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Abstract

This paper analyses how the introduction of a series of pedagogical programs aimed at sensitizing children on gender and sexuality in Italy has resulted in a rapidly growing body of discourses which, both explicitly and implicitly, aim at maintaining heteronormativity. By deconstructing the Italian debate on education, this work firstly presents both anti- and pro-gender education perspectives’ on concepts as gender, sexuality and identity; secondly, it reflects on the potential (and duty) the school has in fighting gender and sexual inequalities by proposing a pedagogy that critically and reflexively teaches the cultural aspect of social discriminations, starting from a revision of the role of the teacher.

Key words: inclusive education, gender and sexuality education, gender pedagogy, ideology of gender, education in Italy.

Introduction

This article is about gender and sexuality and how these two concepts have been framed within a debate on education that spread in Italy between 2014 and 2016. Specifically, it intends to analyze the ways in which both parties of the debate – which I call ‘anti-gender’ and ‘pro-gender’ – through different conceptions of what gender and sexuality are and how they should enter the pedagogical curriculum, maintain and reaffirm heteronormativity as a social system of power based on sexual and affective relations between women and men. In fact, by critically deconstructing the bases of their discourses, in this work the main argument I propose is that the Italian debate on gender education barely scratches the heteronormative societal system, as both parties, explicitly or not, fail to envision the potential and duty the school has in fighting gender and sexual inequalities. After presenting both parties of the debate on gender education, this article then focuses specifically on the discourse of pro-gender advocates and, ultimately, proposes possible ways to educate about differences and inequalities without reproducing normative and unequal dynamics within the classroom.
The Italian debate on gender education: the anti-gender discourse

From 2013 till now in Italy there have been a number of important events connecting the issues of gender and the realm of education. Among them, two educational projects (UNAR pamphlets and The Respect Game) were meant to raise awareness on gender inequalities by sensitizing teachers on the stereotypical aspects of certain classroom settings (i.e. colors, the location of activities), and on the use of gender stereotypical language. Quite soon after their promotion, these initiatives activated an escalation of openly oppositional rhetoric in the pages of Catholic newspapers and the protests of Catholic parents’ associations which, eventually, obtained their interruption in the schools’ curricula. According to anti-gender exponents, these materials were dangerous for children’s natural sensibility, innocence and vulnerability, and have the potentiality to lead youngsters to prematurely wanting to perform sexuality in irresponsible ways. In this scenario, young people are believed to be free from sexual interest and curiosity and, if reached by discourses on sexuality, they would not only prematurely be willing to perform sexual activity but they would also be pushed to have sex in the ‘wrong way’ (homosexual sex). As a result, for anti-gender advocates, within the classroom students can only approach sexuality and gender discourses when they either concern the biological aspects of sexuality or images of loving relations as long-lasting and heterosexual (Allen 2007; Jackson & Weatherall 2010; Santelli et al., 2006). In this realm homosexuality is a sin that is best avoided and those who advocate for sexual equality, or those who identify themselves as homosexuals, are perceived as forms of social corruption able to reverse the ‘natural’ order of things, dynamite for the heterosexual order as a political regime based on reproduction.

Pitfalls in the pro-gender discourse

Two of the pro-gender responses to conservative discourses are the letter of the Italian Society of Historians to the Minister of Education Stefania Giannini, which affirms the necessity to activate pedagogical programs on gender in schools and to contribute to “the development of a more just and tolerant society”; the second is the publication of the book Papà, Mamma e Gender (in English: Dad, Mom and Gender) on October 20th 2015, by Italian philosopher and politician Michela Marzano. In both examples, one of the main arguments used by gender education exponents is that gender and sexuality education mainly aims at teaching to young people both the naturalness of their sexual bodies and of their sexual orientations (their sexuality) and the feeling derived by being masculine or feminine (their gender), in order to acknowledge human complexity and combat harmful prejudices and stereotypes. Thus, pro-gender see sexual
identity as a combination of a cultural aspect (gender) and two natural ones (sex and sexual orientation), in which the feeling of being masculine or feminine is independent from one’s own body and more culturally influenced while, on the other hand, both sex and sexual orientation are natural in their being more physical, biological and chemical aspects of one’s own subjectivity, from which derives their impossibility to be culturally changed. Therefore, gender is considered cultural but in its combination with a certain sex (being either male or female), the identity that derives is seen as natural and, as a consequence, the different combinations of sex and gender presuppose the natural realm of human sexual and gender complexity:

In the majority of cases people who are biologically males (sex) have a masculine gender identity and behaviors which belong to the cultural canons of masculinity in a given society. In the majority of cases people who are biologically females (sex) have a feminine gender identity and behaviors which belong to the cultural canons of a given society. In a minority of cases, instead, people can have a gender identity which is different from the sex they are born with (transsexuals or transgender FTM or MTF). In another minority of cases, some people can have an identity conforming to the sex they are born with but certain behaviors do not perfectly align with the gender cultural canons.

As a result, pro-gender argue that to fight inequalities and prejudices through education means to teach human sexual complexity and that, no matter the differences, sexual identities must all be perceived as equally valuable and in need of respect.

In this paper I claim that to consider gender and sexuality as two aspects of subjectivity
that can be combined into a fixed amount of equally natural, identitarian configurations (being heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, polysexual, transsexual etc.) still relies on a dualistic vision of sexuality which creates identities as either normative or non-normative. Hence, against the conservative fear that heterosexuality is in danger by a discourse that depicts homosexuality as equally natural, pro-gender depicts homosexuality as being naturally belonging to certain people and not to others, in this way perceiving human differences as casts into homogenous essences of unchangeable naturally sexual subjectivities (we are either heterosexual or homosexuals, transsexuals etc.). In this regard and in my opinion, advocates of gender education ultimately fail to take into account both the fact that sexuality itself is to some extent constructed and the fact that human differences are not just differences but are, instead, placed into hierarchical positions within complex structures of power that are constantly produced and reinforced through social institutions and political apparatuses. As C.J Pascoe writes (2007, p. 10): “[H]eterosexuality is not just a private matter but one that links a person to certain state benefits [because] what seems like a private desire is part of the mechanisms through which the micro processes of daily life actually foster inequality.” Differences between human beings are not only natural consequences of the complexity of human sexuality, but they culturally signify as such into a cultural environment which positions them into a hierarchical structure of power. Sex and gender, as knowingly Butler states (1990, 1993, 2004), are not only properties of individuals, some sort of transcendental aspects of identity, but are also discursively constituted in the social and cultural realm the body is embedded in; they are both present as irrefutable characteristics and comprehensible through the social institutions and signs which give the sexual body its cultural meanings. As a consequence, human differences gain meaning within a particular structure of power present in society in which power is distributed unequally to human beings according to their gender, their race, their class, their religion, and their sexual orientation. Thus, when thinking about diversity among human beings we must pay attention to power relations, otherwise we risk being left merely with a list of differences (Zinn and Dill, 1996). In the next section, I focus on the possible repercussions of these understandings of sexual and gender identity on a pedagogical level.

**Rethinking ‘inclusion’ as a pedagogical project**

A consequence of the tendency to teach that differences should be seen as equal examples
of human complexity (i.e. to categorize human identity into fixed combinations of axes of significations like race, gender, sex and class) risks to naively teach that social inequalities and power relations are only a matter of the ways individuals behave and relate to each other and that correcting those behaviors would result in the consequential end of social discrimination. In other words, if teaching that gender inequalities derive from the ways different people relate to each other (alias, that gender violence derives from the ways men treat women, homophobia derives from the ways heterosexuals treat homosexuals, racism derives from the ways whites treat blacks etc.) then, as a consequence, it can seem that the solution for social discrimination lies in a process of unlearning oppressive codes in order to then re-learn politically correct behaviors and traits (Gatens 1983: 144). The main point of this work is to underline how such a vision fails to recognize the cultural, historical and social systematic aspects of inequalities between genders, races and classes and tends to perceive subjects as self-sustainable and self-responsible for their own well-being.

Paradoxically then, while Italian educational curricula aim at fighting gender discrimination and violence, they do it by trying to fight discriminatory and violent behaviors in students without framing them in the larger cultural environment which creates the soil for these actions to take place. Even though I agree that those subjectivities which manifest different sexual and gender behaviors should be integrated and respected in the school and in society at large, I propose the use of a discourse that it is not only “pro inclusivity and tolerance” among individuals but that it especially claims the importance of teaching the ways in which inequalities are continuously reproduced and maintained through normative discourses of sexuality and gender, class and race, and especially, within the educational environment. In other words, to merely work on the effects of discrimination (change your behavior to be more inclusive) is not enough; if we really want to fight sexual and gender oppression in the school we should to teach how discrimination works and the mechanisms that are in place. In fact, the school as an institution should not only be a place in which minorities are accepted by normative subjectivities that are taught to respect those who are different in order to “promote […] a society of tolerance and respect in which those young people and adults who express their gender in non-conventional ways can be welcomed” as Bernini writes. Rather, those who embody normative positions of identity should be not only taught to respect others different from them but, especially, to understand the ways in which they themselves come to be positioned where they
are because of a systematic structured of dynamics of power. In other words, inclusion does not work fully and extensively work as a pedagogical approach since inclusion relies on the idea that there are people that need to be included ‘because they are different’ by other people who are already included ‘because they are normal’. On the contrary, to see identity in its cultural aspect means to see and let student see how in our culture social positions depend most often on unequal distributions of power according to which those ‘outside’ are outside because of the same mechanism that keep the ‘insiders’ inside in the first place. This is finally to say that to fight social inequalities in the classroom means to teach and rework the social distribution of power.

Towards a pedagogy of difference

The goal of a feminist, holistic gender pedagogy is not only to expand students’ knowledge about gender, sexuality and other axes of social signification but to offer them tools to critically understand how these axes work in their own lives and how they can contribute to deconstruct them (hooks 1994). This pedagogy is not only a project aimed at giving students the tools to understand them both as identitarian elements, as roles or as expressions, but as an education that proposes the tools to students in order for them to reflect on what gender and sexuality are, how they function in society, what these functions imply in their and others people’s lives. In this way, gender and sexuality are taught as being relationalities and transformations, performativities and complexities, rather than two aspects of an immutable identity. Following this, there are some pedagogical areas which could be rethought in order to make the classroom a more feminist and equal space. In the next paragraph I pay attention to the role of the teacher.

The Role of the Teacher

Due to the predominant idea that sexuality should not be part of the educational curriculum, teachers tend to represent themselves and students as asexual (Irvine, 2002) and to conceive the classroom as ‘a safe space’ (hooks, 1994). On the contrary, teachers should be willing to present themselves as sexual and gendered beings and should not refer to differences among students in terms of fixed identitarian characteristics but as open processes of development embedded in specific structures of power. Thus, as adults, to challenge the power relations present in the classroom means, on the one hand, to avoid the tendency to show
ourselves as gender-neutral and asexual and instead to acknowledge our own gender and sexuality, while, on the other hand, it means to avoid picturing sexuality as something closed and unchangeable, but rather as complex and plural, “to risk [our] own sense of expertise, to remember [our] own feelings of helplessness” (Gamberiet al., 2010, p.74), so as to construct “a community of learners together” (hooks, 1994, p. 153). In fact, teachers must transform the classroom into a democratic place where everybody feels the responsibility to intervene and participate, where students learn to hear each other, to listen to one another, to recognize one another; where pain and emotions and freedom of expression can happen. However, this does not mean that teachers do not have to use their power, that students and teachers are equal, rather, as hooks argues (2014, p. 153), “that we are all equal here to the extent that we are equally committed to creating a learning context.” Teachers themselves should become learners in the classroom rather than show a pre-fixed identity that remains un-affected by the educational environment. They should become educators in front of their students, making the educational process one which is transformative for everyone.

Conclusions

In the Italian debate on gender education both advocates’ and opponents’ discourses explicitly or implicitly maintain and reaffirm heteronormativity as a social system of power in and outside the school. In fact, while anti-gender depicts the school as asexual, pro-gender represents the school as a place of inclusion and tolerance of those sexualities that are socially considered different from the heterosexual norm. In this article I argued that, instead of a school of ‘inclusion’, ‘integration’ and ‘tolerance’ of those ‘minoritarian’, ‘different’, ‘other’ subjectivities, what is needed is a school in which mechanisms of control and of production of normative subjectivities, discourses and practices are questioned, brought into light, analyzed and deconstructed. The school is not a neutral place but a highly political one that mirrors the social structures outside of it, and in which subjectivities are constructed daily as either normative or non-normative. Therefore, even though progressive discourses make a step further from conservative homophobic affirmations, in perceiving sexual identities as naturally different from one another, they keep in place the social structure that positions these identities into a hierarchical distribution of power. Thus, as a consequence to their understanding of sexual identities as fixed ‘natural’ essences, pro-gender risks considering social issues like homophobia,
violence against women, racism etc. as the result of individual shortcomings which can be resolved through an education that aims at unlearning oppressive codes in order to then re-learn politically correct ones (Gatens, 1983). Instead, in this article I argue that through a revalorization of sexuality as public and cultural (Butler, 1993, 2004) it is possible to imagine the school as a place which, rather than wanting to include in the realm of the ‘natural’ those ‘different’ sexualities, can help reflect on the complex system of power that creates ‘the natural’ and ‘the different’ in the first place.

Education can make a difference in fighting gender and sexual inequalities, but it cannot teach gender and sexuality without teaching power and domination. Understanding how discrimination works is the first step towards its overcoming.

References


Moroccan Women and Socio-economic Well-being: The case of Home-Based Businesses in Fez region

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Abstract

This paper is a report of a survey conducted on the socioeconomic situation of women in Morocco (Fez region as a case study) and their awareness of the necessity to change their social situation for their own well being. As a methodology of research, I have relied on a face to face interview. 25 women with varying age groups, social classes and educational levels were interviewed. The majority of these women confess having strong desire to take their lives at hand and try to find adequate alternatives to improve and empower themselves at a financial, social and mainly at a personal level independently from partners’ help or family financial aid. The discussion revolved around their own experience on how they convert from simple housewives to businesswomen or else. This survey is also a tribute to all Moroccan women who have achieved their goals either by perseverance, commitments or trust to the self.

Key words: Moroccan women, socioeconomic situation, home-based businesses.

Introduction

Most women today see themselves on an equal footing with men. This is due to the fact that lives of women have improved dramatically in many respects. They have more access to schools, receive better health care, get better jobs and acquire almost legal rights and protections. In the same realm, women, around the globe, declare being financially satisfied even with a low income as far as they have an occupation. Women with no occupation, however, declare being unsatisfied, marginalized and have no real social integration. Moroccan women are not an exception to the global concepts on women empowerment through descent and honorable socioeconomic status. The present study is meant to report amazing stories of 25 ladies from Fez city aged between (22 and 55 years old) who willingly accepted to share with me their adventures, challenges and strong believe on themselves. The focal questions of this research revolved around their educational attainments, their journey as women home-based start-ups and their personal achievements. More specifically, they were asked about the main reasons that push
them to convert from housewives to businesswomen claiming that it was a case of emergency to improve their socio-economic status emphasizing the need to social integrity, self improvement and family well being. The paper will be articulated as follows: Section 1 will shed light on Moroccan women history; Section 2 will briefly portray Moroccan women in business as well as an overview on home-based businesses in Morocco; Section 3 will be devoted to a survey on the socioeconomic status and social integrity of women in Morocco; it will be demonstrated that women drive social power from being educated, civilized and modern; Section 4 will deal with methodology and, more specifically, the instrument used and the population sample targeted; Section 5 will present the results of the survey, and attempt a preliminary interpretation of them; a deeper data interpretation, statistics and analysis will be dealt with in its sub-sections, and finally a conclusion to this study will be provided in section 6.

Moroccan women History

Through history, the traditional role of women was to stay at home splitting up the household chores and also doing various activities such as traditional embroidery and crafts. There was a strict code of behavioral conduct and practices that must be followed by females mainly that they were allowed to go out only for the steam-bath (traditional hammam) or to their husbands’ house which was considered another prison in the life of women at that time. Women were given more value only according to their age, importance and status. For instance, married women were treated better than divorced women who were looked down upon. Women were and still are responsible for raising children and are increasingly likely to raise children alone nowadays.

Within the French colonization, the right of women to go to school started to be applied among modern and rich families first, and then step by step some conservative families started to accept females’ schooling. At first, females were, exceptionally, allowed to join Coranic schools; meanwhile, the idea of learning other languages, different subjects and, notably, becoming intellectual had been considered a sort of power. Therefore, females belonging to conservative families also joined either French or Moroccan schools. As a consequence of studying in foreign schools, the concept of females’ studying abroad got implemented as well among Moroccan Families. Many Moroccan females continued their under-graduate and post-graduate studies in different foreign universities around the globe. The experience of embracing other cultures,
mentality, as well as of exploring new horizons of knowledge empowered women in different domains as, for instance, the business field. Last but not least, Morocco as a Muslim country follows the charia based on the Coran that women have: the right to live, the right to be honored and respected as a mother, and the right to own a business and work. These rights enormously affected women’s lives and their treatment in society by men. Thanks to education, women were gradually enabled to lift their status remarkably and have succeeded to change some practices to their own favor, yet much to be done to reach equality. In this respect, women development across the life span either locally or globally is remarkable through history. Moreover, the Modawana, reformed in 2004, adds more value in the life of women since this latter allows women to enjoy more rights. Divorced women, for instance, can obtain child custody and support and can own and inherit properties.

**Moroccan Women and Business**

Business is one of the most activities of modern life. The creation and growth of new companies are at the heart of economic dynamism. The field of business used to be a male domain but after independence women’ interest in this economic activity phenomenally increased. Today, female founders in our country are growing more and more in number, as are businesses with women co-founders. According to the 2015 statistics closely tracked by economist, investors and policymakers among others, women set up about 1,200 startups per day. Through these initiatives, women are solving problems by creating jobs, participating in productivity, and help in supporting their community. In this respect, women in Morocco have demonstrated that they are competent, skillful and creative equally to men by holding positions of power. Worth mentioning here, that the problem of equality between males and females is not a question of power but a question of authority. Business, in particular, is a field where women have shown great intellect, competence, spirit of challenge and a distinguished feminist presence. Female business figures like Meriam Bensalleh Chaqroun, Miriam Belqziz, Amina Belkhadra, Asmaa morine Azzouzi among others are models for other women who virtually and spiritually share this success with them.

Setting a business, for women, is mostly related to finding a way out to change one’s social and financial situation, self-satisfaction, and turning a passion into a profit. The type of business that concerns us in this study is home-based business. This type of business is not a new
concept in Morocco, women used to work from their home location mainly on sewing, embroidery, and making traditional cookies. These businesses were known thanks to neighborhood and family members. In fact, women based-home start ups was a norm. But within the changes happening worldwide, the norm has become to own a business or to become a working girl. By virtue of girls’ education the number of working-girls and business women increased and the norm becomes to have a job or a business outside homes. Today, home-based businesses are challenging alternatives to women who cannot have a job because of family constraints or luck of qualifications as well as to women who want to set a business but don’t have an initial capital.

**Types of home based businesses in Morocco**

Home-based business is a small business that operates from the business owner’s home office. It is usually defined by having a very small number of employees in order to minimize initial expenses. The business can be any size or any type as long as the office itself is located in a home. The old and traditional home based-business in Fez city and probably around Morocco is sewing and embroidery. Women used to be called in this case **lm3alma, lm3alma ttraza ‘a woman who practices the art of embroidery’, lm 3alma xiatta ‘a woman who practices the art of sewing’, lm3alma nbbata ‘a woman who practices the art of pearling’ etc…** Also women used to be and still are wedding planners from their home location; **Neggafa or Tabbaxaa ‘a chef or a cook, or qabla ‘midwife’** are practiced outdoors. These occupations are still practiced in the same way, but the new generation proposes new and fresh touch of modernity to products and services. More precisely, women start adopting trendy and up-to-date visions in order to satisfy an extremely demanding young girl and woman community in terms of quantity and quality. For example, today modern women’s needs are ‘bio food’, ‘modern and trendy cloths and caftans’, ‘personalized products’ ‘modern handmade decoration’. Another example is modern baby sitting. Current moms explore their valuable skill-set and resources that can be incredibly useful to other parents. In other words, some modern and educated mothers suggest babysitting services with specific activities for children, like music and dancing, reading stories, drawing, tutoring sessions and sports. Working women respond positively to these services as far as they respect some standards as security, discipline, and professionalism. With the advent of the internet women are able to publicize their offering and monetize their skills and abilities through blogs and social
networks. It is worth mentioning in here that YouTube tutoring offers creativity, self education and originality to educated women. Illiterate women, on their side, rely on traditional types of media as TV and radio to learn more about new practices and trends. Most of home-based businesses today are solicited by a great majority of women and find it an adequate alternative for both clients and suppliers.

**Socioeconomic status and Social Integrity**

Socioeconomic status is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. When viewed through a social class lens, privilege, power and control are emphasized. Research indicates that socioeconomic status affects women development as well as their physical and mental health especially when women have no real and sustainable income, a jobless husband or abandoned by their partners and have to raise their children alone. Therefore, the socioeconomic standing of women is of great importance to the well being of themselves, their families as well as future generations. In other words, socioeconomic status is a key factor in determining the quality of life of women. In this respect, for women, quality of life is measured by the others’ esteem and respect and by being able to integrate socially. Brigitte, Cohen and Seeman (2000) noted that: ‘social integration is the extent of participation in social networks, indicated by active engagement in social roles and social activities, and cognitive identification with network members’ (p.151).

Researchers on ‘women and society’ indicate that women socialize and establish good relationships very quickly with their community members Sadiqi (2003). In other words, females’ socializing with other members of their community can positively or negatively affect their well-being. More precisely, getting engaged in social activities with females of high social status may negatively affect them if they feel that they are marginalized or looked down up on because of poverty, lack of education, or lack of interesting occupations. These phenomena engender a lack of linguistic and communication competences considered as essential in relationship ethics. As an alternative to this delicate situation, most of stay at home moms (notably divorced, abandoned and illiterate women) have decided to make a change in their lives and stop being considered as a stay at home person with no real occupation. Women drive social power from being educated, civilized and modern. Therefore, their own and family well being is related to finding a way out to take their lives at hand. The best alternative has been to start
home-based small businesses adopting the concepts of ‘from kitchen to company leaders’ and
‘From Zero to Hero’.

Rational of the Research and population samples

The growth of working at home has paved the way for women to keep their family at the
central part of their day-to-day lives, while also managing to bring in extra income with their
own business. Stay at home women start businesses that reflect their own abilities like sewing,
cooking, hand crafting and any artistic endeavor. In this research 25 women from Fez region
aged between 25 and 55 years old, belonging to different social classes were interviewed on their
home-based businesses, the reasons that push them to start a business at home and their feeling
today being autonomous as well as the difficulties they have faced before and after settling their
business.

The research targeted at first, women from popular class, but I noticed that the number of
upper class women home-based startups surpasses low or middle class start ups. Upper class
women’ home-based businesses are related to fur and jewelry, haute couture clothing, wedding
consultancy and planning, handmade decoration, modern babysitting, Moroccan dishes revisited
in a modern way etc. while low class women start ups are related to bakery and pastry, sewing,
maid services at home. It is true that high class women are running luxurious and prolific
businesses but the concept is the same. In other words, either rich or poor, women from either
class have decided to achieve their personal work dreams.

The idea to conduct research on home-based business emanates from the number of
services and products that my neighbors, friends, family members and my own students
proposed to me. My curiosity has grown when women started to market their products in public
places like gymnasiums, hair-dressers and mostly at their children schools’ door. Moms were
always ready to exhibit their products on their smart phones and always proposed to exchange
phone numbers with other mothers to send them pictures of their products or explain about their
services through WhatsApp or Facebook, and/or propose a home visit. As a result of their
excellent marketing performance, I was tempted to buy their products or use their services, and I
cannot deny that most of the time I was satisfied and convinced by their professionalism. This is
also a pertinent reason that has pushed me to probe on home-based business in my region.


Research Methodology

The Interview

To well investigate on this study, a face to face interview was adopted as a methodology of research; the languages used are both French and Moroccan Arabic. The interview comprises 10 questions. The respondents were first asked about their age and level of education. The second question focuses on the based-home start up idea and the reasons that push them to start a business from their home location. They were also asked about the persons who supported them before and after setting their businesses, how the respondents manage to market their products from their home location, how they get in touch with their clients as well as how they deal with their profit.

25 ladies from different social classes, different ages, different occupations, and different marital statuses, willingly accepted to respond to my request and shared with me their stories around a coffee or a cup of tea and some cakes and cookies mostly handmade which was one of the starting point of our conversation. The interview took place between mid-February and mid-March, 2016. The interviews weren’t scheduled for a specific timing, but they took between 1:30 to 3 hours, this depended on hospitality of women, the time it took to expose their products, to demonstrate their services, as well as to consult their web-sites. At first, I used my smart phone to record my respondents’ conversations, but after interviewing 5 females, I shifted to observation and note-taking which were more practical for my research. Because of the similarities between some cases and the limited space of the paper, only three case studies are reported.

Data Interpretation and Analysis

Main reasons to start a home based-business

In the era of globalization and the rapid changes happening worldwide, being a full timer housewife is not anymore adequate. The economy is getting tougher and the income of men alone can no longer sustain a family especially that wives and children's needs and desires grow bigger day after day. Housewives feel desperate and marginalized by their partners when these latter cannot satisfy them financially. Worse than that, women are psychologically harassed by their husbands when they are told that they are just staying at home doing nothing. They feel
more frustrated when their husbands describe other women, namely a colleague, or a working-woman neighbor, as elegant, well-educated, and open-minded or have an interesting job. Others feel bored and suffer from long days’ routine. Housewives suffer also from mental and eating disorder especially when they feel that their days are similar and endless. The routine of life is apparent on their faces. Young ladies claim that they are getting old at an early age and the olds claim that they are useless with an extremely tired body. Indeed, housewives who managed to find solutions to their endless days consider life more valuable and desirable. That is to say, women who establish quick relationships with other females with whom they share the same interest, engage in sport and social activities, and decide to start their weeks with new resolutions and new challenges breathe a fresh air of victory, liberty and mostly self-satisfaction. Therefore, socioeconomic status is a key factor in determining the quality of life of women. To overcome life difficulties, stay at home mothers find a win-win situation to earn money and at the same time to fulfill their daily duties. Therefore, self-employment among women is becoming more and more a norm and women who start businesses which reflect their abilities and skills assure a sustainable success.

The Interview Report

Through this report, I will briefly project the respondents’ stories, how their lives have changed, and how the socio-economic status can contribute to women as well as to their families’ well being.

My first respondent is Khadijah, 40 years old, mother to three daughters, her husband is an office-boy and she is living in a very small flat. She started her first job as a maid. When she gave birth to her second daughter she stopped her job and decided to start her business. Khadijah decided to keep the same activity but from her home location. Khadijah relied on her own savings as well as the aid of the people she used to work with to help her buy an oven and washing machine. She decided to propose several services to her clients such as laundry services, cooking, and mainly bakery and pastry services. She claimed that her need of money urged her to think of different services at a time. She added that it was too difficult at the beginning but step by step, she managed to organize her time, bought another washing machine and another oven. Thanks to the support of her husband, her family and her neighbors she managed to make new clients by mouth to ear, clients who trust her, and rely on her in different events and ceremonies.
Khadijah considers herself a successful woman today because she helps her husband and at the same time she is financially independent. Khadijah enthusiastically said that her pride resides in the amount of clients she has today and the professional relationship she managed to establish with them. One of Khadijah’s biggest challenges is to buy a big apartment to her family.

Our second respondent’s name is Bahia. She is 55 years old, a BA holder in French. She divorced when she was still pregnant of her twins. Bahia couldn't find a permanent job because of her two babies. Though she was living with her parents, she was in a great need of money to raise her children as she dreams of. Bahia started home tutoring sessions when she was in the second year university but she stopped this activity when she got married. Once her children integrated the kindergarten, she decided to go back to her old occupation. She got in touch with some mothers at the door of her twins’ school and suggested her service as a teacher of French. She started to teach primary and secondary school pupils. At first, she managed to have a group of 10 students. She got 300 MDH per student, for four hours tutoring per month. Because of her efficient methodology of tutoring, she managed, later, to have more students, then more groups. Bahia started tutoring at her own bedroom then turned the underground garage into a classroom. She said that her love for teaching helped her a lot. Bahia’s difficulty resides in being a divorced woman with no income. She suffered from a depression after her divorce; she said that she could have overcome this depression if she had a job. Staying at home made of her a vulnerable woman, most of the time sad and anxious. Bahia received a great moral support from her family and friends and realized that only a home-based business or activity can change her life radically. Bahia considers herself to be a brave and successful woman today. Her income covers all her needs and even her desires and notably her children’s needs. One of Bahia’s biggest challenges is to have her own private school.

The third respondent is Fatima, 30 years old from an upper class family. Fatima is married and has three children. She is selling luxurious garments, bags and accessories from her home location. I am actually one of her clients. Fatima was living in the United States of America and decided to come back to Morocco. Once settled in Fez city, she started selling some of the products brought from the States. She immediately noticed that her business can be lucrative. She started her journey by a back and forth to Paris, Turkey and New York to select brandy garments, jewelries and bags to her demanding clients. She converted her dining room to
a big shop. I asked Fatima about her choice of having her business in her home location rather than in an outdoor shop, knowing that she can afford a luxurious shop if she wants. Fatima laughed and replied that to run her business at home make of her a present mom and a successful business woman at the same time. Sometimes, women set up business not for money’s sake but for self challenge. A home-based business is similar to a go-to-work or an outdoor business. It is led in the same way; you are a manager, an accountant and a secretary at the same time. You open an account, you make plans and strategies of sales, you think about reinvesting as well as saving. You decide about the prices and sales. You remain trendy to satisfy your clients’ needs. It is an exciting occupation since you get ready to meet your clients everyday while you are fulfilling your house duties. Being a housewife doesn’t mean to be condemned to earning little or no money, many housewives are earning significant income by offering a whole variety of products and services. In other words, to be financially independent, women feel empowered, joyful, and gain more self esteem, this, indeed, can affect society as a whole. Fatima’s biggest challenge is to export Moroccan traditional caftans to different parts of the globe.

Statistics

Home-based startups’ success is related to many factors. The main factors were attributed to: 1) educational attainments, 2) tolerance and support of partners, 3) availability of budget. The following tableaux are the survey statistics of the contributing reasons to start a home-based business:

1) Educational attainments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year university</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA degree/master studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tableau above demonstrates the educational level of the 25 females interviewed. We can notice that 10 females from the low class are illiterate, and however, managed to find a way
out to help themselves. 7 Middle class’ females stopped their studies because of marriage, pregnancy or because of some other circumstances. And finally, 1 female belonging to the upper class stopped her studies at the baccalaureate level because she got married and her husband obliged her to stay at home and take care of her children. Whereas, 4 upper class females are BA and/or Master holders either from private schools or foreign universities, which explains their easy access to social and business networking, have regular clients, and have enough budgets to enlarge their activities.

2) Partners support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s Moral support</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s Financial support</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics on Partners’ moral and financial support has been much revealing about the hurdles that females’ in the low class may face in comparison to upper class women as the tableau shows. However, and according to the respondents’ revelations, this situation has not affected in, a way or another, their determination to set up their businesses.

3) Budget availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial capital</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>90 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Tableau shows that low class women are more in need for an initial capital to start their business than middle or upper class’ women, which push them to make their home locations a starting point of their business and with the minimum money they have.
Conclusion

In this research paper, the focus has been, mainly, on Moroccan women and home based start ups. Through this survey, it has been demonstrated that housewives, today, can enjoy more and more independence, respect and success thanks to small businesses that can be run from their home locations. The growth of home-based businesses is still increasing day after day and women are exploring more interesting business horizons. The report also exhibited some housewives challenges claiming that the main ones have been how to get started, to know how to market and sell products and services, and to change social and cultural stereotypes on housewives as ignorant, with no occupation and no real status. It is also a challenge to prove that home-based businesses are real, descent, and honorable occupations to stay at home women. It is a way to prevent psychological and health problems as well as life routine. And it is a way to realize their dearest dreams.

Last but not least, home based business is the best alternative for a woman to realize her dreams, practice her passion and take care of her family. In other words, it is the jack-pot for every woman who has decided to change her socioeconomic status from a stay-at-home mom to a successful businesswoman. Finally, this survey is only the first part of my research on home-based businesses in Fez city. The second part will be on home based business and the role of associations in the rural areas of Fez region. Most exactly, this part will cover the important role that associations fulfill either financially or psychologically. How stay-at-home females who are not aware of business networking get to market their products and/or services. This part will also handle the role of government and financial agencies in supporting associations, especially in the way they proceed, communicate and put into practice home-based business either at the national or internal level. Are these initiatives going to create sustainable jobs for needy females? Answers to these questions will better clarify the socio-economic status of women in Morocco and their well being.

References


Gender Representation in the Moroccan EFL Textbook Discourse

Mohamed Jaafari, Cadi Ayyad University, Morocco

Abstract

The overriding purpose of the present paper is to examine a significant feature of gender representation in the discourse underlying the current Moroccan EFL textbooks. Indeed, the paper discusses findings brought about by a research paper conducted in the fulfillment of the requirements for degree of doctorate at the faculty of Letters in Beni Mellal (Jaafari, 2015). The study has quantitatively processed 252 pieces of the gendered dialogues and talk exchanges embedded in the eight textbooks officially employed in the Moroccan high schools. Particularly, the study examines the manifestations of unequal distribution of power to genders in discourse as language in use. In this endeavour, the study is guided methodologically by the works of the Critical Discourse Analysis scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, LiaLitosseliti and others. The research is also characterized by the implementation of M.A.K Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, mainly modality analysis at the interpersonal level and transitivity analysis at the experiential level. The conversational methods and techniques are employed to map out the way people exert power over interlocutants, reproduce or challenge prevailing gender ideology in talk. The importance of the results is proved by their implication for textbook industry, language pedagogy, human rights and the improvement of society as a whole.

Keywords: CDA, gender, equity, discourse, power.

Introduction

The present study finds its rationale in the ideological, social and educational context of change currently running in Morocco. Furthermore, gender equality as a trend has become a field of study universally undertaken to assess the status of human rights and equality within gender communities. In Morocco as a case, the efforts to bring change in the field of rights as a whole started by signing the universal human rights conventions in the late nineties. Eventually, the policy assumed to foster gender equity in education was integrated in The Charter of Education and Training (2000). The new policy expects the newly devised school textbooks to reflect in
form, content and methodology the attempt to abolish gender discrimination and instruct young citizens on gender equity.

Taking into consideration the context of study discussed above, the research purpose becomes obvious which is to answer the following question:

To what extent does the pedagogic discourse via the EFL textbook, in its current form, transmit successfully the principles of the national policy regarding the construction of the Moroccan gender identity?

The question above was forwarded to serve as an overarching inquiry for a better orientation of the research. Such a question was approached by hypothesizing on the role of discourse in the production or reproduction of the citizen's gender identity. Two hypotheses directed the investigation:

Hypothesis 1. We assume that there is quantitative imbalance in the distribution of power and knowledge between the gender roles in the Moroccan EFL textbook discourse based on dialogues.

Hypothesis 2. We expect to find that the Moroccan EFL textbook discourse only reproduce implicitly and explicitly the traditional gender roles existing at the macro level of the society.

To test the hypotheses, the study examined the manifestations of unequal distribution of power to genders in discourse, which is language in use. To achieve this purpose, the investigation extracted and analysed 252 gendered dialogues embedded in all the eight textbooks officially accredited and currently running in the Moroccan high school.

In this endeavour, the study is guided methodologically by the works of the Critical Discourse Analysis scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Lia Litosseliti and others. CDA theoretical framework conceives that the structures of discourse are linked to the structures of society. Class, gender and ethnic relations, for instance, are “systematically associated with the structural units, levels, or strategies of talk and text embedded in their social, political and cultural contexts” (van Dijk, 1995, pp. 135-136). Such links, though far from being explicit, are communicated by meaning.
Accordingly, the textbook as educational discourse plays multi-dimensional roles, namely psychological, cultural and ideological. Within this scope, van Dijk (1989) advances that the school textbook is a source of power for institutions of societies and a means of establishing unanimous consensus on particular attitudes and beliefs. He states that:

Together with instructional dialogues, textbooks are used extensively by all citizens during their formal education. The knowledge and attitudes expressed and conveyed by such learning materials, again, reflect a dominant consensus, if not the interests of the most powerful groups and institutions of societies. (p. 48)

Van Dijk links the value of the school textbook as educational discourse to its powerful impact on the orientation of the citizens’ attitudes and the contribution to the building of the social identity. He compares this impact to the effect of media discourse on society, essentially because “textbooks are obligatory reading for many people, which is a second major condition of their power” (van Dijk, 1989, p.48). Hence, textbooks are not only vehicles of language instructions and learning, but also devices for orientating thought and positioning social roles. Such influential aspect is the main reason behind choosing the school textbook as a sample for investigation in this paper.

Equally valuable for the present research is the way dialogues represent models of social roles in social interaction as they introduce new linguistic structure and functions for learners to practice in meaningful contexts. Expanding on the same assumption above, Fairclough (2003) probes in the essence and properties of dialogues and conversations in general; he declares that “…even informal conversation shows inequalities which can be attributed to social relations between participants” (p. 78). That is, unequal social relations between participants inevitably results in inequalities in talk and discourse. These inequalities, he adds, are most explicit in the distribution of turn between men and women in conversations. In similar vein, van Dijk (1995b) states that:

The more specific interactional nature of dialogue may reflect the ideologically based power of interaction strategies more generally, by which speakers who share egalitarian ideologies may feel entitled to verbally treat their speech partners as inferior.(p. 31)
VanDijk here highlights the aspect of inequalities in interaction which is explicit in the inequality of using interaction verbal strategies.

In conclusion, the choice of textbooks as a sample and textbook dialogues as a corpus for quantifiable analysis reflects awareness of the social role such material plays in community. As a powerful socialization agent, the school textbook by means of instruction dialogues make learners internalize unconsciously portrayals of people, explicitly representations of gender roles and speeches. Such phenomenon is the focus of the present paper with the purpose to locate recursive inequalities in these gender representations.

The central question is, ultimately, how to spot and reveal linguistic structures of dominance and power in text and talk? How meaning is constructed to transmit knowledge with the purpose to shape thoughts and constitute identities? Then, what linguistic tools underpin CDA in this endeavour?

**Quantitative analysis**

**Theoretical background**

To answer these questions, the present research focused on the implementation of M.A.K Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, mainly modality analysis at the interpersonal level and transitivity analysis at the experiential level. For the purpose of the general aims of the present analysis, the modals extracted from the textbooks dialogues are classified in terms of two distinct categories: epistemic and non-epistemic modalities which Halliday (2004, p. 150) terms ‘modalization’ and ‘modulation’, respectively. While epistemic modality relates to the proposition in the utterance and is concerned with “matters of [human judgment,] knowledge, belief and opinion rather than fact” (Lyons, 1977, p. 793), non-epistemic modality refers to facts or events and is performative such as imposing obligation, making promise, giving permission as facts to be acted out by the addressee. They involve an attempt to influence, direct or control the event and regulate the behaviour of the addressee. The latter category Coates (1983) labels ‘root modality’. Non-epistemic and root modality are interchangeable in this paper. They are used as umbrella terms to all the other types, namely deontic and dynamic modalities, distinguished from epistemic modality.
Methodologically speaking, the choice of a method of analysis appropriate to the objectives and theoretical approach of the research helped to come out with reliable results. Indeed, this project intended to be quantitative in terms that the search for data is in a large sample of texts. The analysis statistics are performed by Wordsmith software which spotted and counted the frequency of modals and verbs, names and job titles as linguistic items across the numerous samples of dialogues. This project is also qualitative because it falls under discourse-analysis type where "the results tend to be richer with regard to understanding the way that information is presented in a text" (Nicholls, 2003, p. 3).

**Variables**

Defining the variables in research is also a decisive procedure which is clarified within methodology. Concerning modality, the basic modals are stated as follows: can (ability), could, may (permission, probability), might (possibility), must, ought to, shall, should, will, and would. Don’t have to, have to, mustn’t+ can’t (prohibition), might have + past participle, had to, should and ought to (advice and recommendation) + needn’t modals in the present and past.

As for transitivity, the verbs are extracted from the dialogues and studied within the context of use. This thesis adheres to Hallidays’ view of transitivity which forms the core of representation. As a system of lexicogrammatical choices, transitivity offer meaning potentials for the language user to choose a possibility that convey a meaning that suits most her/his social and personal needs and the view s/he holds about him/herself and the world around. In this paper, four types of processes are analyzed: material (doing, happening, creating and changing), mental (feeling, thinking or seeing), relational (being, identifying, attributing), verbal (saying or speaking). It is an attempt to assess how the world of experience is perceived by either genders, namely the material world and the world of inner consciousness. In one word, transitivity in this paper probes the different gender’s utterances embedded in the dialogues to find out which type of processes dominates the discourse of either gender roles. The first step in the procedure has isolated quantitatively the verbs, then the processes in the dialogues. The second step computed the gender of the participants involved in each process. It means to answer the following questions: who acts? Who thinks and feels? Who acts on the other? Who has the agent role in material processes? Who is the recipient of these ideas? The overall aim is to discover which
gender has more power and influence on the events and acts and who is most affected by these acts; that is the protagonist of the representation.

**Results and discussion**

**Modality**

Quantitatively, both genders have their share in the occurrences of modal verbs of all types analyzed. The following table exhibits the overall distribution of modals to males and females.

![Figure 1: Distribution of modality to genders in the textbooks](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probabilities</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Gate1</th>
<th>Ticket1</th>
<th>Ticket2</th>
<th>Gate2</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Frequency of the epistemic modals

It is worth noting that the most frequent core modals are the probability will and possibility can. Concerning the use of can, all the textbooks, except Insights and Ticket1, give evident prominence to males over females. Besides, the overall analysis shows that males exceed females in the frequency of use of will by 16 hits and can by 20. In sum, the analysis shows that the discrepancies between female and male’s number of uses of epistemic modality reveal inequality in gender representation.
Non-epistemic modality. Contrary to epistemic modality, non-epistemic modality relates to event and behavior rather than knowledge. As such, speakers use modals to attempt a change in the behavior of the interlocutor such as imposing obligation, giving permission, requesting, expressing ability and willingness. The forthcoming table displays the distribution of the different semantic categories belonging to non-epistemic obligation, and prohibition between males and females in the dialogues in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obligation &amp; Prohibition</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Gate 1</th>
<th>Ticket 1</th>
<th>Ticket 2</th>
<th>Gate 2</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>must I</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>should</td>
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<tr>
<td>should I</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>have to</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>shall</td>
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<tr>
<td>ought to</td>
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<tr>
<td>needn't</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't have to</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>can't</td>
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<tr>
<td>mustn't</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Frequency of the obligation modals

The analysis shows that the deontic Should hits the greatest rate of frequency which is 76. Must, have to and ought to follow with 40, 16 and 3 hits respectively. Important are the overall frequencies that indicate that men use deontic obligation modals more than women. This is true also when analyzing the instances of using the obligation modals by males and females in individual textbooks. This idea is made clearer in the table below.

Fig 2: Frequency of the deontic obligation and prohibition modalities
Except for Window, the textbooks show that men more than women exhibit strong inclination to use modals expressing obligation. In Outlook, women exceeds male in using obligation modals just by one beat that is 13 for females to 12 for males which is negligible.

To conclude, the discrepancy between the frequencies of obligation modals expressed by males and those mentioned by females is very conspicuous. The former outnumber the latter by the double, 97 to 50 respectively. So, it can be said that females are less represented than males in the cases of obligation modality.

Further concordancing of modal auxiliaries embedded in the textbook dialogues showed that males and females use core modals for various functions according to the speakers’ gender and social roles. The table below demonstrates the frequencies of the auxiliaries expressing different functions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Request 2: Decision, 3: Volition, 4: Ability, 5: Offer</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Ticket</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Ticket</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Gate 2</th>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Freq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will + sub</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would + like</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Can</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couldn't</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Frequency of modals expressing different functions

The first remark is that the modal can has got prominence over the other modals in use for different functions, and it is the only modal in addition to its past form, could, which is able to express ability. The frequencies of requests outnumber the other functions with 88 instances, followed by ability with 60 instances, decision making, volition and offering with 36, 32 and 24 instances each. Quantitatively speaking, the distribution of dynamic modals to genders is
irregular and its frequency is changing from one function to another and from one book to another. Such a fact doesn’t give opportunity to draw substantive conclusions concerning gender representation. However, the qualitative analysis of the discourse demonstrates the reasons and the way males and females use some of the non-epistemic modals. The following example relates to deontic obligation:

Mrs. Plump: Well, I always feel weak and tired when I get up in the morning. I look at myself in the mirror and I say: “... Yes, I'm putting in weight, and I can't get into my clothes" Must I go on a diet? Must I see a nutritionist?

Doctor: No, you don't have to go on a diet and you don't have to see a nutritionist, either. But you must change your eating habits. (Outlook, SB, p. 70)

By directing the obligation must to herself and requesting instructions from the doctor, the female is expecting the male doctor to dictate to her the obligations according to which she should tune her future life style. The male doctor, by contrast, confidently enumerate to her the dos and don’ts. He first illicits her attention by successive expressions of absence of obligation. Then, he exhibits his expertise in his profession by a must-directive.

In other instances, females’ propositions of obligation are either directed to themselves or another interlocutor of lower status.

Pharmacist: who's next please? Can I help you?
Customer: yes please. Can I have a couple on injections like these?
Pharmacist: Let me see. I'm sorry. Do you have a prescription?
Customer: They are not for me. They are for my mother. She is very sick, and I must get her shot now.
Pharmacist: I know but I must respect the rules. So you don’t have to wait. You call your doctor.
Customer: Ok. What about bandage for my arm?
Pharmacist: No problem. You don't have to produce a prescription for that. (Outlook, SB, p. 71)

The male doctor initiates the conversation by offering to help the female customer. This help is offered out of duty rather than humbleness or sympathy. He uses the expression ‘Can I’. The same expression is used by the lady but as a request to fulfill a need. The female customer expresses self-directed obligation ‘I must’ out of care for family while the male pharmacist does the same but out of care and respect to law and professional rules. Therefore, the male is
depicted as a source of power producing directives to the helpless woman who lacks knowledge of the rules.

However, there are moments when females give directives to a different person. This latter may be of lower social status. Such a use of deontic obligation relates, for example, to the case when the mother is addressing talk to her daughter saying: “You must be careful with that knife”. (Outlook, SB, p. 72). Hence, the use of obligation in context endows males with more power than females who are described as lacking knowledge hence power. This conclusion goes in line with previous research’s findings. Lakoff (1973) states the following:

The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of. In appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favored. (p. 45)

In fact, these numerical insights offer a solid support to the assumption that men are depicted as being more inclined than women to change the occurrences in the immediate world of reality by means of producing performative acts such as commands, invitations and ordering which influence, direct and regulate the addressee’s behaviour.

Transitivity

The second phase in the quantitative analysis goes further to probe into the frequency of the transitivity processes in the textbook dialogues. Being at the core of reality representation, transitive processes reveal noteworthy discursive facets of the social context as they contribute to the interpersonal meaning of discourse. The distribution of the frequency of the processes in the dialogues studied is illustrated in the following diagram:

Fig 3: Distribution and percentage of the 4 processes
The illustration above ranks the four types of processes according to their rate of frequency in the dialogues studied. Out of 4929 clauses extracted from the dialogues with the help of Wordsmith Concord software, 1898 instances of gendered transitivity are selected and categorized in terms of process type and gender role. It is worth noting that two types of processes dominate the majority of the clauses extracted; they are material and mental processes. Material processes rank first (36%), followed by mental processes (30%), then relational (28%) and verbal (12%) processes. The following table indicates the quantified instances of gender representation in individual textbooks.

![Fig 4: Frequency of gender representation in transitivity](image)

Accordingly, the investigation settles on the conclusion that males are more represented than females in Outlook, Visa, Gateway1, Ticket2, Gateway2 and Insights. In contrast, only two textbooks out of eight which are Window and Ticket1 give noticeable prominence to female gendered transitivity instances.

Conspicuous enough is also the high frequency of the material processes acted by males in contrast with those acted by females in the majority of the textbooks, which is 5 out of 8. In Outlook as a case, men are the actors of 93 out of 146 material processes versus 53/146 material processes acted by females. Hence, the fact that males run the utmost amount of material processes attests to their inclination towards action and the material world.

The succeeding implication was unexpected; following the mainstream gender studies, our hypotheses postulate that females would have monopoly on mental processes, hence show more preference for thinking and feeling than men. Indeed, one of the main conclusions Lakoff (2004) comes out with from her research is that “Women are person-oriented, interested in their
own and each other’s mental states and respective status; men are object-oriented, interested in things in the outside world” (p. 101). On the contrary, only two of the textbooks studied (Ticket1 and Insights) give supremacy to females over males in thinking and feeling. It can be concluded, then, that males dominate the frequency of gender representation as they do most of the doing, feeling and thinking processes.

Equally significant results rise from the scrutiny of the frequency of relational and verbal processes. All the textbooks, except for Window, Ticket1 and Insights, tend to describe males as recurrent agents of relational processes in the dialogues. Males are thus depicted as more capable of identifying and consciously establishing relations between elements in the material world of experience which they monopoly. Unlike relational processes, verbal processes communicate and speak out the inner world of consciousness. The analysis of gendered verbal processes yields that the instances where males perform verbal processes outnumber those where females are subjects. This fact further attests to the assumption that males, besides being more disposed to act, tend to communicate their thoughts and feelings more than females would.

In brief, the results from the quantitative analysis on gendered modality and transitivity in the Moroccan EFL textbooks concur with the thesis set for the study. The modality analysis demonstrates that female’s less assertive language reflect their powerlessness. In disparity, males address directives to females with noticeable self-assertion. Furthermore, the analysis of the gendered process types brings proofs to the assumption that males are more represented in the textbooks’ discourse and are regarded more than females as active agents in all areas of experience of the real world: acting, sensing, relating and communicating. The quantitative analysis has, therefore, brought to knowledge that a sexist undercurrent and ideology permeates implicitly the Moroccan EFL textbooks. Such a claim needs to be confirmed and consolidated by applying a different level of analysis to the same data and some semiotic features accompanying the dialogues such as pictures and illustration.
Qualitative analysis

Firstness

The first illuminating results come from the reconsideration of female firstness in the dialogues. If in the quantitative analysis the focus question was on the number of times each gender initiates dialogues, what matters more in the qualitative analysis is the way genders start their dialogues. The assumption drawn from the extracted exchanges destabilizes the preliminary meaning conveyed by the results from the quantification of the frequencies of female visibility at the onset of the dialogues. Journalist or reporter as a career fulfilled by female gender is quite gratifyingly respectful, but in the textbooks, it is recursively juxtaposed to socially and intellectually higher professions that male characters have such as scientist and specialist. So, although females are given the prominence of initiating considerable amount of dialogues, males are depicted as a source of knowledge from which females seek information and, thus, receive high unconscious and conscious attention from the young learners. One reason is that the interviews are exploited as main reading or listening activities in the unit. Second, the questions incorporated in the follow-up activities invite the learner to focus on the utterances delivered by the interviewees who are males.

It is worth noting also that questioning is a predominant course both females and males employ to initiate talk with each other. Obvious from the analysis that both females and males frequently employ three types of speech functions to initiate speech with each other: wh-questions, yes/no questions and statements. The former counts 59 instances with 23 for males and 36 for females. By contrast, males ask more yes/no questions than females, 40 instances for males and 29 for females. The assumption to draw from this comparative counting is that the textbooks assert that females ask more wh-questions than men. That is, they illicit knowledge which they don’t know before. Males, on the other hand, propose knowledge to accept or refute through the use of yes/no questions. Concerning statements, the discrepancy is minimal, because females state 22 while males state 26 which make the total of 48.
Social spheres

Biased gender representation is most salient in gendering the spheres of life in the textbooks. The present table is meant to provide numerical data concerning occupational and household roles that the characters perform in the textbooks’ dialogues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational &amp; Household Role</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor/ Pharmacist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist/ Interviewer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Businesspeople</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Couple</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse/ Secretary</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Frequency</strong></td>
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</table>
female activities relate to shopping and organizing social activities. Males, on the other hand, are the family main breadwinner.

To conclude, the Moroccan EFL textbooks may, at the first encounter, appear to be equal in gender representation through distribution of talk initiation, turn-taking, professional and social roles. However, a closer analysis of what and how the language is used in talk and context in addition to the roles the genders assume recursively in the different spheres of life makes it clear that the authors’ conscious endeavour is subverted by the persistent traditional gender ideology which prevails the hidden thinking of the Moroccan people.

In general conclusion, the methodology in this dissertation proposes alternative assessment of gender representation. First, it shows that gender bias is multifaceted and can be both explicit and implicit in different components of the school textbook. To uncover the underlying gender ideology embedded in the textbook components, a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analyses would yield richer account of gender status than a single-way method of textbook analysis. Methodology as such in this paper is a combination of quantifying data analysis and context-sensitive approach.

Conclusion

Equally important are implications for pedagogy. The present research has focused on gender imbalance in the current Moroccan ELT materials. The outcomes obtained by the study indicate that the authors of the textbooks have consciously invested enormous efforts to represent both genders in different components of the textbooks such as themes, characters and language. However, multiple gender inequalities seem to persist in the textbooks. The results from the study imply that textbook designers should treat gender representation quantitatively and qualitatively. A balance should be struck between the rates of gender roles within each theme in line with the rate of males and females in society. They should pay more attention to both the number of times, how, when, with whom and for how long a gender perform speech acts in dialogues. Special attention should also focus on the ideology that the topic orientations of dialogues, the portrayal of men and women in occupational, social activities and places may produce. Authors, for example, should be considerate to recurrent illustrations of gender roles that impute females a very confined range of activities limited to shopping, cooking and caring. If such instances of gender inequities persist in textbooks, they may create a sense of normality
towards discrimination in the learners’ concept of gender. This fact may affect negatively students’ learning styles and trigger prejudice in their subconscious socialization processes which will have repercussions on their adult life such as gender hostility. Such is the social phenomenon that this study intends to change in community.

Apart from authors, teachers and students are also meant by the implications of the results of this study. The impacts of the extreme prevalence of traditional gender stereotyping on the students’ values can be minimized, if teachers and learners are consciously alert to the sexist ideology and they are willingly committed to challenge it. Here comes the role of sharpening the students’ critical thinking. Empowering both teachers and learners with gender literacy and gender critical awareness is therefore one strong way to boost citizens’ immunity against stereotyping in language.

References


Constraints to Girls’ Education in Morocco and a Gender Approach to Literacy

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Abstract

The development of any country is often measured by its citizens' level of education. Most western countries are developed because they have provided education for all their citizens. Developing countries, on the other hand, have lagged behind, and many of them find it increasingly difficult to educate all their citizens because of inadequate financial and human resources. Morocco is among the countries where the number of illiterates is high despite all the efforts made by the government and by nongovernmental organizations (NGO) to eradicate illiteracy and provide education for all. Thus, the present paper explores this social phenomenon, with specific reference to Moroccan women. Its purpose is to shed light on some of the most significant constraints to girls’ schooling in Morocco. Also it intends to make the people in charge aware of the effects of education, and human development; and particularly NGOs regarding the role they can play to fight some negative traditional values to improve girls’ and women’s situation in Morocco.

Therefore, this paper is mostly concerned with displaying some aspects of gender inequality in education and elucidating how education is a crucial means for women’s empowerment and its impact on the development of her family and entire society.

Keywords: Identity, gender inequality, gender stereotype, segregation, empowerment, development.

Introduction

Education is considered as one of the crucial factors in determining the social, economic, and political development of a society. According to the World Bank, “girls’ education yields some of the highest returns of all development investments, yielding both private and social benefits that accrue to individuals, families and society at large…” (World Bank, 1995). However, in Morocco, girls’ acquisition of knowledge is fervently opposed; regulated to
secondary importance as compared to boys or impeded with so many restrictions as to make it almost impossible for female students to get a decent standard of education, especially in the rural areas. Despite attempt at transformation of education in Morocco, it seems that little has been achieved to facilitate and boost girls’ education. The purpose in this paper is to shed light on some of the most significant constraints to girls’ schooling in Morocco. The objective in this article, thus, is to make the people in charge aware of the effects of education, and human development; and particularly NGOs regarding the role they can play to fight some negative traditional values to improve girls’ and women’s situation in Morocco.

1. The Causes of Female Illiteracy

The causes of female illiteracy are varied and different. Illiteracy is attributed to extreme poverty, customs and traditions, the geographical distance of schools, personal decision, and school failure. Thus, the principle determinants of schooling can be classified as follows: the educational constraints, the socioeconomic constraints, the environmental constraints, and the cultural constraints.

1.1. Educational Constraints

In this category, constraints are related to the educational system and the mechanisms that govern its functioning (structures, cadres, culture, etc.). Among other factors contributing to gender differentials in enrolments are the location and the physical facilities of schools, the lack of female teachers, and the lack of basic amenities. Other obstacles include the distance between home and school and the lack of roads and means of transportation, which affects females more than males where female mobility is restricted.

The nature and the quality of schooling: Schooling in the rural areas is characterized by the inadequacy and the non-satisfaction of the populations’ needs. Schooling is poorly distributed among the regions and the rural douars, and are not arranged with the entire pedagogical structure at the financial level, and educational level. This leads to sharing classrooms, the dispersion of schools, failure and then premature dropping out particularly among girls. In this respect, Ibaaquil (1996) notes that the budget allotted to the pedagogical stuff in the Moroccan primary school is in most cases less than 6 percent of the whole budget. He
adds that due to lack of material, teaching methods are rather traditional and based on memorization and authority.

The Content of the school programs: In the rural areas, there is an inadequacy, on one side in the contents of the programs or “schooling culture”, and on the other side, in the values and the elements of the rural culture. This inadequacy concerns particularly the means and dynamics of the social formation of the girl; in addition to the values, customs and the conception of the woman’s role within family and society upon which this formation is based. This negatively affects the situation of rural girls in spite of the significant changes that these contexts underwent due to their acculturation with the urban values and the behaviours.

The inadequacy of the available educational services: One factor accounting for the lower rate of girls’ participation in rural primary schools is the low proportion of female teachers in such schools. The data show that whereas 50% of urban primary school teachers are female, only 18% of rural teachers are female. Improvement of this proportion could help overcome the reluctance of conventional rural parents to send their daughters to schools. Unfortunately, the importance of the presence of female teachers, especially in the rural areas, is primordial. It is worthwhile to point out that the presence of female teachers would provide an incitement for girls to enroll in schools; they would create a safe atmosphere that would encourage parents to send their daughters to school, and would provide positive role models. In a patriarchal society like Morocco with cultural barriers, female teachers would allow parents to feel more comfortable with the school because their daughters are supervised by other adult females. Female teachers are also less likely to perpetuate gender discrimination and harassment, creating a safe space for girls to learn. In other words, simply because they are women, female teachers would be gender sensitive in their attitudes and behaviors, fight for more gender sensitive curriculum and provide a safe environment free from sexual harassment. Thus, An increase in the numbers of women teachers would accelerate, if not ensure, sustainable gender equality in education.

If women are to achieve equality on Moroccan society, women teachers must be in the forefront of those who encourage social transformation for girls. They must themselves be, and help young females to be, critically aware of their society’s norms that include an understanding of patriarchy and how and why females have been traditionally relegated to a secondary position
within society. They must help female students to challenge accepted gender roles. In this vein, UNICEF has noticed that the greater the presence of female teachers, the higher the female student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates. UNICEF has also noted that the better the amount of education the female teachers received, the more likely that they will be effective teachers with increased student learning.

1.2. Socio-Economic Constraints

These constraints concern, on one hand, the economic and the financial conditions that deprive the rural areas, and on the other hand, the disparities and the social stratification characterizing the rural context.

As previously mentioned, many factors have an influence on girls’ educational opportunities. However, poverty is the main reason why families either fail to enrol their girls in schools or withdraw them prematurely from primary school. Thus, family socio-economic status is often regarded as an influential factor affecting school achievement. It is commonly assumed that children of the middle and upper classes achieve better in school than do classmates who are economically less fortunate.

Families with few resources may select boys to get an education at the expense of girls. Girls are often considered as a source of household work that will leave their families upon marriage and become part of the work force of another family. Boys, on the other hand, are expected to support their families of origin when they become adults. When this is the case, it is economically sounder to invest in the education of boys than that of girls, particularly where money for education and basic necessities is scarce. Therefore, and as stated by the study on the schooling of girls in five provinces of Morocco (2012), the high cost represents the major obstacle that occupies the first rank among the constraints related to schooling, (84.5%) to the weak access to school and (81.5%) to the dropping out. Thus, the economic factor significantly elucidates the work of children belonging to the disadvantaged categories. In fact, those children take part as a human capital in the domestic production, either in the household, the care and the education of little children (for girls); or in the field work (for boys).

However, research into the constraints to girls’ schooling explains the persistence of gender gaps. Girls in poor households are particularly likely to miss out on schooling because of
the perceived and actual costs to households of girls’ schooling. These costs are both direct (e.g. fees books, pencils, paper, required clothing, transport) and opportunity costs. For example, data from Morocco reveals that reasons for non-attendance differ by gender, and that poverty was more likely to be a constraint for girls. Poverty was found to be a reason for non-attendance for 15.8 percent of girls, but only 8.9 percent of boys. In the poorest expenditure group, girls were much less likely to attend school with 48.5 percent non-attendance for girls versus 22 percent of boys (World Bank 1994, cited in Baden 1995b).

1.3. Environmental Constraints

Parents are often very concerned about a daughter’s safety and the preservation of traditions such as male-female segregation, and therefore, attention needs to be paid to the physical environment in which girls are educated. In Moroccan rural areas, especially in mountainous regions, schools are not available and if so, they are not accessible as the children have to walk long distances before reaching the school, a fact which does not encourage parents to send their daughters since it involves many moral and physical risks (Belarbi, 1992). Given this situation, distance to school, safety of access routes used by girls, sanitation arrangements, security and seclusion of school buildings are all important factors influencing parental decisions whether to send a girl to school or to keep her at home. Physical inputs such as the supply of water pumps and suitably designed latrines can be key elements in improving girl’s basic education. Researches in Morocco undertake as part of a project to promote girl’s education highlights conditions that impact access, retention and attainment by girls. So, the distance of school from the community is particularly important. However, girls are more likely to enrol in schools less than a mile from home. Where intermediate schools are less than 10 miles from the community, enrolment in primary schools also increases. Where primary schools have water, electricity and latrines, girls’ attendance is higher by 11 percent (Spratt, 1992). In this situation, girls are the most negatively affected about schooling than the other categories of the rural population because of their penalized social situation.

A gender perspective on education suggests attention to the content and value of what schools teach and the kind of environments they provide for girls, not just whether girls attend school or not. Girls’ sense of second class citizenship may be reinforced by the school
environment, where the curriculum or teacher attitudes perpetuate sexist stereotypes, or where there is a lack of female role models (Womankind 1995).

1.4. Socio-Cultural Constraints

The superstructures that include values, mentalities, or culture in general are characterized by resistance to change and a high capacity to fight against the new values. Cultural elements are implemented in the social body thanks to mechanisms allowing their reproduction. This ensures their capacity for resistance, their self-renewal and their striving against factors that can block them. This situation applies notably to the problematic and the feminine question. At the present time, through woman’s crucial participation in the active life and her relative emancipation, there is still the persistence of the traditional beliefs and thoughts. Those beliefs contrast woman’s autonomy and gender equality, particularly in the marginalized and rural areas.

Thus, under the effect of ignorance, poverty and marginalization, those cultural elements hold back the schooling of girls. In this respect, the parents’ attitude towards mixed teaching environments, the presence of male teachers, the acquisition of the values that challenge rural traditional values, the conception of the social role and the future of girls, etc. are extremely negative. All these cultural elements determine the opportunities of girls and their rights to education. Stromquist (1990) argues that traditional societies are, for the most part, sexist in the way girls and women are treated. This treatment affects many dimensions of their lives that school texts strengthen traditional sex-role stereotypes, and that these factors cumulatively result in continued female subordination and denied access to education in male-dominated societies (Wagner 1993).

Obviously, prevailing cultural values and norms appear to have a great impact on the female education’s state. Many parents in rural areas lack interest or are openly hostile to the formal education of their daughters for reasons related to social and religious norms in general and to marriage prospects in particular. The opinion is still widespread that education spoils a girls’ character and undermines her willingness to fulfill her traditional role properly. Early marriage and the importance of preserving a girls’ good reputation lead to extensive girls’ withdrawal from school at puberty, especially if they attend co-educational institutions.
Research on parental attitudes towards female and male education, however, suggests that the education of males is more highly valued than that of females. Marriage and motherhood are envisaged as the eventual girls’ ‘career’ in all social classes, and by the time they are teenagers, girls themselves see their future in this way, whereas boys stress on careers and work but rarely mention marriage or children. Sharpe (1976) argues that many parents stated explicitly that education was ‘not important’ for girls. Boys were constantly urged to study, work, or ‘do well’ often in relation to a specific career while the common attitude towards girls’ education was a passive one. On a wider level, parents bring their daughters up to be protected and dependent: ‘a girl is seldom given the opportunity to test, develop, and assess her abilities for herself, and is unconfident of doing things alone.’ (Garett, 1997)

Similarly, in a study undertaken in Northern Morocco, Bourqia (1996) reports that rural people laugh when asked why their daughters do not go to school. There are two main types of response. The first emphasizes that education is irrelevant to the efficient performance of the wives’ and mothers’ roles, and even that of daughters’; she makes bread, she cooks, she holds children on her back. There is no point in a girl’s staying at school if her mother needs her help in these chores at home. The second is a proud statement of fact, “we don’t send our girls to school”. It is correspondent to seclusion for preserving family honor intact. Schools, then, are seen as a corrupting influence, giving access to the public sphere. In Sadiqi’s terms, “lack of schools only partially explains Moroccan women’s illiteracy. Another important factor is men’s attitude in a patriarchal society: men are generally reticent to encourage women’s literacy as the latter is synonymous to ‘emancipation’ which is believed to make women less compliant and more independent. Illiteracy is a powerful means of perpetuating the gender gap between women and men, as well as a means to subdue women.” (Sadiqi, 1999)

1.5. The Vicious Circle of Illiteracy

One factor that is often overlooked is the vicious circle of illiteracy. An illiterate mother is far less likely to send her daughters to school. A traditional culture that sets little value on girls’ education is least embarking upon daughters’ education or adult literacy.

A combination of mutually reinforcing customs, traditions and attitudes places greater value on males than females. Moreover, improved employment opportunities and earning-power as a result of educational opportunities can lead to greater independence for women, which may
be threatening to men’s sense of superiority, control, and conviction about the status of men and women in society. Thus, these attitudes act as a restraint to women’s educational opportunities. This intricate reality requires a planning conception based on scientific foundations. It needs a planning that should be able to evaluate the determinants, the dimensions and the typology of the social demand on education in the rural area.

Morocco’s High Commissioner for Planning Ahmed Lahlimi revealed statistics from the 2014 census, which show that illiteracy dropped to 32 percent, compared to 42 percent ten years ago. Lahlimi stated that illiteracy rate in Morocco is more common in adults over 50 years old at 61.1 percent, but drops to 3.7 percent for children who are less than 15 years old. According to the same source, illiteracy rate decreased by 18.7 percent in 2014, and the number of illiterate people decreased to 8.6 million people in comparison to 10.2 million in 2004. In rural areas illiteracy is still high at 41.7 percent, in comparison to 22.2 percent in urban areas. The illiteracy rate among women (41.9 per cent) is higher than that of young men, 22.1 percent, respectively. The results show that illiteracy in rural areas dropped proportionately, although it still exists at a high percentage in comparison to urban areas. In rural areas, illiteracy dropped by 21.2 percent while in urban areas it dropped by 6.9 percent. Men represent 17.5 percent of the drop, while women represent 14.6 percent. (Haut Commissariat of Planning, 2014)

In this connection, success in getting girls to schools and keeping them there requires a partnership between government, the private sector, and the community. Government policy and practice directly impact educational access. Keeping girls in school requires a society where girls are encouraged to participate and excel; where the curriculum is relevant to their daily lives; and where they participate fully in learning (USAID, 1998). Experience worldwide indicates that an effective strategy to improve educational access and quality for girls is to form partnerships with parents, teachers, the private sector and NGOs. Governments have a key role to play because support is needed for teachers, schools, and quality-enhancing inputs such as learning materials.

It was indicated that in almost every country where illiteracy rates are high, illiterate women are more likely to represent the majority. These two facts when combined, show that women have been throughout time, systematically marginalized from educational and learning opportunities right from early childhood. Thus, if large-scale educational activities and strategies in their favour are not endorsed, it is unlikely that a situation of equality will not be achieved.
This in turn will limit women’s participation and contribution to the social, political and economic development of society.

Thus, by making education available to all members of society, Morocco can create a larger and more skilled labor force. These skills are driving force behind technological and economic advancement. Also, by becoming part of the labor force, women will be able to add to their family’s income, allowing many families to raise their standard of living. These facts alone are an incentive for the Moroccan government to create a national policy which will overcome illiteracy. In Morocco, the most significant public policies regarding gender equality in education are the Charter for Education and Training (2000) and the Najah Emergency Plan (2006), which were instituted to accelerate the attainment of universal education and to eliminate gender disparities. Morocco’s charter for Education and Training (2000) focused on providing universal education and gradually making it compulsory in order to eliminate gender disparities, even in rural areas, which suffer from the highest rates of gender disparity; it also seeks to fight illiteracy, improve the quality of education, and improve schools’ infrastructure. To achieve these objectives, the Charter implemented institutional, socio-cultural and financial measures. On the other hand, the Najah Emergency Plan (2006), a national strategy, was adopted to accelerate the implementation of the Charter and to achieve its goals. Mainstreaming gender in education is one of the main objectives of the strategy. The plan also intended to build 600 boarding schools, provide 650 school buses, and increase the number of scholarships and canteens eight-fold, allowing more girls to go to schools. As such, primary school populations went from 3.878.640 in 2007-2008 to 4.030.142 in 2013-2014 and school enrolment of children 6 to 11 years old went from 84.6% (80.6% for girls) in 2000 to 97.5% (96.3% for girls) in 2010-2011 and (99.1% for girls) in 2013-2014. These results reflect the efforts deployed to promote primary education and improve education opportunities in this cycle in urban as well as rural areas, while focusing on rural girls that have been so far the most disadvantaged. (Report, Morocco 2011)

Therefore, during 2007-2008 to 2013-2014 period, enrolment opportunities have been improved through the creation of 455 primary schools, i.e. almost 2.742 new classrooms, in addition to the program on the establishment of community-based schools in rural areas. Community-based schools as a new concept in the implementation of the compulsory and universal primary education in rural areas, is defined as a public school with an attractive
education space with boarding facilities to provide accommodation and meals to students, accommodation for teachers as well as other vital services for a good education. Such schools would be quite open to their environment and their management is usually provided by highly engaged civil society actors. (Report, Morocco 2011)

To overcome socio-economic and geographic obstacles that impede access to compulsory education, promote learners’ retention, and support students of underprivileged social backgrounds, an integrated action plan was set up with a number of social support services, and that has continuously increased the number of beneficiaries. From a financial perspective, the annual budget allocated to this action plan increased from 800 million Dirhams in 2008-2009 to 1.9 billion Dirhams in 2011-2012. Therefore, during the academic year 2013-2014, 3,230,946 students have benefited from school bags and stationary under the Royal Initiative “one million school bags”. 1,212,628 students benefited from school canteen services and 2,114 students from school transportation services. One of the innovative programs of the social support strategy, with a positive impact on enrolment and retention rates, is the “Tayssir” program. It provides a direct and conditional financial support to needy families in rural areas; the aim is to improve the attendance rate in class and reduce wastages. The total number of beneficiaries out of this program was 88,000 students in 2008-2009 and 730,000 students in 2011-2012, i.e. a growth rate of 730%. The impact of this mechanism on the efficiency of the education system is quite significant. It is an improvement of the enrolment rate of 6.5% of gender parity (equal access to boys and girls) of 2 points, and a reduction of drop-outs by 1.5 points during the same period. (Report, Morocco 2011). Admittedly, a progress has been made in recent years in the indicators of gender parity in access to different levels of education and training; however, this progress would be more beneficial if it is followed up on and consolidated by improving equity in retention and success.

However, the efforts made by both the governmental institutions and the non-governmental organizations, the democratization of education is still far from being a reality in a number of areas in Morocco. The persistence of illiteracy which is “regarded as one of the worst social problems of our time and a major challenge to the international community” (UNESCO, 1993) is one of the most serious aspects of the inequalities which characterize Morocco. Therefore, the elimination of illiteracy presupposes a firm political will resulting in the
mobilization of all available resources. It likewise means that the struggle against this phenomenon must be conducted on two fronts: the development and renewal of primary education.

In short, to improve human development, an active political leadership is required. Therefore, firm and important decisions should be taken to develop and implement ambitious and well designed literacy programs.

A sound national plan should be designed to eradicate illiteracy through efficient coordination between various Ministries and other concerned departments and institutions.

A national observatory needs to be set up to follow the status of illiteracy in society, and to conduct basic research and fieldwork, executed by experts to develop effective strategies and pedagogical methods. Plans for practical and successful programs need to be designed to meet the needs of heterogeneous groups of individuals or communities. Therefore, target populations should be properly defined to achieve the desired results, and to provide adequate evaluation.

Accurate, reliable and meaningful literacy statistics are also essential to successful literacy campaigns, for targeting communities and subpopulation in need, for targeting skill areas in need of development, and for evaluating the results of the campaigns. Sound literacy statistics are critical to the planning of effective development programs and the judicious use of literacy materials in health and family planning, agricultural extension, small-business development, and credit activities.

Field studies about the causes of drop out especially among girls in the rural areas and about the traditions hindering women’s education and which constitute serious obstacles to the elimination of women’s illiteracy.

The necessity of studying the cultural and geographical specificities of each region to better define the contents and the instructional means to be adopted.

The textbooks and the different didactic means need to be redesigned, to take into account the different needs of the target categories, especially girls. New textbooks with new effective contents and methods need to be adopted to achieve the targeted aims.
Conclusion

Importantly, women’s education is not only the key to development, but also for achieving peace, prosperity, harmony and co-operation in the society. Literacy and other education programs for women, therefore, assume the highest importance in the planning for development of any nation. Hence, the higher the level of education of women, the faster would be the development process. As a matter of fact, women’s education needs to be strengthened to empower them, to play an active role as partner in the development process.

In short, until we live in a world where the decision makers value the importance of education, and the interrelationships between care-taking, relationships, economics, power dynamics, health, culture, disabilities, generational transfer of skills, and literacy, women will continue to lag behind men in their literacy skills and generations of children will be born in communities where low literacy is an issue. Only when systems that oppress women on the basis of gender are abolished, women and the families they are responsible for will continue to face restrictions that keep them poor, with no access to the literacy skills to empower them and make them independent and financially secure. Because women and children make up the majority of the world’s population, it makes sense to work to end the obstacles that would hold them back from achieving economic, physical and emotional health and growth. It is not just a societal issue it is also a humanitarian issue.

References


Gender Differences of Ukrainian Eighth Graders in Matters Related to Education Obtained From TIMSS-2011 Results

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Abstract

This study examines the answers of Ukrainian TIMSS-2011 participants to a Student Questionnaire in order to find the differences between boys and girls in matters related to Math and Science education. Three subsets of answers (attributes) were analyzed according to three subtopics: students’ attitude toward learning and school subjects; relationships with parents; things happened to students at school. Students’ answers on these attributes were used for training machine classifiers to obtain gender patterns in form of decision rules and partial decision trees. It is found that largest difference among girls and boys appear in answers to the questions center around talking about their schoolwork with their parents, and liking the job using some school learning subject. The predictive power of each pattern were calculated and interpreted.

Keywords: gender in education, educational data mining, large-scale study, TIMSS.

Introduction

Large-scale studies in the form of tests of students’ learning achievements complemented with questionnaires covering contextual variables are good source for obtaining statistically reliable data about personalities of interest. Gender differences are permanently important aspect of such studies. See, for example, Baye and Monseur (2016) for general analysis of gender differences in variability and extreme scores in an international context based on twelve databases from IEA and PISA. TIMSS refers to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, dedicated to improving teaching and learning in mathematics and science. First conducted in 1995, TIMSS reports every four years on the achievement of fourth and eighth grade students. The 63 countries and 14 benchmarking entities took part in TIMSS 2011. Each participated student took tests in Math and Science. Also students, their teachers, and school principals answered the questionnaires on educational contexts such as home environment support; students' backgrounds and attitudes; features of the Math and Science curriculum;
teachers' education and training; classroom characteristics and activities; school contexts for learning and instruction.

Ukraine took part in the Study only in 2007 and 2011, with only 8th graders participated in 2011. 3378 8th graders participated in testing and interviewing. As follow from the official TIMSS-2011 report, on average across the all eighth grade Math test participants, boys had higher achievement than girls in number but girls had higher achievement in algebra, geometry, and data and chance. In Ukraine, boys outperformed girls in number, the differences in other content domains is not significant. Across the eighth grade countries, girls outperformed boys on average in both the knowing and reasoning cognitive domains. As for Ukraine, there boys significantly outperformed girls in applying. Gender differences in science achievement at the eighth grade were larger, on average, than at the fourth grade, with the difference favoring girls (international average: 480 vs. 474). Across the countries, girls outperformed boys in Biology and Chemistry, but boys had higher achievement in Earth Science. As for Ukraine, boys outperformed girls in Earth Science as well, but also in Physics. There is no significant difference in Biology and Chemistry. It is interesting that across participant countries girls performed better than boys in all cognitive domains, whereas no significant differences were found for Ukraine. All mentioned data are available in the PIRLS and TIMSS internet site.

In this article, we analyzed the answers of Ukrainian TIMSS participants to a Student Questionnaire in order to find the differences between boys and girls in matters related to Math and Science education. We were looking for patterns in data, not interpreted them or made suggestions. But we did it in manner somewhat different from traditional statistical analysis. Namely, we used technology connected to fashionable term Big Data. This technology is so called Data Mining.

Data Mining is a way to teach machine to discover patterns in raw data. First, computer builds the model based on full data on objects of interesting (so-called training sample). These models can be used later whether to explain data or for predicting. For a detailed description of the methods and algorithms of Data Mining as well as WEKA software, which we used for the analysis, see book of I. Witten, F. Eibe, and M. Hall (2011). A good overview of research in the field of Educational Data Mining can be found in the article of C. Romero and S. Ventura (2010). The main task of Data Mining is building classifiers. For example, we can build the
model to recognize for which class, “boy” or “girl”, belongs given person, if it attributes (answers on the questions of questionnaire in our case) are known. Usually the built model has the form of set of “If... than...” rules, or so called, or partial decision tree, or even mathematical formula. A decision tree is a graph that uses a branching method to illustrate every possible outcome of a decision. If the decision (tree root) is gender identity of the person and leaves of tree are attributes, then motion along tree branches from leaves to root helps to understand for which sets of attributes the difference between boys and girls is the largest. The main characteristic of accuracy of the rule or tree prediction is the number of persons that it predicts correctly, expressed as a proportion of all persons to which it applies. The WEKA Data Mining computer system was used for pattern obtaining and analysis.

Analysis

As usual, some preparation work was done first manually. Set of 68 potentially sensitive to gender questionnaire items (attributes) was chosen and then reduced to 17 ones best useful for predicting gender classes, using Attribute Selection tool of WEKA. Dimensionality reduction yields a more compact and therefore easily interpretable representation of the target pattern, focusing on the most relevant variables.

Students’ answers on these attributes were used for training machine classifiers to obtain gender patterns in form of rules and partial decision trees. First, so-called One-rule algorithm has helped us to identify the most distinctive attribute in terms of differences between gender classes. It turned out answers to question “How often you talk about school works with parents?”. The WEKA One-rule output was as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often you talk about school works with parents?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVERYDAY OR ALMOST EVERYDAY</td>
<td>-&gt; GIRL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMITTED OR INVALID</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2013/3375 instances correct)
Correctly classified instances 2013 59.6444 %
Incorrectly classified instances 1362 40.3556 %
So if a person claimed that she talks about school works with parents everyday or almost everyday, then it was likely that she was a girl. All other answers, including missed ones, point to a boy.

Decision tree, obtained using J48 (modification of known C4.5) algorithm for selected 17 attributes and reduced by “minimum 300 instances (persons) per leaf” option, is in text form as follows:

| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER: BOY (137.0/48.0) |
| Would like job using physics = DISAGREE: GIRL (1283.0/447.0) |
| Would like job using physics = AGREE: BOY (625.0/303.0) |
| Would like job using physics = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (17.0/4.0) |
| Would like job using physics = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (3.0/1.0) |

| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = EVERY DAY OR ALMOST EVERYDAY |
| Would like job using physics = DISAGREE: GIRL (1283.0/447.0) |
| Would like job using physics = AGREE: BOY (625.0/303.0) |
| Would like job using physics = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (17.0/4.0) |
| Would like job using physics = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (3.0/1.0) |

| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK |
| Would like job using physics = DISAGREE |
| Students like learning biology = LIKE LEARNING BIOLOGY: GIRL (302.0/142.0) |
| Students like learning biology = SOMEWHAT LIKE LEARNING BIOLOGY: BOY (300.0/144.0) |
| Students like learning biology = DO NOT LIKE LEARNING BIOLOGY: BOY (88.0/25.0) |
| Students like learning biology = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (3.0/1.0) |
| StudentsLikeLearningBiology = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (2.0) |
| WouldLikeJobUsingPhysics = AGREE: BOY (326.0/86.0) |
| WouldLikeJobUsingPhysics = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (16.0/5.0) |
| WouldLikeJobUsingPhysics = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (2.0) |

| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH: BOY (234.0/100.0) |
| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (37.0/9.0) |

In the table above each vertical bar at the beginning of the statement means a new branch of the decision tree. Each branch has the format: statement = degree of consent: class prediction.

This example of tree under strict limit on the number of objects per leaf allows seeing the main variables, which split up the boys and girls in their answers to the questionnaire. More lenient restrictions allow to get a more detailed tree with the inclusion of a larger number of attributes.

Also three subsets of attributes were analyzed according to three subtopics: (1) students’ attitude toward learning and school subjects; (2) relationships with parents; (3) things happened to students at school.

It was found that the best predictive regarding gender class is the answer to the question number 11.b of the questionnaire: most often girls talk about their schoolwork with their parents.
every day or almost every day, while boys do it less often. About 60% of Ukrainian 8th graders are classified correctly by this rule. It is important to remember that attributes were designed around students’ achievement in Math and Science.

Partial decision trees produce the set of 14 main patterns that describe gender classes more accurate (more than 62% of correctly classified students). For example, if some person talks about school works with parents once or twice a week and that person would like a job using physics, than it probably is a boy. 326 out of 3378 survey participants was answered so, and only 86 of them were classified incorrectly by the model.

The attribute subset on students’ attitude toward learning and school subjects produces differential patterns such as follows: boys would like a job that involves using physics; boys value learning mathematics; girls like learning biology and would like a job that involves using biology; girls do not value learning physics and somewhat value learning mathematics. The “would like a job that involves using physics” statement is most decisive here.

The attribute subsets on other two subtopics produces the main distinctive statements toward gender as follow: I often talk about school works with parents (2); I was left out of games or activities by other students (3). Also the sets of more complex patterns on each subtopic were obtained. The predictive power of each pattern were calculated and interpreted.

Conclusions

Machine learning models such as set of rules or decision trees allows obtaining patterns from raw data easy to interpret. In our case, we got some patterns that allow seeing gender differences in Ukrainian 8th graders responses to the TIMSS Questionnaire. Overall, the model accuracy shows that these differences are not significant. Most likely, they are explained by the traditions of upbringing of children of different genders and early orientation in “male” and “female” activities in family and school.
References


“Girl Power” in Education: The Case of High School Students in El Jadida

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Abstract

Education today is increasingly being feminized with girls accounting for the large majority of the student population at all levels. This feminization is happening not only in terms of number of girls but also in terms of performance. The present paper reports on a comparative study that looked into the differences between girls’ achievements and boys’ achievements in high education. More specifically, the paper explores gender differences in written linguistic proficiency by analyzing a sample of high school students’ pieces of writing in English. The research sample consisted of 130 high school students in the city of El Jadida, 59 males and 71 females. Using Hunt’s T-units as a method of language measurement, the paper outlines gender differences in the sample in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity. Results showed that girls significantly outperformed boys in different aspects of writing, thereby suggesting a reversal of gender inequality. However, care must be taken so that these differences which favor girls are not misinterpreted in such a way as to reproduce traditional gender inequalities in educational institutions (for instance, some people are advancing the idea that boys are differently, not deficiently, literate). In light of the results, the paper ends with recommendations for justice to be done to female students as well as for the adoption of best classroom management practices that maximise all students’ achievements.

Key words: gender, achievement, written competence.

1. Introduction

Gender inequality has been defined as unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender, attributed to differences in socially constructed gender roles. In this context, Beauvoir (1973, p. 301) says that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. This statement distinguished between sex, the anatomically given aspect of the female body, and gender, the culturally acquired aspect of the female body or the acculturation process that the body of the female undergoes.
In schools, there has been a long-standing gender gap with boys being favoured over girls. For instance, at the beginning of the previous century, girls couldn’t go to school or couldn’t continue their schooling in case they went to school as priority always went to boys when school fees were short. Parents reasoned that girls were expected to marry and give birth to children while boys were expected to become breadwinners. Even when both sexes went to school, it was pronounced that boys were more intelligent and fared better than girls in different subjects.

The first wave of feminism was, therefore, focused on eliminating these sorts of gaps besides the suffrage right. With time, efforts of the proponents of women’s rights did bear fruit, and tremendous progress has been made since the first wave; the traditional gap closed and a discourse of equality was launched that led to more girls going to school. Nowadays, education is being feminized not only in terms of number of girls going to school, but also and mainly in terms of increased performance on the part of girls.

In Morocco, too, more girls are going to school today than ever before. In spite of the fact that the Gender Parity Index still shows a slight favoritism for boys in school enrolments (in 2012 for instance, the index was 0.91 meaning that more boys than girls were being enrolled in school), higher repetition and dropout rates among boys lead to higher numbers of girls in advanced stages of education, namely in high and higher education.

Thus, a rapid increase in female educational attainment has become a striking trend in education in the latest decades. Such a discourse of girls’ increased achievements is being pitted against another discourse of boys’ underachievement. Girls’ effortful learning and less disruptive behavior have been designated as key factors in girls’ increased performance while boys’ underachievement has been attributed mainly to their disruptive behaviour and ‘anti-school culture’. Owing to this female advantage in school achievements, gender is being recognized as a factor in determining student performance besides other traditionally decisive factors like motivation and ability.

Against this backdrop, the present study is a contribution to the debate on gender equality/inequality in educational achievements. The paper is motivated by the observation that girls are becoming more successful in schools, thus fueling a discourse of girl power and problematizing traditional feminist discourses of gender inequality. This observation triggered
our curiosity to conduct the present study and find out whether the observation has a physical reality and girls are really achieving today in such a way as to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

More specifically, the study aims to explore gender differences in school achievements in high school with a view to documenting the latest gender trends in education. It wishes to clearly determine whether the traditional disparities in school performance between boys and girls persist, or the stereotypical superiority of boys no longer holds. In particular, it addresses the following research questions:

1. Is there a gender gap in students’ writing ability (and in favour of whom)?
2. Is the difference statistically significant?
3. Do male and female students perceive each other’s abilities similarly?

2. Theoretical framework

The present study is situated within modernization theory and value change. The theory refers to a model of a progressive transition from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘modern’ society characterized by new concepts of and new ways of thinking about men and women. It is used to explain the process of modernization and value change within societies. As modernization takes hold, traditional beliefs, values, cultural traits and traditional conceptions of gender roles are increasingly being replaced with newer, more revolutionary ones, with the objective of creating a de-gendered, more equity-based world.

Women’s movement organisations have been playing an important role in this shift. They have had a big impact on attitudes and traditional perceptions about the abilities of men and women. For instance, the concepts of gender and sex are decreasingly being used interchangeably thanks to the work of women’s movements. Increasingly, it is being explained that while sex is anatomy, gender is socialized behaviours prescribed for society’s members based on their sex. As a result of these efforts, women are no longer viewed as exclusively the homemakers; they are increasingly assuming the role of breadwinners working side by side with men.

Modernization is also a process of socio-cultural transformation in the sense that education plays an important role in it. Education is viewed as a decisive tool which helps in the
diffusion of the values of modernization, namely, equality, freedom, individuality, and independence. Thus, education and modernization are closely linked and they affect each other in equal ways.

As the world is being interconnected in a way unprecedented before, modernization theory is shaping the world at large. Thus, the pace of change in Morocco is determined not only at a national level but also globally as we find ourselves required to catch up with the rest of the world and keep up with what is happening elsewhere. Thus, modernization theory and value change are exerting much influence in our society particularly in the educational sphere which also provides individuals with the tools of change.

Within the modernization framework, there is no denying the fact that people’s attitudes, views and behaviours regarding women are being changed. Therefore, more and more parents are sending their daughters to school, and are giving equal support and encouragement to their boys and daughters for all of their school work and aspirations for their future. Likewise, women are increasingly participating in the paid workforce, traditional family units are being broken up, and sex roles are being transformed in such a way that people are being familiar with working moms and stay-at-home dads. Hence, traditional fixed roles are fading away, and girls are constructing their identities in newer terms.

Nowhere are these social transformations more evident than in the educational sphere. Girls have managed to close many of the gender gaps in subject choice. For instance, they are now opting for science and mathematics subjects, previously monopolised by males. Besides, while gender parity is being achieved at the level of enrolment, new gender gaps are being opened up in terms of achievement patterns, with girls outperforming boys now in most school subjects, fueling a discourse of girl power in education. The high number of female teachers in schools plays an important role in this new trend as they serve as positive role models for the girls to follow.

3. Literature review

“Gender gaps in education” is an old issue. Traditionally, girls have suffered from a discourse of inequality with boys. On the basis of this discourse, they could not go to school or stay at school when they went to it. They have also being designated as less intelligent than boys.
According to Lips (1997), prior to the 20th century, it was a commonly held view that men were intellectually superior to women.

However, a number of countries, including Morocco, have made tremendous progress since then. Gender disparities are not only narrowing in many parts of the world, but turning in favour of girls. According to Lips (1997), there are no overall differences now in educational achievement, though commonly held myths about gender continue to make girls less able in at least some cognitive tasks. However, different studies have been conducted which proved that girls are not inferior to boys. On the contrary, most studies showed that girls are doing better than boys in schools.

Hyde (2005) performed 46 meta-analyses, and found that 78% of effect sizes for differences were in the small or close-to-zero range. Only few main differences between the two sexes appeared in the studies analysed. Further, these small differences fluctuated with age, growing smaller or larger at different times in life. Thus, Hyde concluded that there were more similarities than differences between the two sexes. On the basis of this observation, she developed her famous “Gender Similarities Hypothesis” according to which boys and girls are more alike than different on most psychological variables.

In a subsequent study, Hyde, Lindberg, Linn, Ellis, and Williams (2008) investigated large amounts of data (7 million students). Consistent with the findings of the previous study, the researchers reported again that traditional gender differences in math performance no longer hold, with the mean for gender differences being trivial (d = -0.05). As a result, the researchers called for thoughts on gender gaps to be revised in such a way as to do justice to girls.

In contrast to the findings of the studies by Hyde (2005) and Hyde et al (2008) which proved absence of gender differences in most school subjects, other studies showed gender differences but in favour of girls. In point of fact, stable female advantages were reported in most courses by different researchers. For instance, Fergusson and Horwood (1997) examined gender differences in educational outcomes from school entry to age 18. They looked at the results of standardized testing, teacher ratings of student performance, and the final outcomes measured by school certificate success. Three major conclusions were evident: i) in all educational stages, males achieved less than females. Gender differences were evident in the results of standardised testing, teacher ratings of school performance and in the school leaving outcomes of the
participants of the study. ii) These gender differences in educational achievement could not be explained by gender differences in intelligence since boys and girls had very similar IQ test scores. iii) There were gender related differences in classroom behaviours with males being more prone to disruptive and inattentive classroom behaviours. Thus, the cause for male underachievement was not low IQs but ill behaviour in classrooms.

Another study which also proved female advantages but this time exclusively in writing was conducted by Kanaris (1997). In particular, Kanaris (1999) looked closely at differences in writing between boys and girls and noted that girls wrote longer more complex texts that contained more subordinate clauses and a wider range of adjectives. Kanaris argued, therefore, that girls were more skilled both at word and text level. She also noted the existence of an identifiable gender characteristic in writing which would, she says, develop further in future.

Kenney-Benson, Pomerantz, Ryan, and Patrick (2006) have drawn attention to the fact that girls are surpassing boys in school grades even in stereotypically masculine subject areas like maths and science. Interestingly, these researchers went beyond documenting girls’ academic excellence to investigate causes for it. In particular, they examined how each sex approaches school work. The main variables were achievement goals, classroom behaviour, learning strategies, and self-efficacy. The findings showed that girls were more likely than boys to hold mastery over performance goals and to refrain from disruptive classroom behaviour. Mastery goals emphasise understanding the material, whereas performance goals emphasise marks. Hence, learning strategies accounted for girls’ advantages in terms of grades.

Jones and Myhill (2007) explored gender differences and similarities in linguistic competence in writing. Based on the results of a large-scale analysis of the linguistic characteristics of secondary-aged writers, the researchers reported the existence of evidence, though small, which supports the argument that boys and girls are differently literate. They noted small statistically significant differences at sentence level and at text level. The differences were considerably fewer than those identified by achievement level which showed that girls outperformed boys.

Similarly, Geisler and Pardiwalla (2010) documented girls’ academic advantages for girls in all courses and in all stages of education. The researchers reported that boys’
underachievement and underparticipation at both primary and secondary levels was well established. They also noted higher dropout rates, higher levels of truancy, and greater discipline problems among boys than among girls, which could account for boys’ lagging performance.

In another meta-analysis which spanned data from 1914 to 2011 and which evaluated gender differences in a wide variety of subjects, Voyer and Voyer (2014) reported a stable female advantage extending to all school subjects (language, math, science, ...). The researchers have also noted that this female advantage “seems to be a well-kept secret considering how little attention it has received as a global phenomenon” (p. 1191). According to the researchers, although the reported gender differences would be classified as small based on Cohen’s (1988) categorization of effect sizes (the values were kept within 0.2 indicating a small effect size), they were so consistent that they should not be ignored.

Along the same lines, Reynolds, Scheiber, Hajovsky, Schwartz, and Kaufman (2015) confirmed females’ increased performance compared with boys. Using a large, nationally stratified sample of children and adolescents, the researchers investigated gender differences in writing and concluded that writing was an academic subject that may be an exception to Hyde’s similarity hypothesis. They reported that girls outperformed boys, scoring higher mainly on spelling and written expression, with effect sizes inconsistent with the gender similarities hypothesis.

4. Method

The present study follows an observational exploratory design. Exploratory research refers to research conducted to explore, clarify and define the nature of a phenomenon. The objective of this study is to explore gender differences in writing, and if they are statistically significant. Another objective is to explore how each sex perceives the other sex’s abilities in writing.

4.1. Setting and participants

The study was conducted in April 2015 in three different high schools all located within the province of El Jadida. The participants were 130 students in their first year at high school distributed between 59 boys and 71 girls. Their age ranges between 16 and 19. The slightly higher number of girls reflects the tendency of girls to participate in studies more readily than
boys, but it does not affect the reliability of the conclusions as group means are calculated separately. Following is a brief overview of the setting and participants:

**Table 1: Overview of the participants and participating schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>N. of boys</th>
<th>N. of girls</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 November</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChouaibDoukkali</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoulayAbdella</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of students</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.2. Research instruments**

Data collection tools consisted of a proficiency test (a free writing task) in addition to a question regarding the participants’ views about students’ abilities in writing. The proficiency test was responsible for identifying differences between boys and girls in writing as it provides concrete realisations regarding what learners can do in their language productions, whereas the question was in charge of determining the way each sex views the other sex. The question required the participants to nominate students who are good at the writing skill.

**4.3. Data analysis method**

It is widely believed that L2 writing proficiency constructs are multi-componential in nature, and that the notions of complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) can satisfactorily capture their principal dimensions (e.g. Skehan, 1998; Ortega, 2003; Ellis, 2003, 2008). These dimensions are believed to best describe language performance in general and determine variation among students. They are most frequently used as dependent variables to assess variation with respect to independent variables such as attained level of acquisition or the features of a language task. Thus, we adopted CAF dimensions to analyse students’ written pieces in this study. To reduce the subjectivity usually associated with holistic ratings, the present study used a more objective measure, namely, Hunt’s T-units (1966).

To measure CAF constructs in students’ writing, we used Hunts’ T units defined as one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it (Hunt, 1966). According to Hunt, the length of a T-unit determines the cognitive development of a learner, thereby providing a satisfactory and stable index of language development. Further, T-units have been found to be more reliable indicators of language measurement. They have proved to be better than scoring rubrics which showed their subjectivity as rarely would two scorers agree on one mark for a
single test. T-units involve a fairly high degree of inter-rater reliability with regard to identification of units and unit boundaries and thus are more reliable; different scorers would rarely produce different analyses. The following table describes how CAF dimensions were operationalized in the study:

Table 2: Operationalisation of CAF measures adopted in the analysis of students’ written products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total number of words</td>
<td>number of error-free T-units</td>
<td>mean number of words per T-unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total number of T-units</td>
<td>error free T-units per total</td>
<td>mean number of clauses per T-unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number of T-units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obtained data was fed into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to be analysed. Descriptive statistics was used to generate means, percentages and standard deviations. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was used to test for the significance of the differences between boys and girls. This test is the most common form of t-test that helps us know if the difference between two groups is unlikely to have occurred because of random chance in sample selection.

5. Results

The study looked into differences between boys and girls in writing. The first research question addressed the issue of the existence of a gender gap in students’ writing ability, and in case it existed, it was in favor of whom. The following figure presents the results obtained:

Table 3: Results by gender (CAF measures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Standard error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word number</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40,27</td>
<td>7,90</td>
<td>1,02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56,50</td>
<td>10,72</td>
<td>1,27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-unit number</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,37</td>
<td>1,53</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9,14</td>
<td>2,56</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free T-units</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,44</td>
<td>1,82</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4,77</td>
<td>2,85</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free T-unit ratio</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words per T-unit</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,51</td>
<td>1,33</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6,49</td>
<td>1,63</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clauses per T-unit</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,08</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows clearly that girls achieved higher than boys in fluency, represented by word number and T-unit number. The mean obtained by girls was 56.50 compared to only 40.27 by males and 9.14 against 6.37 successively. In accuracy, girls’ superiority was again obvious as they scored 4.77 against 2.44 obtained by males in error-free T-units and .47 against .34 by males in the ratio of error-free T-unit to total number of T-units. In complexity, however, only slight differences emerged with boys scoring 6.51 in words per T-unit and girls obtaining 6.49; similarly, in number of clauses per T-unit, the difference was very slight as girls obtained 1.08 and males scored 1.05.

The second research question addressed the issue of the significance of the differences obtained in the measures of fluency and accuracy. To that end, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the means obtained by girls and the means obtained by boys. There was a significant difference in the scores for males (M=9.15, SD=.24) and the scores for females (M=9.54, SD=.58); t(101)=-4.29, p = .000. The t value is negative indicating that group 2 mean (girls’ mean) is larger than group 1 mean (boys’ mean).

Regarding the third research question, it addressed the issue of how each sex views the other sex’s abilities in writing. To that end, a question was delivered to the participants which asked them to nominate the students who they thought were good at the writing skill. Notwithstanding girls’ superiority in most areas of writing in particular and in language ability in general, answers came inconsistent with students’ grades. 80.85% of the male participants nominated boys only while 71.42% of the female participants nominated girls and boys.

6. Discussion

This study examined gender differences in one particular area, namely writing among high school students in their first year of high school. The findings showed clearly that males were at a disadvantage compared with girls. A comparison of the mean scores showed that girls scored higher in fluency and accuracy but not in complexity. Besides, the difference between the mean of the male group and the mean of the female group has been found to be statistically significant. In complexity, however, there were no differences. Such an absence of gender differences in complexity may be attributed to the factor that students are at a level not yet exposed to complex sentences. Maybe in a more advanced educational stage such as in tertiary education, complexity would also produce itself as an area where girls achieve better than boys.
Another reason may be linked to the nature of the topic which could have prevented students from displaying more complex language in writing.

The findings obtained are consistent with the literature. For instance, Reynolds (2015) also reported female advantages in writing and concluded that even if we accept Hyde’s Gender Similarities Hypothesis (2005), writing would offer itself as an exception. Along the same lines, the study conducted by Voyer and Voyer (2014) not only confirmed female advantages, but also extended them to all school subjects. In data spanning from 1914 to 2011, gender differences in favour of girls were consistent in different school subjects. The findings are also in line with English Proficiency Index, an international test which measures people’s competency in English, according to which Moroccan girls scored 51.21 as compared to 48.17 by boys. Girls were closer to the global average while boys lagged far behind. Now, having documented girls’ academic advantage in writing, the question that comes in order is: “what is the cause of such female increased performance?”

In the absence of tests on intelligence, we cannot claim that boys are less intelligent and we do not think that intelligence is the cause of boys’ underachievement. More potent explanations suggest themselves. One such explanation is general school behavior with high rates of disruptive behaviour and high truancy levels among boys than girls according to the records at the administrations of the schools where the participants of this study belong. Probably male academic achievement would not be less than female academic achievement had boys been as well disciplined as girls. Such an explanation is also empirically based. It has been voiced, for instance, by Fergusson and Horwood (1997) and Kenney-Benson et al (2006). These researchers argue that boys’ inattentive and disruptive behaviours account for their underachievement in school. In turn, Geisler and Pardiwalla (2010) noted a strong correlation between boys’ underachievement and higher levels of truancy and discipline problems.

Another explanation may go to learning styles adopted by the two different sexes. Learning styles are applicable to all course areas and not only to writing, which is why girls are doing better than boys in all academic subjects. According to Kenney-Benson et al. (2006), the learning styles adopted by females make them more mastery-oriented and more attentive in class while being less performance-oriented and less disruptive. Such positive attitudes to school work
are likely to enhance grades as they foster more effortful learning and higher concentration levels.

Another possible explanation is grounded in the theoretical framework within which this study is situated, namely modernisation theory and value change that ensues from it. As girls are receiving more recognition, opportunities, freedom, equality and occupational options, they are striving to show that they are up to the challenges including school performance. Besides, girls are learning to construct their identity in newer, less domestic terms. While increased female participation in the paid workforce, break-up of traditional family units, and transformation of sex roles have a role to play in this shift, education offers the tools of change.

Consequently, female students are highly motivated and more focused on their studies. They are also adopting more positive attitudes to school work. Besides, girls can also be claimed to have higher aspirations than boys; they want to enroll in tertiary education and earn a higher degree while boys, in general, aim for a lower vocational degree or enrolment in the police force. Additionally, the presence of a high rate of female teachers in schools further motivates girls to work hard and have similar occupations.

Regarding the last research question, the findings indicated a peer-perception gap. This means that boys refused to recognize female achievements in school while girls’ answers showed that they recognized boys’ presence although boys were generally performing less well. One possible interpretation of this peer perception gap may be connected with the way boys are socialized. Boys probably have been educated into exercising bias against girls even if girls are high-achievers. This is an extension of female invisibility in society which we may paradoxically also use to explain female academic advantages by advancing the argument that girls’ increased achievements are one way of making themselves visible and one way of resisting traditional gender roles mapped for women.

The peer-perception gap provides us with evidence that there are gender stereotypes impacting on students and young people in general. Although girls are achieving better than boys and are more likely to go on to tertiary education, these advantages are not yet fully recognised by society as they should be and they do not yet fully translate into equality at home in particular and in society in general. Thus, what is happening in schools is an extension of what is happening outside school which underscores that notwithstanding women’s achievements, males
still refuse to acknowledge their skills. It also raises our attention to the fact that the opportunities women are benefiting from are still fragile and need consolidation.

7. **Recommendations**

In light of the results obtained, there are a number of recommendations worth considering. The most pressing issue related to gender gaps is the lagging performance of boys and the peer-perception gap. First, as girls have proved that they are not less able than boys, they need to be highly regarded, empowered and given opportunities. Consequently, a culture of socialization into refusing to acknowledge girls’ efforts even if girls score higher needs to be redressed. Second, care must be taken so that differences in favour of girls are not misinterpreted to reproduce traditional gender inequalities. Some people, for instance, are advancing the argument that boys are not deficiently literate but only differently literate. In this context, Cohen (1998) observes that women’s accomplishments in language domains have hardly been recognised as intellectual advantages; on the contrary, they have historically been interpreted as shallow talkativeness providing evidence of innate inferiority to men who displayed more reserved and self-regulated verbal skills that testified to masculine intellectual strength.

Third, educational reforms should now give greater priority to boys’ educational difficulties. More precisely, efforts should centre on best classroom management practices that address the issue of disruptive behaviour in a way that maximises all students’ achievements. Boys need to be disciplined, attentive in class and less disruptive, and need to learn to focus on their studies. They need also to learn to set higher expectations and goals. We suggest that we should start this process by connecting with them and meeting them where they are. In this context, social networking technologies have to be channeled to the educational service.

Last but not least, while we recommend that sound policies should be put in place to consolidate women’s rights and make them equal partners to men, the increased female achievement should not blind us to the girls who are left behind, namely, the girls who have been deprived of their right to go to school. We should not forget that the Gender Parity Index still shows a slight favoritism for boys in school enrolments, an issue that needs to be fixed immediately in order to bring all girls to school. Further, we should move beyond generalizing
schooling to school-age children to guarantee quality education to all so that everybody participates in the sustainable development of the country.

8. Conclusion: A reversal of gender gap?

This study set out to explore gender differences in the area of writing among high school students. More specifically, it examined differences in fluency, accuracy and complexity in a writing exercise administered to first year high school students from three different schools in El Jadida. It has been found out that girls steadily out-perform boys in academic areas, and the differences are statistically significant, thus suggesting a reversal of the traditional gender gap. However, it has also been found out that a peer-perception gap persists, with boys refusing to recognize girls’ skills in spite of their higher grades.

Possible interpretations of female advantages at school go primarily to their good behaviours and attentiveness in classrooms. Other sources are connected with modernization theory which is responsible for the change of values in our society. Girls are being given more freedom, more opportunities and recognition for their merit in society. These are main factors motivating them to work harder and prove their worth in society. As to the peer perception gap, we interpreted it in light of the process of socialization that the boys are subject to at home.

While we commend girls for their academic performance, we also raise questions regarding the new gender gap because we cannot achieve sustainable development based on one half of the country’s population. Indeed, the new gender gap should be a cause for concern to promote a discourse of “both sexes win” because no country shall progress if its half is idle. Unless action is taken, males will continue to perform below the level of females in all courses.

Lastly, the present study focused on writing. Such a focus is likely to limit the generalizability of the conclusions reached. Therefore, we recommend that other studies be conducted that explore gender differences in other school areas. Another important area for exploration in future studies is identifying the factors for the new pattern of boys’ underachievement in school and addressing the needs of boys to bridge gender differences rather than reinforce them.
References


Abstract

This paper examines how the contemporary Arab-American poet Mohja Kahf challenges the western and patriarchal interpretations of some Islamic cultural symbols like “Hijab” (the veil). In poems like “Descent in JFK”, “Hijab Scene # 7”, and “Thawrah Des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective”, Mohja Kahf offers an interesting counterpoint to challenge hegemonic narratives about Arab-American women rooted in the nineteenth century Orientalist discourse, and foregrounds the paradoxical experience of what it means to be a veiled Arab-American Muslim woman in a non-Muslim country. While this paper focuses on Kahf’s use of poetry as a form of resistance, it also rethinks the contemporary history of Arab-American women’s stereotypic repertoire.

Key words: Mohja Kahf, Arab-American women, hyphenated identity, Muslim feminism, Diaspora, poetry.

Arab women and, by extension, Arab-American women have long been perceived through the lens of Orientalism, a hegemonic discourse frequently configuring them as silenced, oppressed, veiled and timeless. In her critique of the deeply-held misconceptions of the veil, MohjaKahf says:

Once a journalist who was supposed to be reviewing my poetry reading reviewed my mode of dress code instead. All she could find to say was: Here’s this woman in Hijab who reads poetry! Look, she’s in Hijab and reads poetry!.

(Darraj, 2004, p. 14)

According to Kahf, being simultaneously an educated Muslim and an American is ‘irregular’ to many even to the highly educated people who disregard her ability to be “an intelligent woman schooled in literature and philosophy” (Darraj, 2004, p. 2). It is this restrictive way of thinking about Arab-American women—reducing her to a piece of cloth and questioning her artistic abilities—that Kahf tries to resist.
In fact this view of the Arab woman is not new; it dates back to the European invasion of the East and to many misrepresentative writings about Muslim women. Marsha Hamilton in her essay, “The Arab Woman in U.S Popular Culture”, states that the image of the Middle Eastern woman in the nineteenth century was that “of an alien creature of a different nation and religion, sometimes dark-skinned, and by the late nineteenth century, the symbol of a defeated and occupied empire” (cited in Abdulhadi, Naber, and Alsultany, 2005, p. 152).

Arab/Muslim-American women are facing pressures from within and from without. The pressures from within emanate from their dual identity and the intricacy of getting along with their fellow citizens. Whereas the pressures from without lie in the Orientalist heritage of western representations of the East. These pressures have given rise to a religious crisis that subsequently affects their identity. For many Arab/Muslim-Americans, it’s more a question of realizing who they are according to their nation, and how to reconcile their dual positions of their hyphen, balance their hyphenated identity ‘Arab/Muslim-American’ and bring cohesion to their multiple contexts.

The nascent wave of Arab-American feminist writers offers an interesting counterpoint to challenge hegemonic narratives about Arabs and Arab-Americans. Mohja Kahf is one of the contemporary Arab-American women writers who bring the Arab-American experience to the forefront in her writing. In her volume of poetry *Emails from Scheherazade*, Kahf challenges the Manichean opposition by questioning and challenging the deeply-held American misconceptions eroticizing Arab-American women and their identity.

In her volume of poetry, Kahf breathes life again into the mythological figure *Scheherazade*. She says: “I’m back for the millennium and living in Hackensack/ New Jersey, I saved the virgins from beheading by the king/ who was killing them to still the beast of doubt in him (Kahf, 2003, p. 43). We can deduce that just as the power of Scheherazade’s oral storytelling art form in the *Arabian Nights* helped her to “still the beast of doubt in the king”, the power of her poetry in the twenty first century is used as an attempt to correct the Western dominant paradigm that perceives Arab women only as oppressed females.

In some poems, Kahf juxtaposes the fossilized and distorted images of Arabs and Muslims with positive counter hegemonic Arab-American voices. In her poem “Descent into JFK”, she reflects on the external gaze any Muslim woman is subjected to when she lands in an
American airport and the hardship she endures because of her sartorial choices that makes her look “anomalous” compared to the American woman. Kahf deconstructs this sense of being an “aberrant” identity:

Descent into New York airspace is hard.

......
If they saw Uncle Shukri
In his checkered headscarf,
Like when he let her ride
Behind him on his motorbike,
They’d think he was a terrorist.
They would never know Khaleda
Has a Ph.D.
Because she wears a veil they’ll
Never see beyond (Kahf, p.37)

In these few lines, MohjaKahf realizes that other Americans see her as an oppressed victim, just as they see all Arab males as patriarchal terrorists. Whether Khaleda and Uncle Shukri are American citizens or not is irrelevant, since the whole focus is on the negative connotations that their dress code implies. Khaleda, for instance, is reduced to a piece of cloth and viewed as illiterate. In this regard, Doaa Hamada (2014), in her piece “Arab American Muslim Women and the Experience of Being ‘Irregular’ in MohjaKahf’s Emails from Scheherazad”, puts it bluntly that “the western mind cannot grasp the idea that the Hijab is a cover of the hair, not the mind” (p. 5).

Being simultaneously a ‘hijabi’ Muslim woman and an American causes the Arab-American woman to be looked at differently. That compels the speaker in the poem “Hijab Scene #7” to start responding to the questioning looks around her and uses language to dismantle the persistent misperception from within negating boldly all the restrictive interpretations of her dress and by extension her identity:

No, I’m not bald under the scarf
No, I’m not from that country
Where women can’t drive cars
No, I would not like to defect
I’m already American. (Kahf, 2003, p.39)

In her poems, Mohja Kahf presents a real life situation frequently faced by Arab-American women consisting of an obligation to choose between their multiple identities. Arab-American women are somewhat different from non-American Arab women and non-Arab American women. Their identity is caught up in the “in-between world”, feeling that they are suspended in the seemingly empty space between “Arab” and “American”, standing in that undetermined threshold space, and ‘going from one Otherness to the next’ as the Arab-American poet Nathalie Handal puts it (p. 2). Hence, Kahf’s poems try to confirm the nexus between Arab-Americans and the US, with their various identifications (as Americans, Muslims, Arabs) complementing rather than contradicting each other.

Mohja Kahf, like many of her fellow hyphenated people—being a Muslim of Syrian origin and raised in the small farming town of Plainfield Indiana—embraces an insider/outsider perspective. Thus, Arab-American women are often challenged by what Lisa Suheir Majaj calls “split vision” or what W.E.B. Du Bois calls “double consciousness”, “as Arab-American writers turn one eye to the American context, the other eye is always turned towards the Middle East” (Abdelrazek, 2005, p.151); which means that they cannot forgo the two cultures to which they belong. To quote Trinh-Minh-Ha, the Arab-American woman is, “this inappropriate ‘Other’ or ‘same’ who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming ‘I am like you’ while persisting in her difference, and that of reminding ‘I am different’ while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at” (cited in Abdulhadi et al, 2005, p. 149).

In the following lines, the narrator is speaking from a universal experience of ethnic stereotyping, while also using words as a weapon to confront the American society’s fear of Muslims and to stress that it is possible to be simultaneously both a ‘Muslim and an American’. The narrator subverts her image of being a terrorist:

What else do you need to know?
Yes I speak English
Yes I carry explosives
They are called words
And if you don’t get up
Off your assumptions
They’re going to blow you away (p.39)

Using a sarcastic tone, the Muslim American speaker emphatically challenges the skeptical looks directed at her through her powerful words that she claims to be her real explosives. Actually, while using words to confront and negate the reductionist interpretations of her dress code, and by extension, her identity, she asserts her Americanness claiming that this piece of clothing does not make her less American nor limit her spatial freedom but rather deprives her from the right to belong. Hence, this poem becomes a reconstruction of the Arab-American identity against all sorts of de-humanization and stereotyping. Here appears the power of art; through poetry Mohja Kahf can resist these rigid stereotypes even if it takes one thousand and one nights to break their silence. More significantly, behind Kahf’s practice of writing as an art form, the main desire is resistance which is the driving force that prompts her to write because the voice of her ancestral Muslim women has been silenced for too long.

It seems that the spirit of Scheherazade “forever persists in Arab-American women, who use their art and storytelling as a powerful means of resistance, defining themselves, naming their own experiences; it symbolizes her alternative to marginalization and exclusion from main discourses such as history” (Abdelrazek, 2007, p. 104). Actually, reviving Scheherazade’s spirit of resistance is aimed at halting the long-standing misrepresentation of ‘Hijabi’ Muslim women.

In her poem *Thawrah des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective*, Kahf continues to shed more light on the issue of the veiled Muslim woman’s invisibility in the Western discourse. This poem stages a revolution (‘thawrah’ in Arabic) against the misrepresentation of Arab women. It tells the story of a group of painted odalisques who felt tired of being fixed in their position for long years in Henri Matisse’s paintings, declaring that Arab women in particular have had a long history of being defined and misrepresented in the western Art. Throughout the poem, we see how much these painted odalisques are frustrated, struggling to gain their freedom from the hegemony of their artistic representation. One of the odalisques says:

Yawmmin al-ayyam we just decided: Enough is enough
A unique opportunity, the Retrospective brought us all together
I looked across the gallery at Red Culottes and gave the signal
She passed it on to Woman in Veil and we kicked through canvas
“She must be so uncomfortable in that position”
These two museumgoers murmured in front of two Odalisques
Suddenly I felt my back aching
A seventy-five year kind of ache (Kahf, 2003, p.64)

While the narrator starts with Arabic words “yawmmin al-ayyam”, meaning “once upon a time”, she simultaneously restores the voice of Scheherazade’s oral tradition of storytelling. Kahf’s 21st century Scheherazade is depicted here as the strong Muslim feminist female who lives in the Arab-American Diaspora sending e-mails to her Western reader as a way of rethinking and deconstructing the stereotypes of the Oriental sexual figure as she used to be portrayed in the Western culture. In the third millennium, Scheherazade is an Arab-American writer who negotiates her identity in the Diaspora, and a rebellious odalisque. However, even though Scheherazade and the odalisques revolt against these labels, they continue to be torn between the prejudices of Western feminism and the patriarchy of Arab nationalism.

No one wanted to know about us
Statements were issued on our behalf
By Arab nationalists, Iranian dissidents, Western feminists
The National Organization for Women got annoyed
After some of us put on Hijab,
And wouldn’t let us speak at their rally,
Then someone spread conspiracy rumors about us
Among the Arabs
Like, why had we hung around so long? In the capitals
Of the Western world so long (Kahf, 2003, p.66)

In these lines, the odalisque narrator bristles at the idea of dismissing the agency of Muslim/Arab women by Western feminists because of wearing the veil. Unlike Western feminists, their Arab-American counterparts have to fight on two fronts: the Arab and the American. On the one hand, they have to face the prejudices in America and that of Western feminism for looking different—wearing Hijab—and on the other hand the patriarchal values within nationalist ideologies that limit women’s agency. In this regard, the Arab-American feminist Susan Muaddi Darraj argues:
The battle against sexism fought by Arab women is more layered and intricate than the one fought by Western feminists because Arab women are simultaneously fighting patriarchy in their own societies, colonialism by the West, and nationalist forces in their own societies who interpret feminism as another branch of imperialistic domination. (2003, p. 193)

Yet, in their battle against discourses of Arab patriarchy and that of Western feminism, the odalisques refuse to give up their cause of freedom. They all joined “a support group” they “had to get back together awwalb’awaal/ Maybe from a support group, as in/ “Hi I’m Odalisque with Big Breasts/ I was painted by Matisse, / but I’m in control now” (Kahf, 2003, p. 68). Here, the odalisques announce a dominant presence, deciding to break away from their patriarchal captivity. In her academic study titled *Western Representations of Muslim Women: From Termagant to Odalisque*, Kahf points out that ‘the dominant narrative of the Muslim woman in Western discourse from about the eighteenth century to the present depicts the Muslim woman as ‘innately oppressed...submissive nonentities or rebellious renegades, rebellious against their Islamic culture while conforming to Western gender roles’ (1999, p.177). Because of this oriental translation, these odalisques have decided ‘enough is enough’ and then ‘tore down museum banners’ so as to dress nude fellow odalisques. Kahf offers her characters agency that transforms them from being sexual objects into strong subjects who are able to reclaim identities which would not to be smothered by some aesthetic form. Thus, Kahf re-positions the Arab women’s agency in which she seeks to voice the narratives of the lost voices of her ancestral Arab women. So, one can claim that her poem embraces the strategic position of “writing back” against the long-standing misrepresentation of Muslim women.

Actually, the odalisques in this poem protest not against art, but, against the Oriental representations in which their bodies are objectified: “we just don’t want to be made something we’re not/ it’s a lie. The paintings lie about us/ we were made to live a lie” (Kahf, p.68). It is clear that Kahf’s transnational feminist standpoint defies the western feminists’ assumption that all women have the same subjectivities, interests and experiences. Hence, “there cannot be one version of feminism to apply to all women everywhere; each woman has a voice and a story that qualifies her to deconstruct any theoretical frame of feminism” (Fouad Selim & Eid Mohamed, 2014, p. 11); and the Arab-American story is about defending her culture and self from the embedded Orientalist translation, and trying to strike a balance between her Arab and American
backgrounds. This is obviously clarified through the transcultural title “Thawrah des odalisques at the Matisse retrospective” which makes a reference to the Arab-American writer’s ability to write from both sides of the hyphen. The code switching, here, serves to resist the patriarchy whether in the West or the Arab World and at the same time highlights her experience in the Diaspora. So, Mohja Kahf invites her reader into

the linguistically and culturally heterogeneous world of a Syrian American woman, living in the Diaspora with her cultural ‘articulations’. In this manner she inscribes the language of her poems with the multiple cultural and linguistic landscapes she inhabits, never completely succeeding in rewriting English into Arabic. (Sabry, 2011, p. 93)

However, identifying with both Arab and American sides of the hyphen becomes difficult for the Arab-American woman when her “Arabness” is negatively connected with oppression, harem, and terrorism because the world “is unprepared to recognize her wit, humor, lyricism, passion and intellect, and all too ready to negate her worth as a Muslim woman” (cited in Safaa Alahmad, 2016, p. 49). Susan Muaddi Darraj echoes this idea of being “irregular” in both cultures: “while Americans thought I was a “foreigner”, Arabs regarded me as “Americanized” (Darraj, 2004, p.1). Thus, even if her hyphenated identity feels essentially part of each world, neither world fully accepts her.

By way of conclusion, we can argue that in her poems, Kahf gives a strong poetic voice to her invisible minority subjects using “the political language of identity that levels out distinctions between chosen connections and given particularities: between the person you choose to be and the things that determine your individuality by being thrust upon you” (Gilroy, 2004, p. 106), and negating the persistent apprehension of it as an outsider and relating it as part of the ethnic tissue in the United States. Kahf’s diasporic figure ‘Scheherazade’ becomes the representative of other Arab American women writers through which they can negotiate belongings and affiliations. These women writers believe that writing is “a process by which a person goes to a place and moves the dirt in order to understand why he or she is there at all. And this is where Arab-American writers find themselves today, ‘moving the dirt’ and ‘sifting through the little things overlooked or abandoned or discolored by others” (cited in Golley, 2007, p.176). Hence, to move this dirt, Mohja Kahf’s characters tend to start their revolution inside the
archival walls of the museum which is “the storeroom of a nation’s treasures providing a mirror in which are reflected the views and attitudes of dominant cultures” (Simpson, 2001, p.1). It is from this dominant space where the odalisques obtain their powerful stance, allowing them more power to recreate an alternative image to their history, recover their agency, subjectivity and their status in history.

**References**


The Importance of Exchange Programs in the Re-Construction of Female Students’ Identities

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Abstract

In a globalized world, the experience of overseas exchanges can play an outstanding role in reshaping the identities of the Moroccan female students. Indeed, culture, religion, tradition, patriarchy, gender based discrimination are some stumbling blocks leading to the marginalization and exclusion of some of these students. To better their situation, civil society emerges as a springboard to pave the way for female students in higher education to benefit from new challenging opportunities in an international context. The present paper aims to examine how the NGOs exchange programs help the female university students reconstruct their social, economic, cultural, and gender identities in different Moroccan cities. The methodology used in the study is based on a mixed method approach. Its main target is to discover the attitudes and experiences of AIESEC exchange program participants. The main techniques of data collection are questionnaires and interviews. Therefore, this paper illustrates that these program beneficiaries become able to move from the constraints of the Moroccan society based on their gender to a world of new horizons. In other words, this article provides a lens to the fact that exchange programs abroad have positive outcomes. On the one hand, they offer an opportunity of academic, professional, and cultural experiences. On the other hand, they help them develop new identities in terms of leadership, agency, and independence, to name but a few.

Keywords: Exchange programs, Development, Gender, NGOs, Identities.

Introduction

The emergence of new types of identity in Morocco has become an important issue over the past decade, for researchers, civil society activists and participants alike. A growing number of civil society activists argue that the development of international integration projects is a facilitating tool for the reconstruction of identities. At the same time, researchers and policy makers have puzzled over the means by which such identities can be fostered, while being
increasingly frightened by some stumbling blocks such as culture, tradition, gender and others. Despite some of these stumbling blocks, women’s situation in Morocco has been changing over the recent years thanks to the implementation of several reforms which aim at empowering women in different fields. Access to higher education allows students to gain more independence in terms of thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. However, conventional ways of education are not the only tools which make students’ identity grow and develop at many layers. Involvement in extracurricular activities and especially traveling abroad in exchange programs with NGOs proved to be among the devices which serve to reinforce and reconstruct identities. Consequently, the paper focuses upon the efforts made towards the reconstruction of female identities, through student exchange programs provided by civil society organizations. More specifically, it explores the impact of the introduction of these overseas programs towards the transformation of social, cultural, economic, and gender identities of the beneficiaries.

We argue in this paper that AIESEC exchange programs have a positive impact upon fostering new identities. Female university students through their participation in AIESEC exchange programs realize and develop social, cultural, economic and gender identities in a transnational context. An assessment of these identities is necessary since they will allow the examination of the situation of the Moroccan woman. The overriding research question is how female students in higher education benefit from new challenging opportunities- like overseas exchanges- to reshape and reconstruct their identities? This question has two sub-questions: 1) Are exchange programs organized by AIESEC able to change the situation of female students in terms of their cultural, economic, and gender identity, how and to what extent? 2) Can female students within the framework of civil society organizations become agents of change? To meet the objectives and to try to answer the research questions, the paper follows a mixed methods approach. It uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques, especially through the use of questionnaires and interviews.

1- Theoretical background

1.1 Gender and Identity

A gender study is an interdisciplinary area of research that incorporates methods and approaches from a wide range of disciplines. It is a field of research, which triggers a heated debate in the academic field. Its main interest is the understanding of gender identity and/or
gendered representations. Gender theorists, in particular, look very closely at these questions of identity and representation based on social, political, economic structures of particular societies. In this section, the purpose is to explore the different forms to construct a gender identity that is about men and women. It examines the social and cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities through the socialization process, as it does not refer to the state of being a male or female. Consequently, this overview deals with the distinction between being a man or a woman. By so doing, it leads to power relations between both sexes and, ultimately disregard women in a subordinate position in different contexts and societies.

The traditional linguistic distinction between gender and sex differentiates gender as the linguistic description of words as feminine, masculine or neuter, from sex, as a designation of biological differences. Gender denotes women and men depending on social and cultural factors, as social role or identity, which has been confirmed by many scholars. Humm (1989), for instance, defines gender as “a culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviors given to the female or to the male.” West and Zimmerman (2002, 42) confirm that “It is individuals who do gender.” In contrast, sex denotes human males and females depending on biological features. In this respect, in its distinction between sex and gender, Rob (1998, 112) states:

Sex refers to our physiological makeup and those biological differences, which determine us as female or male: differences of chromosomes, genitals, hormones. Gender, however, refers to our social make-up and those culturally constructed differences, which distinguish us as feminine or masculine: differences of dress, social role, expectations, etc.

In this specific sense, gender becomes a kind of shorthand to reflect its social relations. These later seek to make apparent and explain the global asymmetry, which appears in male-female relations in terms of sex roles in power sharing, decision-making, the division of labor, return to labor both within the household and in the society. In their attempt to introduce the theories used in the discussion of gender, Francis et al., (2003, 2) claimed that: “not only does the system of gender divide the human race into two categories; it privileges the male over the female. Gender operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society, which makes the masculine half of the equation positive and feminine negative.”
Many feminist theorists maintain that gender becomes part of their analysis. Undeniably, they focus the attention on all attributes acquired in the process of socialization. Indeed, this process helps in determining the individual’s appropriate roles, values and behaviors, as expected and acceptable interactions in relationships between women and men. Francis et al., for instance, assert that:

When gender is used in feminist analysis, it is traditionally defined in relation to sex: gender as the cultural or social construction of sex. As a sociological or anthropological category, gender is not simply the gender one is, that is, a man or a woman, but rather a set of meanings that sexes assume in particular societies. The operation of gender in our society takes up these sets of meanings, organizes them as masculinity or femininity, and matches or lines them up with male and female bodies.

West and Zimmerman (2002) confirm that gender is the individual social construction of sex. They assert that: “the ‘doing” of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production.” The distinction between sex and gender is criticized based on the assumption developed by Jackson and Scott: “The concept of gender is insufficient to capture the interplay between the specificity of women’s embodiment and the social and cultural definition of women as devalued other.” That is, according to this interpretation, all-human beings are either males or females. Their sex is fixed, but cultures interpret sexed bodies differently and project different norms on those bodies, thereby creating feminine and masculine persons.

The distinction between gender and sex remains unsolved. However, many scholars prefer to use of gender rather than sex to refer to the distinction between men and women. This distinction is based on the social constructions of gender, which concentrates on men and women as social rather than neutral categories.

In the current research, gender is viewed as an artificial and humanly constructed concept that may not be related to biological sex. The process of this construction is known by socialization by which gender roles are acquired. In their prominent article “What’s Wrong with Socialization”, Stanley and Wise (2002) define socialization as: “that process by which children are transformed into social beings who have taken on particular norms and values, and know
what kinds of behaviors are expected of them.” In this regard, individuals vary in degree of
adherence to gender roles, which results in large amounts of behavioral differences between the
sexes.

Gender roles are typical roles. They are classified by sex. This classification is social and
not biological. In this respect, Rob (1998) distinguishes between the binary opposition of the
gender identity: “we are all born female or male, but each of us learns to be feminine or
masculine according to our experience of the prevailing social norms. Thus, sexuality, women
(not men) are equipped to convince, carry and give birth to children. However, sex roles may be
contrasted with gender roles. This is because sex roles refer to an occupation or biological
function for which a necessary qualification is to belong to one particular sex category. For
example, pregnancy is a female sex role because only members of the female sex may bear
children.

Although attitudes toward gender roles are now much more flexible, different cultures
retain varying degrees of expectations regarding male and female behavior. An individual may
personally disregard gender expectations, but society may disapprove his or her behavior and
impose external social consequences. For instance, an individual may feel internal shame if he or
she experiences emotions or desires characteristic of the opposite sex.

In this sense, one may interpret the famous claim by De Beauvoir (1953) “one is not
born, but rather becomes, a woman” as a process of gender socialization. This means that
females/ males become women/ men through social and cultural teachings. Consequently, they
acquire feminine/ masculine traits and learn feminine/ masculine behaviors. In other words,
biological features, then, do not cause behavioral traits relative to men and women. Rather, they
are acquired through cultural aspects of particular societies. De Beauvoir describes ‘woman’ as
other or ‘not man’. This concept of otherness reflects various categories of contrasting
characteristics labeled feminine and masculine.

Masculinity and femininity relatively drive the individual to think about them as products
of nurture. Humm defines masculinity as “not constructed on the basis of man’s real identity and
differences, but on an ideal difference constituted most essentially in the cultural differentiation
of Man from his other.” Femininity, on the other side of the coin is seen as “the construction of
‘femaleness’ by society, and which connotes sexual attractiveness to men.” Millet (1970)
provides another relevant idea in her book Sexual Politics, where she makes use of gender differences as an “essentially cultural, rather than biological bases.” This is a result of differences in treatment. For Millet (1970), the process of the development of gender identity takes place through: “the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interest, status, worth, gesture, and expression.”

However, the distinction between feminine and masculine gender based norms is problematic. Indeed, gendered behavior conveniently fits with and reinforces women’s subordination so that women are socialized into subordinate social roles. They learn to be passive, ignorant, docile, emotional helpmeets for men. In the same line of argument, Francis et al., (2003) stated that: “gender is the culturally variable elaboration of sex, as a hierarchical pair (where the male is coded superior and the female inferior).” In brief, it can be stated that gender roles are learned through particular social processes. However, equal societies may be created by ‘unlearning’ social roles. Consequently, feminists are requested to fight against the influence of the socialization as a factor promoting gender inequality.

Inequalities experienced by men and women are known as gender inequalities. In this paper, the concept refers to the socially and culturally fabricated differences between men and women. By this inconsistency, the interest is in how-as the sociologists put it: “gender inequalities are structurally determined, not natural outcomes.” This means that at the heart of the sociological approach to gender is the conviction that men and women do not just face difference between them, but rather these differences show power imbalances. According to Strangleman and Warren (2008): “the idea of hierarchy is thus the core of [gender inequalities], with its categories of masculine and feminine reflecting hierarchical notions of strength/domination and weakness/subordination respectively.”

In this respect, there are three main theories focusing on the process through which females become able to be identified with the feminine model and males with the masculine model. In other words, the main interest of these theories is to highlight the process of gender socialization. They include the cognitive development theory, the social learning theory and the psychoanalytical theory.
First, the cognitive development theory concerns itself with children’s self-recognition of their particular gender. Whereby children may ascribe themselves as boys or girls. In a more developed stage of this theory, the child recognizes that his or her gender is stable over time. In this respect, a male child knows that he will grow up to be a man, and a female child knows that she will grow up to be a woman. Additionally, boys and girls select their toys and activities appropriate to their gender before they are able to relate this to genital sex differences. This means that the child recognizes that the gender of an individual stays the same despite of the changes in the person’s activities or appearances. Nonetheless, as it is referred to in Garett’s book Gender, Maccoby and Jacklin criticized this theory for dismissing the important role of socialization on gender behavior. In other words, children are not in need for an understanding of gender as a fixed feature for self-realization to be achieved. A case in point is baby boys and baby girls show interest in toys and games, as these choices will have an essential influence on their future behaviors.

Second, the social learning theory accounts for the fact that girls and boys acquire their appropriate gender identity and gender roles in the same way they learn other things in their childhood. Parents are unconsciously the main actors because of the treatment of their female and male children differently. For instance, the parents’ provision of rewards and sanctions for children encourages them to adopt the socially and culturally assumed appropriate gender role. For example, Kimmel Michael traces, in his prominent book the Gendered Society, the socialization process of children. It includes the language used to describe both boys and girls to echo gendered sentiments. For boys, people mostly say: “who knows, some day he may be president,” or, “with that size he’ll grow up to be a football player”, while girls are more likely elicited comments such as: “she’s beautiful; she’ll really knock the boys out when she grows up” or “it won’t be too long before she’s a mother, too.”

Dressing in gender stereotypical clothes and colors represents another feature of the way Kimmel views socialization (boys are dressed in blue; girls in pink). Moreover, parents tend to buy their child's gender stereotypical toys. In this scope, Kimmel said: “the toys children play with are designed to be sold as girls’ toys or boys’ toys. Girls are given dolls and dolls’ houses; boys get trucks and building blocks, and are told that they are “sissies” if they want to play with girls’ toys.” Parents tend, intentionally or not, to reinforce certain appropriate behaviors. For
example, boys are told that “boys don’t cling to their mothers” and they are not allowed to cry like babies “big boys don’t cry.”

Third, the psychoanalytical theory on gender is widely criticized for its focus on the importance of physical sex as the main determining characteristics of gender identity development of children. It is mainly based on the work of Sigmund Freud, who was considered by feminists as being sexist, because of his view about women as being mutilated and must learn to accept their lack of a penis. In other words, Freud’s psychoanalytical theory focuses on children’s observations about their genitals. Consequently, gender identity is fixed before children are aware of their genital differences. In contrast to the Freudian assumptions about children’s gender identity development, children continue to differentiate gender roles through life experiences rather than limiting their development to childhood fantasies. Overall, a criticism advanced by feminists regarding the three main theories about gender development concentrates on the focus of these theories on the development of males. They further developed arguments on the fact that they are dedicated to men and developed by men.

To conclude, the term gender becomes a comprehensible category. Because of many anthropologists and feminists, it is recognized as a social factor of great importance in various fields. It is one of the very important means of inequality that takes place in many social institutions. In the present research the gendered identity is put under investigation taking as case study young female students who benefit from the exchange programs in order to challenge their traditional gender identities.

1.2 Civil Society Organizations and Identity

In social theory, the question of identity has been strongly debated over and over again. This is because identity is a very complex concept, which is consequently hard to define. Yet, if we want to provide a simple definition, Kay Deaux (2001) defines identity as: “sometimes used to refer to a sense of integration of the self, in which different aspects come together in a unified whole.”(p.1) Similarly, Mead & Cooley (2003) tend to stress the same idea when they define identity as being always in interaction with the self and the society. So, the interactions with many political, social, economic aspects of life influence one’s identity. Moreover, due to the rise of new identities within modern societies, Erik Erikson (1963) introduced “identity crisis” which is part of the psychological development of a given identity. However, this paper is not
meant to deal with this identity crisis but it rather assesses how identities change since they are always in the process of becoming.

According to Kay Deaux (2001), social identity which is part of identity theory “refers specifically to those aspects of a person that are defined in terms of his or her group memberships.” (p:1) That is to say, the individual’s social identity is defined in terms of the group to which he or she belongs to and with whom they identify. The self-definition is therefore shared with a group of people. For instance, the interactions with this group of people, which could be seen as an outside world, contribute to the identity construction and reconstruction process. Thus, “identity becomes a "moveable feast": formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us.” (Hall, et al, 1987) This means that there is always a shift in the identity since there is no permanent one. In other words, identity changes depending on the contact taking place with a particular community in a specific time and space. Therefore, an individual can never have a unified and fixed identity from his birth till his death.

As the paper’s main concern is to highlight the relationship between civil society organizations and identity construction, a definition of the concept –civil society- is needed. According to UNESCO, civil society is “the self-organization of society outside of the state and commercial domains, that is a set of organizations or groups constituted more or less formal and that do not belong neither to government sphere nor to the commercial sphere.” In the same line of argument, the European Union views civil society as an entity which “groups together labor unions and employers “associations (the social partners, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), professional associations, charities, basic organizations”, and organizations involving citizens in local and municipal communities, with a specific contribution of churches and religious communities.” From these two definitions, it is easy to realize that civil society is not related to the state and it seeks to involve citizens in the development of their country at a local or and a regional, national level. It aims at liberalizing the political sphere and increasing the civic participation of citizens in the public sphere. It also includes different types of institutions and/ or organizations.

Civil society as a social engagement that aims towards achieving a societal development is considered to play a very crucial role in the Moroccan society. Sania Nishtar in The World
Economic Forum (2013) argues that “civil society has a unique role in fostering innovations. It has the ability to experiment, move faster (than government) and act as an agent of change.” In other words, civil society organizations tend to provide Moroccans be they young people or women with a vibrant platform through which they can achieve many developmental aims and goals either at the individual or community level. This means that their participation in nonprofit organizations allows them to innovate and become an active agent of change.

More than that, Bohdana Dimitrovova (2009) in her article “Reshaping Civil Society in Morocco Boundary Setting, Integration and Consolidation” stresses the fact that “Morocco’s political opening in the 1990s brought to local civil society a new dimension of internationalisation, diversification and professionalism.” This could be clearly detected when dealing with international organizations that work within an international framework. Stated differently, these organizations offer international and diversified opportunities to local communities. NGO organizations are also a good springboard for both young people and women to acquire professionalism through various experiences. So, thanks to this openness and development in this regards, there are between 30 000 and 50 000 civil society organizations.

According to Eva Evers Rosander (1997), NGOs for women are considered to be “as platforms or spaces for the transformation of female identities.” (p:15) Space here should not be understood in terms of geography but rather as a social construct. It is a social space where women are enabled to negotiate their identities within a certain framework. It is also a gendered space which has its own social, economic, and political specificities. Therefore, many transformations in terms of identity might take place especially that this latter is not fixed. Identity is always in the process of becoming as Stuart Hall (1987) emphasizes when dealing with the concept of identity.

Among the many international NGOs implemented in Morocco, this research will take as a case study the international association AIESEC. This latter was originally an acronym for Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales. However, it is no longer used as an acronym but simply as the name of the organization - which is an international non-governmental, non-political and nonprofit organization run by students and for students. That is to say, it is the students themselves who run this NGO for the sake or to serve other students (i.e., through providing them with exchanges or internships abroad). It was
founded in 1948 in 7 countries in Europe by Jean Choplin (France), BengtSjöstrand (Sweden), and Dr. Albert Kaltenthaler (Germany). It has about 70000 active members and more than 100,000,000 Alumni in more than 126 countries and territories. It represents 2400 universities around the world. This NGO aims at creating positive impact through personal development and/or shared global experiences. Moreover, it seeks to develop the leadership potential of youth through experimental learning, volunteer experience and professional internships. In other words, it develops young people’s leadership skills either through offering its members -called “AIESECers”- leadership positions be it within the entity locally or globally or via exchange programs to both members and exchange participants.

AIESEC’s vision is “peace and the fulfillment of humankind’s potential”. Put differently, it attempts to provide a peaceful environment for the global citizens. In addition to that, this organization has six very important values, which are:

- Striving for excellence
- Demonstrating integrity
- Activating leadership
- Acting sustainably
- Living diversity.
- Enjoying participation

It is a global platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential since it has developed more than 1,000,000 young people who have benefited from an AIESEC experience. This global platform that AIESEC provides, help young people better their societies and before that themselves. AIESECers are passionate about world issues, leadership development, cultural understanding and experiential learning. Thus, in this paper, the target is to examine how AIESEC and its exchange programs shape the Moroccan female students’ identities? But before that, another question might pop up in this regard, why do youth participate in exchange programs in general? And what are the benefits of exchange programs?

2- Methodological Framework

The present study is a field survey research using the mixed methods approach to generate credible findings via both quantitative and qualitative techniques. In this regard, most of the data collection using quantitative methods is based upon qualitative explanations and all the
qualitative data are described numerically. The field survey of the present research is a “one shot survey” in the sense that it is based on a sampling model. A group of exchange participants is selected randomly as a representative sample of the total exchange participants who benefited from this opportunity thanks to AIESEC. This makes it easier to generalize findings back to the population from which the sample was chosen.

As mentioned earlier, the study uses the quantitative research method. It is based on the use of questionnaires. These instruments are important to obtain confirmatory information from each participant compared to qualitative data which are explanatory. It is a tool used to gather data to be converted into numerical form and therefore statistical calculations can be made and conclusions drawn. The main aim is to find answers to the overriding research question, hence, more objectivity is guaranteed about the research findings. Questionnaires are administered online using the Facebook group of AIESEC in Morocco. They include different types of questions that range from structured (limited response format) to unstructured (text response format) questions. Confidentiality is ensured to the respondents because they are informed beforehand about the aim of the study. This means that the information which will be provided by the respondents will be held in confidence except in the general analysis. Qualitative data gathered using questionnaires are presented in this research as tables and graphics accompanied by deep quantified analysis through significant intersections.

The study utilizes a qualitative method as it is significantly related to words and observations, not numbers. For instance, it uses face to face interviews to collect data, as a follow up to the information collected using quantitative methods. The concern here is to further and strengthen the investigation of the respondents’ answers. Data collection employs a general interview guide approach to ensure that the same information is gathered from each interviewee. In this regard, it allows the investigation to be enriched by the participants’ experiences, behaviors, opinions related to their participation in AIESEC activities and how these allow them to reconstruct their identities. Confidentiality is ensured to the respondents in the beginning of each interview. For this purpose, each participant will be mentioned in the text with a fake name to secure the privacy and anonymity purposes.

The present mixed methods study targets AIESECERS and Exchange Participants (EPs) in different cities of Morocco (Fez, Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech.) Data are gathered
from a sample of 38 female members of AIESEC to fill in the questionnaires. The questionnaires are administered online using Google docs as a technique to get online data from different cities. After the introduction to the questionnaire, by which we explained to the respondents the purpose of the study and thanked them for their willingness to devote some of their time to answer the questions, the questionnaire includes different questions classified by themes and purpose of the research questions. Apart from the background questions, there are different closed (limited response format) and open ended questions (text response format.) they are designed in English language as it is the main language of the exchange programs. All in all, quantitative data gathered using questionnaires will be presented in this research as tables and graphics accompanied by deep quantified analysis through significant intersections.

Similarly, a group of 20 female interviewees is selected to provide their success stories as part of this NGO. The qualitative research interview guide seeks to provide and describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the participants. The interviews are conducted with females who have different profiles, but all of them are previous exchange program participants. The main aim behind interviewing them is to get the story behind each one’s experience. They are used to pursue in-depth information around their gendered identity, the extent to which their participation in these programs was/wasn’t useful to their personal and professional development. Interviews are conducted using a guide of questions predetermined previously to be asked to all participants. The target behind the use of the general interview guide approach is to ensure that the same information is collected from each interviewee. Moreover, the data include the participants’ attitudes, opinions, behaviors, feelings about their own experiences in another country. During a period of 30 minutes, each interview process provides more focus than deep conversations, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting as much possible of information from the participants. It gives us the opportunity to ensure that the same information is gathered from each interviewee and to have the opportunity to ask further questions whenever needed. In sum, qualitative data collected using interviews will also provide desirable information to support the analysis of the quantitative data.

In general, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection is of great importance to this research in a sense that both of them complement each others. Qualitative
data can facilitate quantitative research by interpreting relationships between the two data types. Quantitative data can facilitate qualitative through locating interviewees, and they can help in generalizing findings to the population of the survey.

Profiling AIESECERS

Earlier in this paper, it is assumed that the participation of women in exchange programs is a way to reconstruct their identities in a transnational context. It is further assumed that their participation is triggered by different motivations. The present section tries to explore empirical data to answer the following questions: who becomes an AIESEC exchange program participants? What are the characteristics of the female AIESECERS? Statistics provided here are based on the results of the questionnaires filled in by 38 female higher education students and beneficiaries of at least one of the AIESEC exchange program.

By examining the structures of the exchange program participants by age (see table 1), a relatively high age rate of women aged between 17-25 years is 89.4% is observed. Young women aged between 26-30 are involved in these programs with an estimated 10.5% share.

Table 1: Age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork Results

Data retrieved from the questionnaires reveal the predominance of the younger females. This means that, based on their age groups, it is apparent that the newly graduate students remain the most highly represented. This finding is enhanced by the results of the qualitative data, which show similar results. With regard to the marital status; data from the research areas reveal that all our participants are single. The issue of marriage is not important among the participants whose reasons are mostly related to continuing studies and achieving financial independence before going into the wedlock. In what concerns the educational level of our respondents, the data demonstrate different educational attainment levels among the female higher education students.
in the areas of research. The 47% belongs to the master students, 26% of 3rd year students, followed by 8% for 2nd year, 1st year students as well as to those who study in other institutes. Doctorate students are only represented by 3%.

Figure 1: Educational Level
Source: Fieldwork results

Generally speaking, most respondents demonstrate their willingness to study and at the same time to participate in exchange programs. The purpose is to develop their aspirations and aptitude. No one of the informants considers her educational level as a negative point. Rather, they maintained that it is their unique criteria that allowed them to take part of the overseas programs and to benefit from a transnational experience. As it is demonstrated in figure number 3, the participants are students, either in universities or private schools. Data show that 79% belong to public universities and 21% are studying in various higher private schools.

Figure 2: Types of Affiliation
Source: Fieldwork results
Data show that many of the female higher education students want to invest their human capital acquired by the educational system and to improve it via the exchange programs. The findings indicate that the higher educational level of the participants is a key factor to their acceptance in such programs. It serves as a decisive determinant of initial move to another country. However, in a competitive context, the females’ personal situation also has a role in the reconstruction of their identities in a transnational context. In the following section, the understanding of the role of AIESEC exchange programs in reshaping women’s identities will be further discussed with a focus on the social, cultural, economic and gender identity.

Reconstruction of Female AIESECERS Identities

The present sub-section complements the previous one by delineating the salient features of women’s reconstruction of identity in a context of overseas programs provided by civil society organizations such as AIESEC. In this section, we question whether the informants perceive their identities differently after their time in a host country. The reshaping of identity is broken out by the social, the cultural, the economic and the gender identity of female participants. Quotations are taken from interviews and wrap-around conversations with females involved.

Applying for an exchange program is an important way to improve the females’ way of thinking about their social identity. Indeed, data based on the interviews revealed that many of the participants consider the materialistic covered necessities (education, health, insurance…) by the state are the sources that make people in the North happier. Taking into account this general idea, our respondents show a sentiment of need to go into an exchange program to better their knowledge about this. They viewed the exchange as a chance to get new impulses and to see other cultures. They also tried to see whether it is possible to lead a good life with all the new technological equipment and facilities.

Students’ exchange programs overseas were for a long time an essential element in developing the participants’ social identity. In the past few years, with the advance of the world, many youth coming from diverse backgrounds benefited from international experiences. So, the rate of students who choose to spend a period of time outside their home country started to rise. The students’ mobility is an opportunity to build and/ change the personality traits. That it is to say that the student becomes more sociable, independent, active, emancipated, to name but a few. This is emphasized in the following statements by some interviewees:
• Meriam, who is 20 years old and a 2nd year university student said: “I have become more independent and strong.”

• Karima, a student preparing her Master degree in cultural studies expressed her viewpoint as follows: “My exchange program experience gave me enough charisma to impose myself even outside AIESEC.”

• Chadiya, a young female preparing a PhD in English Studies maintained: “It gave me a real support in changing my community and surrounding to the best by learning from another culture.”

Another aspect related to the development of the social identity of the female participants is related to the change of their social impression of their host country and its people. For instance, data derived from the interviews show that the international exchange participants complete their programs with a better understanding of the other. For example, Khawla commented on her experience of a voluntary work: “the experience of exchange programs is the most useful tool for long-term social change and mutual understanding between different people.” Her statement emphasizes that the beneficiaries are able to benefit from a lifelong social experience, which help them to get exposed to the values, customs, and ways of doing things. This is achieved not from the speeches of diplomats, but from citizens and volunteers from all over the world. In this respect, they are able to build an international social identity and gain a fuller appreciation of a different culture of their own. In turn, the communities which host the exchange participants are also able to create a new vision of the country of origin of the participant. This means that both the exchange participant and the hosts are involved in an international exposure that has various effects.

AIESEC exchange participants also have the ability to develop their leadership aspirations. This is maintained by Salma: “AIESEC gives me the opportunity to develop my leadership skills, being confident, and thinking that I could do it.” This in a way shows that participants are increasingly given an opportunity to foster their collaboration with the others on numerous issues. As a consequence, exchanges create generations of young leaders who build international contacts and experience around the globe. This means that the young leaders who benefit from the AIESEC exchange programs are able to address critical topics that lead them to incorporate the international experiences into their everyday life and work.
Similar concerns are expressed by the informants regarding the construction of a cultural identity after the experience of AIESEC exchange programs. For instance, during the exchange period, it is normal that participants generally experience an overturn because most of the times they feel homesick, especially at the beginning of the stay. Sometimes they are overwhelmed by a sense of loneliness. This is aggravated with the cultural differences that may result in cultural shocks. The latter is manifested in various forms.

Experiencing a sentiment of individualism is an omnipresent form of cultural shocks. Firstly, participants show a certain excitement to go on a voyage to a foreign country. This gives them a provocative feeling of happiness, especially because they have expectations of discovering new things, meeting new people, and sharing experiences. Secondly, they start to have disagreement with the host culture. This happens when the participant’s excitement decreases and the exact cultural differences become obvious. In other words, regardless of the openness and the understanding of the cultural differences which the young beneficiaries of the overseas programs demonstrated. In this regard, one may venture to say that the negative aspects related to the cultural choc are not easy to subvert. Thirdly, these participants afterwards start to adapt to the host culture. At this point, they accept that it is an obligation to live a successful stay through getting used to the local customs. Finally, the exchange program participants build their cultural identity, which can be referred to as biculturalism. It is the state where young females realize that their own culture also enables them to adopt a worldwide and an international culture which is based on a different perspective. Ranya, a Master student, said: “Actually, it was a very good experience to travel abroad and meet people from different parts of the world because this teaches us what is called cultural tolerance and make us accept the others even if they are different in terms of religion and beliefs, etc...” From this quotation, one may conclude that the suitable way to trespass the cultural changes during exchange programs is to get involved in cultural activities in the host country. They can also be comforted through building relationships with the natives via communication in the native language or those at least understand what you are going through.

By observing how other people in the host country lead their life, most participants are affected and show enthusiasm to develop their economic independence. Indeed, they are certain that they will continue their studies in the direction of development and getting access to the
labor market, but they are uncertain in what form or where. Even those who don’t think that they will work in development, thinks of the exchange experience as beneficial to orient them to choose better jobs. A vivid example is by Meriam who is a doctorate student: “Absolutely. I am not going to choose a job related to development, but the overseas exchange experience is a good motive and can be useful. I encourage young people to do it. In regards to how you meet people and how you communicate and orient each other”. This highly educated student thinks of the exchange occasion as something of importance for choosing work in particular and for lifelong in general. Moreover, it is interesting to point out how these female participants dream of their professional life and career after benefiting from an exchange program experience. Some comments by the respondents are presented as follows:

- Safae, a third year university student in economics said: “I dream of being a professional leader in my own field of expertise. The experience of the AIESEC exchange program helped me develop my skills of communication, team work, negotiation and it allowed me to have a passionate desire to work. I see myself with the AIESEC spirit in every stage of my life.”
- Ilham, an engineering student pinpointed: “I see myself in the future after the AIESEC exchange experiences as a well experienced person. I imagine I will be able to be developed as a leader and do my own business as an entrepreneur. So, AIESEC made my leadership get more developed and it provided me with the right tools to do so.”

The choice of the respondents to spend a period of time going on an exchange program to a developed country is a way that impacts their gender identity. Bearing the difference women suffer from in Morocco based on their gender; many participants revealed that their experience overseas helped in reconstructing their gender identity. For instance, quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the beneficiaries come back with a strengthened gender identity. This is obvious in their self-development and awareness, which in most cases lead to the enhancement of their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is emphasized by Maria who showed a strong personality in her comment. She declared: “I’ve never felt any difference between male and female from where I came I can’t let people judge me based on my gender and I don’t really care for society’s view. All depends in my own opinion.” This statement exactly shows the most noticeable change in returned exchange female students.
Moreover, maturity and social self-assurance, fuelled by the necessity to confront challenges outside a familiar support network and comfort zone are developed. For instance, a tremendous sense of accomplishment upon completion encourages students to develop independent opinions, make informed decisions and strive to attain fresh goals outside the frame of their patriarchal and oppressing context. These ideas are stressed through the experience of Kamila, one of a private school students and a manager of AIESEC branch who said:

Well, being a member in AIESEC gave me the chance to show my capacities because being a manager in the association is a responsibility. Since I am responsible of finding a suitable project for the Eps, the exchange program developed my gender identity and developed in me the skill of convincing people though I am a female. My internship in Tunisia also helped me in the sense that I became more independent and responsible enough to manage my life. Hence, that helps in reshaping my identity as a Moroccan female.

In the same line of argument, other respondents commented on the importance of the overseas exchange programs in reshaping their gender identities by saying that:

- Naima, a 1st year student of biology said: “by realizing that the difference between genders is not based on qualifications or skills, but it’s all about knowing how blessed I am for being a woman and having all those amazing things to bring to the world that men can't do. This made me rethink the way I see gender equity when I came back to morocco.”
- Salma, a Master degree student expressed with enthusiasm: “The exchange program I benefited from thanks to AIESEC helped me prove that in our hypocrite culture we the women can be more powerful and would give more than our environment could imagine.”

As a matter of conclusion, it is possibly to venture and say that gender differences should not matter when it comes to an international experience that has essential potentials for the reconstruction of the female gender identity in a global context of exchange. The foreign experience paves the way for many participants to view themselves positively and to embark on working hard for a promising future.
Conclusion

Through a subsequent analysis, one may conclude that the identities of female higher education students and participants in AIESEC’s exchange programs are influenced by their experiences in a developing country. For instance, the main results show that, to a large degree, the overseas programs do not seem to have automatically changed their beliefs and influenced them to reshape their identities. Nevertheless, a major concern of the participants was that they showed interest in using their experiences abroad in their lives and for long term objectives. Moreover, it is of great importance to mention here that the informants stressed on three main factors for choosing to be an exchange program participant: travel, learn and practice. For many of them, traveling was a source of bettering information, deepening, knowledge, acquiring new experiences, building a leadership character, and changing the old views about females in a patriarchal society, among others.

The youth exchange programs are an outstanding experience because of these numerous reasons. The participant becomes an ambassador of the country of origin and the collectivity, he or she also discovers a foreign culture and tend to adapt to a new life style, youth seek to build relationships with other people not only in the host country but also with other young participants coming from all over the world, they –in addition to that- familiarize with the customs and the traditions of other people and cultures, they gain experience in relation to transnational issues, they assume a leadership role due to the lessons learnt from the exchange programs experience, they can also learn a new language, and they finally learn how to become independent. This means that AIESEC exchange programs served both as cultural opportunities in order to experience a new and vibrant parts of the world, but also a learning means with a hope of being able to change the females’ situation in their countries of origin and do something they would consider crucial for them particularly and for society at large.
References


Performing a Victim: Toxic Postsocialist Masculinities

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Abstract

The article analyzes postsocialist toxic masculinities as an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices characterized by excess and banality. Focusing on male politicians, it argues that moderation, restraint and sobriety are foreign to their brand of toxic masculinity. Fraught with fear and anxiety, Lithuanian politicians attempt to resolve their masculine ambiguities by resorting to dramatic performances of resentment, impetuousness, hatred, and denigration of others. The examined Lithuanian politicians’ pronouncements suggest that they constitute themselves as injured victims and perpetuate the obsessive discourse of male victimhood. Constant claims about manliness under siege are a way of fabricating simulacra of a particular toxic masculinity characteristic of postsocialist Lithuania. Using the postcolonial theory on mimicry, excess and banality of power, the author argues that these men’s pursuit of shameless lawlessness best epitomizes this type of masculinity.

Keywords: postsocialist Lithuania, toxic masculinity, postcolony, banality of power.

Introduction

In his essay entitled “Are you a Man or a Mouse?” Homi Bhabha writes: “My own masculinity is strangely separating from me, turning into my shadow, the place of my filiation and my fading. My attempt to conceptualize its conditionality becomes a compulsion to question it; my analytic sense that masculinity normalizes and naturalizes difference turns into a kind of neurotic ‘acting out’ of its power and powerlessness” (Bhabha 1995, 58). This quote perfectly captures the dynamic of not only postcolonial but also postsocialist masculinities. Here masculinity is not only its own shadow, a fading sign of power but also a constant reiteration of its normality, mimicry and simulation. It often manifests itself through violent spectacles of hyper-macho posturing, bullying, hatred and impetuousness that can be characterized as toxic.

Toxic masculinities that define “those aspects of hegemonic masculinity that are socially destructive, such as misogyny, homophobia, greed, and violent domination” (Kupers 2005, 716)
have been first analyzed in the field of prison studies. Only recently, with the strengthening of political conservatism in both Europe and North America and the election of Donald Trump “toxic masculinity” became a widely exploited concept. It denotes masculinity that aspires for dominance and control by inferiorizing everyone and everything that stands in its way. This masculinity valorizes violence and aggression as a normal way of social interactions.

Despite the abundance of examples of men engaging in physical and psychological violence in their construction of manhood, the term “toxic masculinity” is still absent from a massively under-researched area of men’s studies in Lithuania. Although some research focused on men marginalized due to their age, class, sexuality, crime, disability and ethnicity (Tereškinas 2011 and 2012; Vaiciuniene, Tereskinas 2015; Tereškinas et al. 2016), no work has examined toxic masculinities of powerful men in politics. By analyzing Lithuanian politicians’ masculinity practices, this article intends to fill the gap.

Before turning attention to toxic masculinity, I will briefly describe the Lithuanian gender regime that could be characterized as one of the most contradictory and paradoxical in Europe. First of all, despite the implementation of a variety of gender equality directives and documents, including the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1999) and the National Programs of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2003–2004, 2005–2009 and 2010–2014), the principle of gender equality is still more a slogan than reality in Lithuania. Since the Lithuanian independence in 1990, gender equality policy has been rather inconsistent, therefore de facto gender equality remains only an aspiration.

A connection between family policy and gender equality is also rather weak, i.e., family policymaking in Lithuania is not based on the paradigm of gender equality. Even though gender equality has been a conceptual element of family policymaking during certain periods, its implementation as well as social attitudes is usually dominated by the patriarchal and paternalist orientations. This is evidenced, among other things, in the prevailing social model of a male breadwinner, in the underdevelopment of pre-school education system, in the lack of flexible forms of employment – all these factors prevent women from participating in the labor market, burden their efforts to balance professional career and family, and at the same time stop men from engaging more fully in family life (Maslauskaitė 2004; Jančaitytė 2006 and 2011; Bučaitė-Vilkė et al. 2012). In other words, sporadic attempts to establish equal opportunities for both
sexes to make use of flexible forms of employment as well as state-provided support and services have often been hampered by the lack of attention to all-pervasive traditional masculinity and femininity models in work-and-family-balancing strategies and by inconsistencies in ensuring equal participation of both sexes in the private and public spheres of life.

Moreover, both gender policies and family-friendly policymaking have been greatly affected by antifeminist attitudes and nostalgia for patriarchal family most vividly demonstrated by the infamous State Family Policy Concept (2008) ratified by the Lithuanian Parliament and subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Lithuania. This Concept did not see gender equality as an important goal, since it postulated biologically determined male-female differences explained away with the “complementarity of sexes” notion (Tereškinas 2012). The framework of traditionalist gender policies in the country influence, to a large degree, practices through which men and women express their masculinities and femininities. It could be argued that this type of ambivalent gender regime has negative consequences for both women and men constrained by the narrow gender roles and cultural expectations.

This gender regime, along with enduring economic, social and political instability, produces a fertile ground for toxic gender practices, particularly among men. Interestingly, not only marginalized men who rework hegemonic masculinity in socially deprived contexts but, first of all, men who have power and authority, for instance, Lithuanian politicians, increasingly exhibit a specific brand of toxic masculinities. They produce the brand of masculinity that often reflects extreme forms of sex-typed behavior by conferring blame for their failures on both powerful lobbying interest groups and vulnerable minority groups such as women, LGBT, ethnic minorities, etc. In a peculiar way, these men in power appropriate the discourse of injury and wound and present themselves as gender victims.

By using the examples of Lithuanian politicians, in this article, I describe gender practices characteristic of postsocialist toxic masculinity. The article begins with the analysis of two politicians and their ways of being powerful males. This analysis uses their public pronouncements in order to grasp the peculiar brand of toxic masculinity in Lithuania. By placing toxic masculinity in the context of postcolonial theory, the second part of this article theorizes it in terms of mimicry, excess and banality.
Men in Power: “Don't you Know that you're Toxic?”

During the last decade, a peculiar male hero emerged in Lithuania: the victimized politician. He might present himself as righteously indignant of the nation’s vices, as bleeding for the sake of the country and mythical traditional family. His wounded image speaks of uncomfortable pressure of painful feeling that dissipates in conspiracy theories and hysterical accusations directed to powerful business interests, lobbying organizations, women, feminists and gays.

One of the best examples of men in power who incessantly express the hysterical sense of victimhood is a Parliament member Petras Gražulis who belongs to the right-wing “Order and Justice” Party. He is a marginal political figure, however, his excesses do not go unnoticed by the Lithuanian media. In public, he flaunts his virility, masculine pride and even physical aggression. He was one of the ardent opponents of the Gay Pride Parade in the spring of 2010 protesting outside the heavily guarded fence. At the end of the parade, when its participants were leaving, he got embroiled in a physical fight with one of the organizers of the parade. He literally rendered his own person into a visual spectacle of embattled but struggling masculinity.

Gražulis is a symptomatic example of toxic Lithuanian masculinity because he often talks of himself as a victim of gender politics and homosexual “propaganda.” In his public pronouncements, he frequently intones gay conspiracy and gay mafia. When his car was caught speeding more than 30 times by the automatic speed radars he said: “[It is] because Gražulis has scared off the parade of gays and pederasts. It is their revenge to him for this… I see the activity of homosexuals here…” (Paknys 2011).

This MP constantly points to traumas that others impose on him, incitements to rescue him and other male victims from the onslaught of global homosexual conspiracy. Exploiting the politics of victimhood, hatred and intolerance and over identifying with toxic masculinity he presents himself as a fighter for the nation and traditional family in the face of the “corrupt” political system. Exploiting fantasies of homosexuals as a threat to the nation and particularly to the traditional family, he engenders the homophobic hysteria that characterizes him as eclectic and colorful clown of the right-wing ideologues. Anxious to distance himself from anything that might be even remotely suggestive of homosexuality or bisexuality, Gražulis is also one of the most revealing and amusing cultural cases of political hatred and intolerance.
Much more important political figure that plays victimhood with self-confidence is Ramūnas Karbauskis, leader of the ruling party “Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union” that currently holds a majority in the Lithuanian Parliament. 47-year old Karbauskis is a millionaire, one of the biggest landowners in Lithuania and successful businessman involved in distribution of farming equipment and fertilizers. From the beginning of his career as a Parliament member, almost daily he would introduce the public to his new initiatives on compulsory military training in schools, national costumes for children under seven, compulsory visits of children to the theater, etc. that his party would allegedly bring to fruition. However, after being ridiculed for these initiatives he was prompt to change his opinions and to pretend, in some cases, that he never said it. His confident macho persona convinced people that he was in control although many of his pronouncements were proven to be false and misleading, especially those related to the important amendments to the Assisted Reproduction Law and Child Protection Law. For all his failed initiatives Karbauskis has repeatedly accused “powerful business interests”, particularly of the alcohol and tobacco industry (all his accusatory ramblings are available at his Facebook page).

One of the most striking blows to Karbauskis’s reputation was a scandal involving the vice-head of his party Greta Kildišienė to whom his company “Agrokoncernas” leased an expensive car and who was his alleged lover. Although the leader of the “Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union” is married and on any possible occasion preaches “family values,” his wife and children have been residing in Spain for more than a decade. In the midst of the scandal Karbauskis stated that the whole story of his vice-head Kildišienė was an attempt to attack the rule of law in Lithuania: “Now it is obvious that it is the first serious attempt at destroy the [ruling] political power elected by people…” In his interviews and speeches, he indicated that “some powerful forces” were determined to topple both the Parliament majority and the government: “… we understood that this attack against the Parliament majority and the government would be fierce and relentless with no regard to the offended and members of their families …”. Once he felt that his credibility as a politician was threatened, he retaliated by referring to himself and his accomplices as wrongfully offended victims. Karbauskis shamelessly used manipulations, lies and evasiveness as public measures to correct these “injustices” and reiterate his determination “to implement changes for which people voted in the [Parliament] elections” (Čachovskij 2017). Although most of his words feed only egocentrism,
irresponsibility and victimhood, his confident and testosterone-revved persona is still rewarded by public attention and support.

Many external factors – from businesses and “mysterious forces” to LGBT organizations — appear to be most threatening to the discussed men in power. It can be argued that their hysteria provoked by unnamed “business interests”, powerful gay lobbies, “anti-government forces” is a manifestation of men’s fears of losing control and being feminized. At the same time it yields a certain political profit. The fantasy of being under constant siege by a multitude of external forces is employed to present themselves as victims while victimizing innocent others. Yet these men-victims emerge as “as aggressive, resentful or suspicious people whose hurt and loss is directed at others rather than at themselves” (Hoggett 2006). As this short analysis demonstrates, both ruling and marginal politicians gain the relief and satisfaction from simple resentment, impetuousness, hatred, and denigration of others.

**Banality of Power and Toxic Masculinity in Postsocialism**

What framework can be used to interpret the briefly described examples of powerful men who successfully perform victimhood and toxic masculinity? One of the ways to theorize toxic masculinities is to turn to the issue of power, its vulgarity and banality in the postsocialist space.

Some scholars suggest that postsocialist space can be theorized as postcolonial (Kelertas 2006) in which postcolonial power relations are of the utmost important. The state itself, in this kind of analysis, is thought of not as sovereign subject or a system but as “a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another” (Brown 1995, 174). This understanding of the state as a set of dispersed powers implies that power resides everywhere: “in speech, writing, discourse, representation, and reason; in families, curricula, bodies and the arts” (Brown 1995, 38–40). Gender and masculinity in particular also become an axis of power and a maker of subjects.

The insights of a theorist of postcoloniality Achille Mbembe (1992 and 2001) and his critics (Trouillot 1992) help me examine this problematic of power and suggest some useful comparisons between postcolony and postsocialism. In Mbembe’s view, the postcolony is a specific system of signs and „a particular way of fabricating simulacra or of stereotypes” (Mbembe 1992, 2). It is the simulacral regime *par excellence* in which a specific simulacral
pragmatic forges the relation between the dominant and the dominated (Mbembe 1992, 11–14). Thus, power relations in the postcolony and, in my view, in the postsocialist space, are based on mimicry that serves as one of their most effective strategies and stylistics. The simulacral postsocialist regimes enable both the dominant and dominated simulate their gender, national and class identities in endless ploy of self inflicted injuries, blame and resentment.

Mbembe also speaks of the banality of power in the postcolony. In his view, banality does not mean that power is predictable and it consists of “repeated daily actions and gestures” but, first of all, that it is saturated with the elements of the obscene, vulgar, and the grotesque (Mbembe 1992, 1). Differently than Michail Bachtin who thought the grotesque and obscene exposed the arbitrary and perishable character of the official authority turning it into a figure of fun (Bakhtin 1984), Mbembe localizes obscenity, grotesque and banality of power in many places, among them, in both the spectacles and prestige of the official power and in the ways it is presented to the subordinated (Mbembe 1992, 4).

On the contrary, Mbembe’s critics think that power is always vulgar and banal whether it expresses itself in the postcolonial, postsocialist or any other space because it is always potentially excessive and exaggerated. In other words, “the imagery of power is excess” and, in Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s words, “Excess, in turn, breeds vulgarity. To be sure, power sometimes attaches a mask onto the vulgarity it generates. If the mask is half successful, power glows, the populace applauds, and vulgarity lies dormant. Yet vulgarity is always there, for power cannot live without its imagery and that imagery begs for exuberance” (Trouillot 1992, 78).

Following Mbembe and Trouillot’s arguments, it is possible to argue that the eccentric and grotesque art of representation, the taste for the theatrical and the “violent pursuit of wrongdoing to the point of shamelessness” (Mbembe 1992, 21) are the defining characteristics of postsocialist performances of toxic masculinity. Constant attempts of the analyzed politicians to resort to the systematic production and application of resentment and victimhood also demonstrate the vulgarity, grotesque and banality of power. As the examples of the Lithuanian politicians attest, their performances of the peculiar brand of toxic masculinity cannot live without exaggeration, excess, resentment, hatred and lies. Moreover, men performing toxic masculinity confirm the exorbitant and exaggerated binary of man and woman “as the exclusive way to understand the gender field” (Butler 2004, 43) and impersonate victims full of hostility
and frustration. In their attempt to escape fear and insecurity, these male subjects who simulate their identities on the basis of dominance and control search for satisfaction in the acts of revenge, accusation, discursive violence and manipulation.

**Conclusion**

As it was noted at the beginning of the article, Lithuania remains a society in which rigid gender norms influence the ways in which social programs assume and reinforce a family breadwinner role for men and a maternal and caring role for women. Family policy, population policy, labor force, regulation of sexual behavior and childcare provisions are a part of a broader set of power structures which act to perpetuate male power in the country. Moreover, rigid gender norms not only perpetuate mutual zombification of men and women but also affect men in power who perform their masculinities on the basis of invented victimhood, blame and resentment.

The article argues that postsocialist masculine performances are based on mimicry and simulation that expose their banality and obscenity reproduced in political life. In their hyper-macho posturing, imagined victimhood, bullying and lack of empathy for others, marginal and not so marginal political figures perform toxic masculinity that masks their underlying fear and anxiety of not measuring up, of being inadequate and of losing control.

In the tortured rhetoric of the Lithuanian politicians, toxic masculinity becomes devoid of sobriety, continence and moderation. Appealing to the loss of family values, compulsive heterosexuality, the national honor and mysterious lobbying interests that attempt to discredit them, the Lithuanian male politicians expose banality and obscenity of toxic masculinity. It is banal and obscene not only because of a constant dramatization of its heroism and injuries but also because of in ceaseless extolling of the legitimating force of such institutions as the nation, heterosexuality or family.

An array of Lithuanian politicians’ pronouncements suggests that prominent men constitute themselves as injured victims and perpetuate the obsessive discourse of male victimhood. Constant claims about manliness under siege are a way of fabricating simulacra of a particular toxic masculinity characteristic of the postsocialist region. This toxic masculinity is not only predictable but also narcissistic and self-destructive. Its taste for the theatrical and its
violent pursuit of shameless wrongdoing best epitomized by the described Lithuanian politicians remain its main mode of existence.

As a journalist Amanda Marcotte wrote in her article on gun violence and terror in the United States of America, “Toxic masculinity aspires to toughness but is, in fact, an ideology of living in fear: the fear of ever seeming soft, tender, weak, or somehow less than manly. This insecurity is perhaps the most stalwart defining feature of toxic masculinity” (Marcotte 2016). Thus, further research on the export/import of toxic masculinity based on domination, the devaluation of women, aggression, and violence would be particularly relevant for the understanding of gender issues in the context of global markets, increasing economic dispossession, migration and ethnic and cultural conflicts.

References


Deconstructing the Foundational Myths of Patriarchy in Gilman’s Herland

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Abstract

In her novel *Herland* (1915), Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) creates a utopian fictitious land inhabited and ruled by women. Against the exclusionary imaginary of patriarchy, this land of females hosts a group of foreign men to engage them into a direct interrogative encounter challenging the male stereotyped expectations of females as being natural subordinate subjects. Dislocating the male gaze conceiving women as weak and powerless, Gilman reduces patriarchal paradigms to groundless myths easily subverted within the condition of emancipated females. As the paper unveils through a deconstructionist method, *Herland* corroborates an argument that boldly interrogates patriarchy to demystify its stereotypes of physical and intellectual superiority, and revises the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance.

*Keywords*: Deconstruction; Discourse; Patriarchy; patriarchal myths; stereotypes

Introduction

Throughout her novel *Herland* (1915), Charlotte Perkings Gilman(1860-1935) enacts systematic deconstruction of patriarchal discourse in order to dismantle the hierarchical categories that hold women inferior. To develop this argument, the present paper will introduce a brief synopsis of the novel, besides some biographical notes illuminating the analysis through pertinent moments in Gilman’s Career. Then, for rigour’s sake, before embarking on a practical deconstructionist analysis of the different relevant levels of patriarchal myths questioned in Gilman’s *Herland*, I will clarify the concepts of patriarchy, myth and what the critical method of deconstruction, adopted herein, involve. This is to pave the way afterward to a practical deconstructionist analysis of the different myths founding the patriarchal imaginary.

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1 The present paper is based on the 1998 edition of *Herland* published by Dover publications
Synoptic notes

In *Herland* (1915), Gilman creates a utopian fictitious land inhabited and ruled by women who can give birth without sexual intercourse on the basis of “Parthenogenesis”, an imagined process of asexual reproduction. Throughout the text, *Herland* enacts systematic deconstruction of patriarchal discourse in order to dismantle the hierarchical categories that hold women inferior. Against the patriarchal exclusionary imaginary, this land of females hosts a group of men to bring them into a direct interrogatory encounter that utterly challenges male stereotyped expectations through which females are erroneously thought to be natural subordinate subjects. Dislocating the “male gaze”\(^2\) and rearranging the essentialist structure of conceiving women as weak and powerless, Gilman reduces patriarchal paradigms to mere totalising myths that are groundless within the condition of free and emancipated females. Within such a deconstructionist feminist framework, *Herland* corroborates an imaginative argument that boldly interrogates patriarchy in order to demystify its stereotypes of physical and intellectual superiority; and revises the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance. However condemnatory to patriarchy, Gilman defends heterosexuality, and solicits women and men to understand one another’s drives and perspectives for the sake of enriching human experience and promoting coexistence. The deadlock caused by their continuous gender misunderstandings, according to the novel, proves that they enjoy little grounds for viable dialogue. For what lacks in both is an inclusive awareness about the meaning of humanity beyond gender restriction.

Notes on Charlotte Perkins Gilman

A feminist activist, sociologist and fiction writer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) was cared for by her aunts after her father had deserted her mother. In her autobiography *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1935), she sheds light on her condition of poverty during her childhood, on her mother’s lack of affection, on her discontinuous schooling, and the impact

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\(^2\) Coined by Laura Mulvey (1975), the male gaze refers to the way visual arts represent life through a masculinist world view disregarding the women’s perspective. This concept is integrated in literary criticism to stress the need for exploring women’s representations to redress the epistemological and ethical lacuna resulting from excluding the feminine view.
of her father’s passion for literature on her future writing career. After severe depression, Charlotte divorced from her husband in 1894, sent her daughter later to live with him and moved to California to become a member in various organizations defending women’s rights and social reforms. Between 1900 and 1922 she lived in New York with her second husband, Houghton Gilman, a Wall Street attorney; and then moved back to California after his death in 1934. Having suffering from breast cancer for four years since 1932, Perkins Gilman took her life using chloroform (Knight, Diaries, p.813).

As an activist, Gilman was anti-capitalist militating for change against class hierarchy. Making her living through essays and lectures on social reforms defending women, Gilman became a well-known figure among feminist writers. Accounting for wives’ psychological disorder as being an outcome of oppressive matrimonial conditions, her short story The Yellow Wallpaper, written in 1890, made her outlive her time to take an outstanding place within postmodern literary writing. Later, exploring the causal relationship between women’s work in the public sphere and their emancipation, wellbeing and agency, her book Women and Economics, published in 1898 and extended in 1903 in The Home: Its Work and Influence, earned her international fame. Besides, “One of the greatest accomplishments of her career” was the establishment of her magazine The Forerunner which she wrote and edited between 1909 and 1916, seeking through serial publication of her literary works to counter the dominant mass media-created ideological atmosphere. Similarly, considering herself a humanist, she criticized Darwin’s focus on the male and his exclusion of the female from the process of evolution (Lane, 1990, p.230). Instead, she believed in the equal capacity of women to contribute to human welfare beyond simply occupying a restricted sexual role gratifying men’s needs.

**Patriarchal myths**

In the case of the present analysis, myth is conceived in the terms adopted by the French critic Roland Barthes as being “naturalized” or “normalized meaning” that backgrounds the historical forces by “a false ‘naturalness’ with which newspaper, art and commonsense constantly dress up a reality which … is undoubtedly determined by history” (Barthes, 1972. P.11). Extending from this sense, patriarchal myths are founded on a system of producing signification that functions as a process of representing the world on an essentialist ground supporting the view that man is the centre for which the world is made. This perspective
excludes women’s perceptions and experiences, and takes them for being aberrant from the norm embodied in man’s worldview. Since it is exclusionary, patriarchy only survives, not by constituting a final truth, neither by producing an infallible epistemic model, but rather by oppressing and devoicing everything belonging to the female sphere.

**On deconstruction**

Developed by the Algerian-born French philosopher Jacque Derrida, deconstruction was originally conceived in his works as a critical method used for reading literary texts for the sake of unveiling their contradictions and lack of coherence, besides revealing their subtle strategies of concealing the dysfunctions of signification jeopardizing the text’s discursive paradigm (Derrida, 1976;1978). Against pure and absolute static meaning founded on binary oppositions, the method of deconstruction questions the presence of truth and unveils the relativity of values, to convey that these latter cannot achieve a fixed totality since they are always delayed and being in the making. However, crossing the boundaries of literature, deconstruction has been applied to both verbal and non-verbal discourse in its broad sense to encompass academic and scientific disciplines along with culture and cultural products (Nealon, 1993). In this regard, not only has deconstruction been implemented by Afro-American thinkers such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., but also adopted by feminists like Barbara Johnson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Luce Irigary and Judith Butler. Beyond focusing on the discursive trouble spots of Gilman’s Herland, the present analysis is rather intended to show how this novel itself deconstructs the patriarchal imaginary through demystifying that male representation of women depend more on mythical constructs than on systematic truth certainties.

**The myth of physical superiority**

From the start on their arrival to Herland, the three men do not believe that a women’s society can sustain itself without men. Mistakenly, observing the cultivation of the forest land and the implementation of a considerable network, Terry deduces that Herland must have been tended by men. Acting upon a cluster of received stereotypes, Jeff thinks that women are to be protected by men while Terry argues vociferously that women are to be conquered. With more encounters with the inhabitants of Herland, The spiral of stereotypes opens further to take various dimensions. Facing the women, the men find them hard to seduce or even to catch up with; as they try to catch the women observing them from the treetop, they realise that these
latter can outrun them. Later, they find out that they enjoy agile bodies, strong physical prowess and brave conduct. Contesting the male physical superiority, the Herlandians destabilise the essentialist male view that physical strength is essentially male. The women’s remarkable athleticism leads them to rethink the cultural conditioning and restrictions of women by patterns of patriarchal normativity. Beaten by the three girls while playing a tossing game, it becomes necessary for Van to reflect and infer that the context of Herland, which is different from the context of his original society, can produce different female physical predispositions. Back home where the men came from, the weakness of modern women is largely imposed due to the “phallocentric” view that females are to be sheltered, a view aiming to contain and subordinate both their minds and bodies. With such a radical insight, Gilman pushes home a poignant demythifying remark that patriarchal discourse can assume sweeping hegemony on women on the grounds of neutralizing all forms of their potential agency by naturalizing the male gaze as the normative center that creates everything around it.

Van, Jeff and Terry come to Herland to explore women who do not fall in the scope of their stereotypes. In fact, their expectations based on masculine criteria of femininity are challenged by their encounter with women that “were not in the girl sense, beautiful” (Gilman, 1998, p.16-17). They are “strong”, “well-knit” and “fearless”. They wear practical stitched robes or long tunics that no longer foreground the female body to distinguish it from the males. Although their hair is cut short, Van starts to reassess his judgements on their lack of femininity as erroneous perception. Instead, he begins to question the normative view on femininity, and thus acknowledges that he has utterly mistaken what women are likely to be, rethinking his assumption that “‘Woman’ in the abstract is young, and, we assume, charming” (p.17).

Ironically, when the three men are caught captive by the women, they grow long hair, which affiliates them with the signs of femininity as constructed in the contours of their own masculine discourse. This role reversal is symbolically handled by Gilman in order to interrogate the masculine boundaries as incapable of defining what femininity is. For more dramatic deconstruction, Terry who believes that women are born to be mastered by men, is ironically

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3 Coined by Lacan (1977), phallocentrism is the male-privileging centering on the phallus to produce meaning for signifying human experience.
portrayed as a weak reckless man who is dependent on women due to his narrow-minded imaginary shackling him altogether to lusty desires determining his representation of femininity. However, encountering Alima who is physically strong, intellectually brilliant, morally engaged and strictly uncompromising of her independence, Terry finds himself alienated from his macho certitudes as he becomes unable to prove his superiority within a new cultural context where the male perspective is inexistent. Rejecting Herland as a space of unwomanly “neuters”, Terry expresses a myth of femininity that is itself rejected and neutralised amid a female experience resisting the patriarchal world view.

The myth of male intellectual superiority

Of further challenge to the male visitors, the women of Herland do not conceive the body and the mind as binary opposites or conflicting units functioning separately. On the contrary, each is seen to constitute an inalienable facet of the other. This is clearly visible in their education theory that considers that “the mind is as natural as a thing as the body” (p.89). For both need to gradually develop and grow through appropriate stimulation, nurturing and active exercising. On equal footing, they are considered two means to be used jointly in order to overcome obstacles; and, at the same time, they constitute an integrated end to satiate and enjoy within pro-social parameters. Through a holistic education predicated on knowing and doing, the mental integrates the physical capacities of the body to produce coherent strong personalities enabled by the principle of complementarity to downplay the limitations of each and recreate them in a way that produces a rich human experience. In the same vein of a deconstructive argument, Herland offers a space to reflect on the shortcomings of the male-dominating epistemology that reduces multiplicity on the binary splitting of the human agent. With a tyrant tearing of the mind from the body through a hierarchy that privileges the first over the second, the patriarchal view advocates the superiority of the mind to appropriate reason and consciousness as exclusively male assets, and to mark the body as a female sphere determining women’s action for performing a lower role. Revising this discourse, Gilman valorises both components as interdependent factors in human subjectivity to demonstrate that women can also assume both forms of actions, and to unveil that role distribution stands mainly on the basis of unnatural and historical power relationships masterminded by men’s power interests.
Furthermore, women in Herland are shown to enjoy a great predisposition for intellectual and scientific activity; for they “had been playing with the arts and sciences-as far as they knew them-for a good many centuries now with inevitable success” (p.61). From physiology, sanitation, physical culture to educational psychology, this female community integrates science within a large framework of the social wellbeing beyond any power aspirations of dominance. Besides, the women of Herland are capable of developing an epistemology based on relativity and open interpretation; for “when a given line of observation seemed to lead to some very dreadful inference they always gave us the benefit of doubt, leaving it open to further knowledge” (p.68).

Unlike the patriarchal mode of knowledge used by the three Americans to make sense of their experience in this “strange” land, the women do not tend to give up to the patriarchal preconceptions and final conclusive certainties. Rather, they tend to question and revise their own reasoning to achieve an open-minded worldview that can even challenge the Cartesian fixities, for in Herland “they had no theory of the essential opposition of good and evil” (p.87). Moreover, even if she is a late Victorian writer, Gilman creates a world of women who, in a post modern way of critical thinking, believes in the changing dynamics of human personality as they “put psychology with history- not with personal life” (p.90). Besides, with self-criticism, Herland endeavours to make more improvements in the quality of their society because they believe in “the critic and the inventor” (p.65) as extensions of female intellectual capacities.

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4 Although Gilman did not write in a fragmentary style common to ‘écriture feminine’, Herland shares with its proponents a relativist and pluralist perspective on different issues

5 Like Foucault (1976) and Judith Butler (1990), Gilman’s Herland makes hints that women’s subjectivity is not natural or static but culturally contingent and historically shifting.
Likewise, keeping women in the private sphere of domestic work as a claim for men’s care of women is emphatically contested in Herland as a pure act of domestication that the modern world enacts in order to subjugate them by constraining their potential⁶. Moreover, Herland views the institution of marriage itself as being a woman-enslaving apparatus that bereaves women of their freedom and symbolically eclipses them by bereaving them of their names. Significantly, Alima rejects dropping off her own name and taking her husband’s as she criticises that “a wife is the woman who belongs to a man” (p.100). Being married according to a modern man’s tradition is seen by Alima as a way of dispossessing wives of their autonomy through a marital institution that defines them in terms of their husbands’ identity. On parallel grounds, besides rethinking the marital institution, Gilman questions the sexual foundations of marriage which give a higher priority to men’s desires than to the wife as a full partner.⁷ To illustrate, as Van manages to control his sexuality by overweighing the rational side and the sense of friendship with Ellador, he becomes a master of his sexual drives. This reinforces the novel’s hypothesis that male sexuality is a controllable human instinct rather than being a ceaseless tyrant to appease for justifying phallocentric claims based on tendencies of promiscuity, polygamy and treating women as sex objects of consumption. Simultaneously, through the character of Van, Gilman concedes that sexuality can perform a significant articulation of affection between men and women even if reproduction is not the ultimate aim. In fact, sexuality is debated in Herland with a revising stance seeking to reformulate it, redress it and humanise it in order to transform it from a tool of dominance into an egalitarian bond between two different but equal sexes.

The myth of patriarchal order and providence

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⁶ Quoting Sophia Tolstoy who wrote in her diary: “you are stuck there forever and there you must sit” Beauvoir (2009, p.586) thinks marriage is an oppressive institution that restricts women in a converging way with Gilman’s feminist thoughts.

⁷ Gilman argued that Charles Darwin subordinated women as he postulated in his theory of evolution that male sex selection is conditioned by continuous sex contact unlike women’s weak sexuality. For Gilman, Darwin is inclined to legitimate masculine oppressive behaviour manifesting in acts of domestic violence and rape (p.36)
Longing for adventure, Van and his friends fly to Herland. However, they find none since this land is vacant of all sorts of struggles, which invokes and critically addresses the exclusive prerogative pretentiously held by men to organise and ensure order for the human wellbeing. Ironically, in Herland women are portrayed capable of enacting an egalitarian social system predicated on equal wealth distribution. In opposition to the capitalist free enterprise spirit, the socialist line of Herland promotes solidarity, cooperation and downplays competitive individualism. In their community, women make a harmonious society that takes the shape of a family beyond the authoritarian model of the state. Besides, Herland is void of power struggle, power seeking and power relationships since the source authority is located within wisdom, experience and the inhabitants’ predisposition for caring for children’s education.

Symbolically, Gilman suggests that women are capable of showing a more philanthropic type of organisation that contrasts irreconcilably with the patriarchal instrumental rationalism which is motivated by utilitarianism. In other words, women’s social model in Herland is shown capable to constitute a constructive alternative to solve social injustice on the basis of toning down egoism and self-interest. In such a system, Herland voices a political feminism that hypothesises for a society wherein every member is responsible to eradicate diseases, crimes and war beyond an authoritarian male-dominated structure model centring power in the hands of hegemonic elite. Moreover, Gilman overtly deconstructs man’s rationalism, claiming that its resulting state’s institutions and economic production cannot do without social ethics to sustain a dignified human society free from various oppressive practices. Instead, values of sacrifice, among other things, are shown to constitute a major principle of the women’s ideals to reach a symbiotic community. As a case in point, even if most of the women desire to have more than one child, they give up this tendency for the sake of society’s demographic balance. In short, the myths of women’s inferiority to manage, organise, rule and elaborate a coherent rational society that could live up to the community’s needs and, at the same time, preserve their humanness, is deconstructed on the non-exclusionary paradigms of Herland as an antithetical work of fiction.

8 In The Second Sex (2009) Simone de Beauvoir addresses the same patriarchal myth of order making mentioning misogynist opinions of the Greeks Pythagoras who wrote, "There is a good principle that created order, light and man and a bad principle that created chaos, darkness and woman." (p.114)

9 Like Gilman, in her novel essay Three Guineas (1938), Virginia Woolf is quite positive that humanity can avoid war if women’s opinions are taken into account.
In a similar vein, forbidding childbearing for women who show anti-social behaviour, this community has no criminals since no room is left for reproducing hereditary criminal character. Besides, the mother is not the only one to educate the child, for other wiser women take charge of ensuring an optimal upbringing\(^\text{10}\). Significantly, part of motherhood in *Herland* lies in women’s readiness to entrust their children to other educators, believing this to be part of society’s common interest. Bearing the patriarchal system in mind, it can be said that the socialisation of the individual in Herland is predicated on a different and unique form of subjectivity. Through a wholly dedicated motherhood, the subject can be seen as an extension of collective affective factors that are free from any kind of institutional coercion or power distributing codes. Instead, subjectivity in this utopian feminist world is seen beyond the reductionist categories of phallogocentric patriarchy that rigidly creates intransitive subjects with passive predispositions to perform and reproduce a predetermining male power. Unlike the patriarchal world, Herland produces free agents who can participate within vital norms that are different from the macho parameters. Within such an organically different society, women, through an extreme spirit of altruistic and caring sense of motherhood, succeed to generate balanced individuals free from the neurotic repercussions of the psychological frustrations that engender a split personality in the Freudian world from which the three men came. Namely, in the absence of males, subjectivity in *Herland* is not dependent on a normative, oppressive and violent oedipal complex that holds the mother as an object of patriarchal appropriation and suppresses the child’s desires through a reality principle for the sake of an institution-backed civilisation. Instead, unlike patriarchy, “parthenogenesis” and motherhood can bring about an intersubjective society wherein females are no longer castrated or lacking. They are complete individuals who are psychologically balanced, interconnected and capable to produce a power-free culture that celebrates life as its very focus within humane feminist conditions.

Moreover, in *Herland* Gilman strikes an eco-feminist note to celebrate women’s affinity with nature.\(^\text{11}\) In sharp contrast to the world of modernity where the men came from, Herland

\(^{10}\) Consider Gilman’s(1998) similarity with Simone de Beauvoir’s(2009) suggestion that children’s education and breeding should be considered a social affair, not only parents’ responsibility (Gilman,1998,p.76).

\(^{11}\) Coined by the French writer Françoise d’Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme Ou Mort* (1974), ecofeminism is a term used to defend that feminism and ecology are interconnected and that women are more interactive and
does not suffer from the greedy acts of exploitation of natural resources. Instead, a large interest is invested to keep nature wholesome to the extent of venerating it. In many ways, the inhabitants are revealed to entertain an existential type of intercourse with various details of their environment. When the men came into the first encounter with the space of Herland, they find it Eden-like with large trees “trimmed” that stood “like a huge umbrella, with circling seats beneath”(p.12). With a principle of deep rooted respect, the women in Herland care for “their country as a florist cares for his costliest orchids” (p.15). Also, animals are treated with considerable friendliness. Unlike the unsafe world of the visitors, dogs are not kept muzzled and just an animal squeak of hunger is enough to make it fed. Herland does not live on animal’s meat; therefore they do not kill animals for the sake of a profit-making meat industry. Also, out of full consideration for every brute, the women do not take a calf away from its mother’s milk to satisfy their own needs. With such contrasts to the three men’s world, Herland does not deal with nature on the basis of a materialistic utilitarianism motivated by equations of benefits.

Within a wise outlook of balance and continuity, this female community shows high responsibility to nature since they consider it their source of life. Accordingly, one of the most obvious symptoms of their ecological attachment manifests continuously in the magical appellation “mother earth”. Beyond seeing nature as a set of physical forces and natural laws of rivalry and struggle, Herland conceives that forests and animals are causes of women’s continuity that cooperate with them and sustain their existence. Unlike patriarchal dualism, humanising nature is the paradigmatic principle with which Herland inhabitants harmonise with their environment within a world view that no longer conceives of nature as an object of domination, but rather as an ultimately conditional requirement for the birth of human culture and civilisation. Of equal importance, this feminist ecological awareness is of high significance in decentering the myth that holds that men are the most superior of all the species since plants and animals are capable to assume agency in the shaping of human biology and in reinforcing human survival. Therefore, Gilman’s utopia articulates different aspects of eco-feminism that range from an analysis defending women’s privileged predisposition for interconnecting with nature, to a critique of patriarchal epistemology that separates culture from nature, to a

protective to natural environment than men. Ecofeminism also conceives that women are exploited by the patriarchal society in the same way as natural resources.
deconstruction of the male capitalist “laissez passer laisser faire” that is responsible for environmental deterioration.

In a similar vein, the inhabitants of Herland are highly skilled at violence management. When trying to subdue the men and take them captives, the women no longer have recourse to physical deterrence. Instead, the “vigilance committee”, whose “attitude was not the rigid discipline of soldiers” (p.19), took them to doctors in order to control them by gently driving them into unconsciousness through a sweet-smelling anaesthesia. After they get up, the men find themselves in a big room enjoying through many windows “a scent of blossoming gardens outside” (p.21) to realise later that there are no jails in this society. Given all the convenient comforts of food and clothing, they are taken afterward to be initiated to the language of Herland and at the same time to teach the women the foreign language of the visitors. Unlike the rigid methodology of modern teaching, the men are taught intuitively on the basis of understanding the learners as whole persons along with the learning difficulties they are likely to encounter. Proceeding in such a way, the community of Herland substitutes punishment as a corrective practice with soft measures of cognitive rehabilitation in which the individual is led to actively construct a positive social behaviour. In addition, unlike the modern institutions that are principled on a discourse of pre-emptive punitive and disciplinary practices, Herland promotes social coexistence through integrative strategies that start basically by equipping its visitors with a feminist dialogic knowledge enabling them to understand their perspective and system of values. Put another way, the men’s disruptive acts are undone by Herland through a feminine corrective that gradually involves them in the social life of their world. Therefore, imaginatively, Gilman interrogates the patriarchal approach that relies on violence, counter-violence and retaliation to eradicate brutality, laying bare that the punitive structure of managing antisocial behaviour is itself no less anti-human.

The patriarchal myths of traditions and religion

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12 In Surveiller et Punir (1975), Michel Foucault argues that prisons were familiar in the public scene as disciplinary institutions of modernity motivated by maintaining power. Consider how Gilman’s anti-disciplinary tropes relate to post-modern thoughts even if Herland is a late Victorian novel.
In the space of Herland, more value is given to changing contexts in such a way that everything is represented as being part of the immediate moment of changing contexts beyond venerating the past or transforming it into irreversible fixed social traditions. To elaborate, the inhabitants of Herland are aware of the necessity to renew their perception in order to assimilate new experience, respond to changing needs and unshackle the present from irrelevant affiliations to illusory stable social codes. With such a daring outlook, this community of women believes in evolution and relativity. They are conscious that they perceive experience from a certain temporal position likely to shift amid a flexible reality open to new ways of life in different upcoming moments. Nothing is to be sacred in Herland since its inhabitants are inclined to behave critically towards the norms, the laws and traditions. Besides, their tendency to analyse and revise the status quo enables them to hinder the development of absolutist institutions, and evade the advocation of stable power relationships petrifying human culture and fixing discriminate roles. On the reverse, the perception of Herland resists the hegemonic instrumentalisation of tradition and enact contingency as a process of emancipation based on a deep sense of existential equality emanating from the subjects’ right to see the world through their own eyes and not through their predecessors’ perspective. In a creative way, this utopian novel wittily revises tradition and criticizes it as a totalitarian patriarchal myth motivated by perpetuating man’s ascendency over women.

Even more, Herland does not adopt an authoritarian religion. Instead, the women have a kind of worshipful and spiritual attitude to motherhood and nature without subordinating their thinking to a natural or supernatural authority. In concrete terms, when Van the sociologist tells Ellador about the different religions of his world, she rejects his religious interpretations seeing that “their common basis being a Dominant Power or Powers, and some Special Behaviour, mostly taboos, to please or placate” (p.93). Capitalising the above religious attributes, Gilman seeks to convey how religious discourse is but a replicating extension of the power-obsessed male regime of thought. This latter operates through the binary opposition of the sacred and the profane to impose a set of inclusions and exclusions. In other words, the religious discourse is

13 In his *Archaeologie du Savoir* (1969), the French philosopher Michel Foucault argues that paradigms of thought and knowledge are not natural or static, but dynamic and power-sensitive within different moments of history; which implies that all types of “truth” are unstable and multiple according to shifting power relationships.
suspiciously portrayed by Ellador as a power apparatus that prescribes unnatural fixed norms in order to empower men for sustaining their dominance.\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, Ellador thinks that religions are hegemonic as they evolve from forms of “the human imagery of the Divine Force up through successive stages of bloodthirsty, sensual, proud, and cruel gods of early times to the conception of a common father with its corollary of a Common Brotherhood” (p.93). Striking this note of scepticism, Ellador invites the critical mind to think genealogically in order to dismantle the religious essentialist truths as mere extensions of patriarchal perceptions; and, consequently, she intends to unveil the mythic foundations on which male power aspirations are grounded. Through “an immense Loving Power”(p.98), as being a spiritual principle in the social life of Herland, Ellador thinks that the religious mind of men is rooted in the principle of projecting male violence on God. When van asks her if they have any theory of eternal punishment, she curtly answers back: “We have no punishment in life, you see, so we don’t imagine them after death” (p.95). Seeing that Herland is a crime-free space resulting from motherhood’s educational priorities, the women cannot develop the binary concepts of afterlife damnation or salvation, since they think that men’s decadent deeds producing a decadent reality is what inspires the male imaginary to produce a sordid afterlife image named hell. Daring to question the sacred and the profane underpinning the invention of gender myth and the naturalisation of male domination, Gilman usurps the patriarchal binary paradigm from a fundamental source of its power legitimacy.

**Conclusion**

In the Utopia of *Herland*, the stereotypes of women’s frailty and inefficiency are replaced by feminine strength, creativity and agency in a way that entails an overt feminist counter-discourse to the male-centred constructions. Although it is a late Victorian novel, Gilman uses in a sense sharp post-modern insights to deconstruct the myths of male superiority along with its legitimating arsenal of tradition and religion. Satirical in tone, Herland is a utopia

\textsuperscript{14} Similarly, in chapter 4, Beauvoir (2009) argues that the Christian clergy despised women to dominate them. Beside Paul the Apostle and Ambrose, she quotes John Chrysostom who wrote, “Of all the wild animals, none can be found as harmful as women.”(p.133).
that extends criticism to the social injustice incurred on women for backgrounding them within the domestic and unequal institution of marriage, and depriving them of presence and contribution to the public sphere. A strong advocating voice of women’s autonomy, Herland squares with Gilman’s outspoken views that women can be economically productive and independent, and that capitalism exploits them through unpaid domestic labour as well as through arbitrary male-oriented myths.\textsuperscript{15}

However condemnatory to patriarchy of which Terry’s attempt to rape Alima is a violent instance that results in exiling him from Herland, Gilman closes her utopian narrative striking an optimistic note. On the one hand, Jeff remains for good in Herland and Ellador departs with Van in order to rethink and redefine humanity outside the restrictions of each gender’s perspective. On the other hand, through Celcis’s pregnancy from Jeff as a defending act of heterosexuality, Gilman makes an overt call for women and men to understand one another’s drives and perspective for the sake of enriching human experience and promoting coexistence.\textsuperscript{16} In the absence of men, the women in Herland think of the three visitors as women since the new category of maleness resists their structure of thinking. The deadlock caused by their continuous misunderstandings lays evidence that they share little grounds for viable dialogue. Besides ignoring all about the peculiarities and the priorities of Herland as a culture and a society, the

\textsuperscript{15} In her \textit{Women and Economics} (1898), Gilman defends the thesis that women can be financially autonomous and competitive to men in public life.

\textsuperscript{16} Like Gilman, existentialist Simone de Beauvoir(2009) thinks that “...to carry off this supreme victory, men and women must, among other things and beyond their natural differentiations, unequivocally affirm their brotherhood”(p.862).
men’s expectations are baffled by the women’s “parthenogenesis”. On their behalf, these women know nothing about the private heterosexual family nor about male sexuality. When Jeff declares that also “a husband is the man who belongs to a woman” (p.100), his attitude becomes a kind of hope that there is a common ground to start dialogue between two different regimes of thought. What lacks in both is an inclusive awareness about the meaning of humanity and a possibility to know and appreciate one another.

References:


The Effect of Gender Differences on the Internal Structure of Creative Self-efficacy Construct

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Abstract

This study examines the internal structure of creative self-efficacy construct using unidimensional Rating Scale model. The main focus is on checking the unidimensionality assumption and the impact on its implementation of the main background characteristic - gender identity. It was found statistically significant differences between boys and girls in the assessment of their own creativity on the factors of creative thinking “originality” and “elaboration”. Thus, was confirmed the known fact about the best women’s ability to develop and improve existing ideas, while men better inherent ability to produce new ideas that differ from existing. This also was manifested in the self-assessment. The Differential Item Functioning analysis revealed items that are evaluated differently in groups of boys and girls. This difference was not relevant to the construct being measured. Removing from the analysis of items which demonstrated DIF by gender has resulted in increasing the percentage of variance explained by the model.

Keywords: creativity, creative self-efficacy, gender, gender differences.

Introduction

A new World Economic Forum report, The Future of Jobs, asked chief human resources and strategy officers from leading global organizations to identify the skill sets the workforce of 2020 will need. Compared side by side to the skills identified as needed in 2015, the shifts aren’t dramatic – except for one skill: creativity. Creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need. Creativity has proved to be a very important competitive advantage of the human mind. People can no longer monopolize logical thinking in such domains as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Robots may help us get to where we want to be faster, but they can’t be as creative as humans (yet). Individuals without creativity will be left behind in a world in which non-creative thought can be automated, but creative solutions to problems are at a premium.
The report also states that the rising role and importance of women in the economy is transforming the composition of the talent pool and extends the skills profiles of the jobs required. Women’s economic power, aspirations perceived as driver of change in the industry. And although now the talents of half the world’s potential workforce are thus often wasted or underutilized due to barriers on the path to women’s successful workforce integration, the Fourth Industrial Revolution now presents an unprecedented opportunity to place women’s equal participation in the workplace at the heart of preparations for the shifts to come. But in order to achieve success, women should have the necessary skills are not worse than men, including creativity.

Modern research of creativity goes back to a famous Guilford’s American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential address (1950). Creativity is generally defined as a stable, continuously distributed trait, separate from intelligence that is the source of novel, original, and appropriate solutions (Brown, 1989; Guilford, 1950). Creativity can be expressed through two state-like dimensions: creative thinking and creative performance. Creative thinking is an internal mental state like expression of creativity in which fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality enables an individual to produce novel, original, and appropriate thoughts (Torrance, 2008). Creative performance, in contrast, is seen as an external social state-like expression of creativity in which an individual’s internal drive, the domain appropriateness of his or her work, and the approval of that domain’s gatekeepers lead to recognition (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Although studies of creativity have been commonplace for decades, but research which would specifically address the internal structure of creativity constructs is still rare (Beghetto, 2013; Mathisen & Bronnick, 2009; Starko, 2013; Yang & Cheng, 2009).

Self-efficacy is a motivational state that is an individual's self-rated capacity to execute certain actions in order to achieve some objective. Self-efficacy “is concerned not with what one has but with belief in what one can do with whatever resources one can muster” (Bandura, 2007). According to the Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, a person with a high level of self-efficacy are more productive in the activities which they are doing that is a result of their belief in the ability to manage situation. A self-efficacy construct exists for every domain of functioning. Creative self-efficacy is a motivational state that is an individual’s self-efficacy for expressing creativity. Obviously, the person who sees himself as a creative personality will try to show and prove this quality in professional activities. To help people better express their creativity, there is a need for a tool to measure creative self-efficacy. Various researchers have attempted to operationalize this construct (Wilson, Guilford, & Christenson, 1953; Torrance, 1966, 1972,
Some authors consider the construct “creative self-efficacy” as a one-dimensional, others suggest the presence of at least two dimensions similar to construct “creativity”.

Features of creativity and creative self-efficacy of men and women have long attracted the attention of researchers. However the evaluation of gender differences in creativity is considered controversial area of research and the results are sometimes very contradictory. Some studies do not show any differences between men and women (Baer & Kaufman, 2008; Charyton & Snelbecker, 2007), while others point to significant gender differences in the creative expression (Hoff, 2005; Matud, Rodriguez, & Grande, 2007). The study of gender differences with regard to creative expression generally shows gender as a moderating variable that influences creative expression differently depending on the context. Baer (1997) used poetry-writing and story-writing in an experimental study where levels of extrinsic reward and evaluation were manipulated. In the study of 128 eighth-grade students, a motivation-by-gender interaction effect was observed. While little difference was observed depending on whether intrinsic or extrinsic reward was used for boys, a difference of half a standard deviation was observed for girls. Additionally, Oral et al. (2007) reported gender differences in creative expression in the absence of motivational manipulation, though the authors discuss this in the context of other studies that did not find such an effect of gender differences. Schack (1989) failed to find a significant effect of gender differences on creative self-efficacy, and Beghetto (2007) found only a weak relationship. Gong et al. (2009) reported a zero-order correlation between gender differences and creative self-efficacy. Sometimes gender differences in creative self-efficacy manifested in different ways in different cultures. Cheung & Lau (2010) showed that schoolgirls in Hong Kong outperformed boys on many factors of creativity. Ai (1999) investigated the relationship between different aspects of creativity and academic achievements of Spanish students. Flexibility was the dominant factor associated with success for boys while for girls fluency and elaboration are more important factors.

The aim of this work is to study the impact of gender differences on the internal structure of the creative self-efficacy construct and its dimensions.
Analysis

For research was used questionnaire (Abbott, 2010) that measures two aspects of creative self-efficacy: creative thinking self-efficacy (CTSE) and creative performance self-efficacy (CPSE). CTSE was expressed through four latent factors (elaboration, flexibility, fluency, and originality). CPSE was expressed through three latent factors (domain, field, and personality). These seven latent factors are each identified by several manifest indicators, or questions: four questions for each factor.

The survey involved 248 junior students of three different specialties, among them 181 girls and 67 boys. On the scale from 0 to 4 students evaluated the level of expression of qualities referred to in the question: 0 means not at all confident, 4 means highly confident. The questions were formulated so that a higher score indicates a higher level of creative self-efficacy. This made it possible to measure all aspects of the construct “creative self-efficacy” on a common interval scale using Rating Scale Model (Andrich, 1978).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Creative Thinking Self-Efficacy (CTSE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fluency</td>
<td>1. Get a large number of different ideas or responses?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Come up with many possible solutions to a situation?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Arrive at a variety of conclusions given a difficult situation?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Think of many answers to a difficult problem or situation?</td>
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<td>flexibility</td>
<td>5. Come up with different kinds of responses, not just different responses?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Answer problems in different ways, each of which are unique and special?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Think of many types of ideas while considering a problem?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Answer problems in different forms or styles?</td>
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<tr>
<td>elaboration</td>
<td>9. Think of ways to defend a 'crazy' thought, by thinking back on what you already know?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Talk to your friends about wild ideas, and make them sound reasonable?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Tell stories based on dreams you had, even if you need to fill in answers?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Connect day-dreams or new ideas to things you have already learned?</td>
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<tr>
<td>originality</td>
<td>13. Be the first in a group to come up with an original suggestion?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Arrive at a novel solution before other people?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Beat other people in imagining a brand new idea first?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Think of ideas no one else has?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Creative Performance Self-Efficacy (CPSE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>domain</td>
<td>17. Make sense of something you want to learn to do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. Start to learn to do something, even if there are obstacles to doing so?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Teach yourself how to do something new?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. Choose do something that is more important within your culture?</td>
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<tr>
<td>field</td>
<td>21. Create a novelty that people will choose, over other novelties available?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22. Find an audience that is well-connected to others in society?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23. Network with people to convince them that what you made is the best?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24. Convince others that you have made a valuable contribution?</td>
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<tr>
<td>personality</td>
<td>25. Be motivated to come up with new ideas?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>26. Have fun coming up with new ideas, after having learned from others?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27. Wake up feeling like you can come up with new ideas if you want to?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. Sustain wonder about something, even after working with it for years or decades?</td>
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The easiest item which indicates a high level of creative self-efficacy for all respondents was item 17 (-0.81 logits). The most difficult item for girls was item 21 (0.78 logits) of CPSE, which characterizes the environment (field). Item 24 (0.55 logits) from the same category was the most difficult for boys. Mutual placing on interval scale student’s levels of creative self-efficacy and item parameters indicates a deliberate overstatement by students their own creativity. Average levels of creative self-efficacy (0.6 logits for boys and 0.51 logits for girls) did not statistically differ (p>0.05).

It was analyzed how empirical data fit to the model. Almost all items have a satisfactory value of infit and outfit statistics, and among people whose data do not fit to models, boys and girls are equally (by 1%).

The Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis revealed items that are evaluated differently in groups of boys and girls and this difference may not be relevant to the construct being measured. Two items 10 and 11 that characterize aspect “elaboration” of CTSE are statistically significantly (p<0.05) different in favor of girls with a difference of more than 0.5 logits. Items 14, 15 (originality, CTSE) and 21 (field, CPSE) were in favor of boys. Moreover, Differential Group Functioning (DGF) analysis revealed that factors “elaboration” and “originality” of CTSE are evaluated statistically differently by boys and girls. Girls assessed statistically significantly higher their ability to develop, supplement the already existing ideas (elaboration) while boys - the ability to propose new ideas, different from the generally accepted (originality). The factors “flexibility” and “fluency” of CTSE and all the factors of CPSE were assessed by boys and girls at the same level (Fig. 1).
An important part of the analysis is the study of the construct dimension. The model Rating Scale assumes that construct “creative self-efficacy” has one dimension. To test this, we used Principle Components Analysis of matrix of standardized residuals in the program Winsteps. Analyzing the entire test as a whole, we got that 23.8% of the variance explained by the model, but it is still more than 20% and unidimensionality assumption may be taken (Reckase, 1979). Among the items with opposite loadings were more items of CTSE. Removing from the analysis of items 3 and 15 with loading that differ most from each other has led to increasing the percentage of variance explained by the model only to 24.2%. Low percentage of variance explained by the participants (5.3%) leads to the thought that the cause of poor unidimensionality is not only the existence of two groups items CTSE and CPSE, but some individual features people (for example, gender). Removing from the analysis of items 10, 11, 14 and 15, which characterizing aspects “elaboration” and “originality” of CTSE and which demonstrated DIF by gender, has resulted in increasing the percentage of variance explained by the model to 25.3%. It is obvious that gender differences are not decisive, their absence does not guarantee full compliance with the model, but their study helps to understand the structure of the construct. It loses features of multidimensionality after removal of several items of CTSE.

Conclusions

Conducted analysis proves the possibility of using unidimensional Rating Scale model to measure “creative self-efficacy” latent variable. Non-fulfillment of unidimensionality assumption is more typically for Creative Thinking than for Creative Performance Self-Efficacy. This is due to the differences between factors “elaboration” and “originality” of CTSE which are influenced by many extraneous factors such as gender. In this study was confirmed the known fact about the best women’s ability to develop and improve existing ideas, while men better inherent ability to produce new ideas that differ from existing. It should be expected that as a result of self-evaluation of these natural differences also show up. Therefore, it should avoid items which may contain bias on at least some of the respondents, when developing of measurement tools.
References


Psychological Research into Female Master-Students’ Identity with the Leading “Management” Orientation

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Abstract

Relevance of women’s identity research when they only start career is due to the awareness of their own values and potential for a balanced decision-making both in their family and career. The fulcrum of the research is the idea of unity in social and personal identity and its cognitive construal, underlying the concept of “prospective identity”. The aim is to explore female master-students’ structure of identity (actual and prospective) with leading management orientation.

The methods used in the research involve Career anchors test, Twenty Statements Test; narrative technique «I Am in 10 Years’ Time»; Mann-Whitney U-test. Total sample size comprises 102 women aged 20-27.

The research has shown that a third of the respondents consider management a desired field of self-realization. If we compare them with the girls, who are not motivated by a manager career, their identity is characterized by a wider field of social identities, closer identification with professional roles, while maintaining the importance of family. Primarily, they realize themselves through emotional feminine characteristics; but masculine self-characterization such as commitment, persistence, intelligence etc. have a high specific weight in their descriptions. However, it is stated that prospective identity of the great majority management-oriented women, does not include the concept of "I Am a Manager in the Future." This indicates deficit of women’s career motivation as a result of a conflict in the structure of their actual identity.

Keywords: social, personal and prospective identity, career orientation.
Introduction

Relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that for women who target at self-actualization in management, the "start" of their career plays a defining role for future career progressing. The decisions they make at the initial stage of their career concern not only the professional sphere, but also choosing a certain way of life, particularly in terms of finding balance in "family-career" relations. All this makes special demands on women’s identity formation. Unless enough clear-cut, career decisions may result in frustration in personal life and professional sphere in the future.

Analysis of current research shows that identity in the context of female career planning and growth is insufficiently studied. The aim is to explore female master-students’ structure of identity (actual and prospective) with leading management orientation.

The present research

The notion of a «career» in psychology is used to evaluate professional life quality, professional self-realization and personal growth in the organizational hierarchy. A person making career is viewed upon as the one targeted at the implementing his/her personal and professional potential.

One of the best explored directions of a professional career in foreign psychology is the research of an individual career and its anchors (career orientations), started by E.Schein (E.Schein, 2008). Career orientations reveal personal targeting towards definite norms and values in career which help him/her realize his/her personal perception of professional activity. They are inner sources of career aims and they also define tends as for personal self-development and self-realization in professional activity. It’s the end of university studying when career orientations are disclosed in all the peculiarities while setting career aims and planning a career.

The choice of career orientations is ideally the result of generalizing, stable, conscious and realistic self-perception and one’s own place in the world.

We understand a female career as a complicated psychological phenomenon influencing many aspects of personal development and connected with an identity transformation. The interest to this phenomenon has grown much recently as women’s attitude to the career depends
on a social-historical order, ethno-socio-cultural background of the society, in which women are the subjects of a career.

The analysis performed by F.A. Semenova in her thesis (Semenova, 2011) proves that a female career has been studied rather fully and in its various aspects. The author marks that such aspects have been studied rather in detail as satisfaction of women with work, models of female career development, the problem of gender discrimination, the impact of socialization on a female career development, barriers on the way to a successful career, carrier peculiarities of self-employed women.

The career of women managers was the object of studies from the point of view of its typology and female management style (Moll, 2012; Bendas, 2009). Very important for understanding the problems connected with planning a female career in management are the results of the research of female emotional tension and stress connected with career making and role conflicts (Greller, Parsons, & Mitchell, 1990), social-psychological peculiarities of women making their careers in traditionally «female» and «male» spheres (Sekaran, 1983).

Identity as a personal determinant of a successful career in management was studied by a Ukrainian researcher I.O. Bondarevska (Bondarevska, 2009). A number of new inner contradictions in the structure of a gender identity of women managers-to-be are revealed in her research. Meanwhile, analyzing a female career, M. Tkalych (Tkalych, 2016) points out the decisive impact of its beginning on the further professional life of a woman and her satisfaction with her life in general. Stable, conscious and realistic self-perception determines the clearness of career aims and their coordination with other aims in the life of girls (their families, children, development). Thus, our research is aimed at studying the identity maturing of the female master-students interested in management career in three aspects of identity: personal, social and prospective.

Theoretical basis of identity research is the unity of social and personal identity (Tajfel, Turner, 1986); the theory of cognitive identity construction (Breakwell, 2010); the concept of “prospective identity” (Cinnirella, 2010). The latest concept is especially significant to consider “self-mobility” in the woman life; let us reveal its essence in details. Russian researcher Olena Belinska described prospective identity summarizing previous research (A.P. Belinska, 2003):
Temporal aspect of identity which is understood as a set of specific characteristics related to the future; Integration of personal and social future identity of the subject and actualization of a "probable myself" in a social context; The result of reflexive processing of a large amount of information: the results of their own activities, the objective possibilities and models of self-actualization that currently exist in society and are demonstrated in the immediate environment;

The functions of prospective identity are determination and regulation of individuals’ behavior.

**Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of the study, the strategy of comparative research was chosen.

The study was organized in two stages:

- The first stage was devoted to evaluation of female master students’ career orientations and establishing the degree to which “management” orientation is revealed. The study involved two identical sub-samples: highly "management" oriented women were the first and the other ones for whom this career alternative is not significant were described in the second.

- The second (main) stage reveals the specificity of the women identity with leading management orientation by comparing the structure of actual and prospective identities of various sub-samples representatives.

The study is based on the following quantitatively and qualitatively empirical methods:

1. «Career Anchors» test of Edgar Schein adapted by V. Chiker, V. Vinokurov;
2. Twenty Statements Test of Manfred Kuhn & Thomas McPartland;
3. Narrative method “I am in 10 Years’ Time”.

To analyze self-characteristics and texts “I Am in 10 Years’ Time”, content analysis was used. The units of analysis were words denoting social identification (ethnic, professional, gender, family, interpersonal) and those meaning personal characteristics (physical, emotional, intellectual etc.). Their frequency distribution was taken into consideration.

Comparison of the two subsamples was carried out using statistical methods: Mann-Whitney U-test. The U-test allowed us to assess the reliability of the differences in the identity structure.
The research involved equal proportions of women future managers (master’s programs: managing schools and management in the agricultural sector) and female master students of non-managerial specialties (master's programs: philology, history, mathematics, geography, chemistry, biology, marketing). Index group was 30 women with polar attitude to careers in management.

Total sample size comprises 102 women aged 20-27. The research was conducted in Mykola Gogol Nizhyn State University and Kyiv University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine.

**Results**

The research into career orientations showed high significance of professional self-actualization for female master students in general. It was found that such value orientations as "stability", “good service", “autonomy" and "integration of life styles” dominate among female master students.

"Management" orientation in the study sample got the fifth rank out of nine (Table 1)

**Table 1. Profile career orientations of female master students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career orientation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«stability»</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«good service»</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«autonomy»</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«integration of life styles»</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«management»</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«entrepreneurship»</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«proficiency»</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«challenges»</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«permanent residence»</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the survey data showed that "management" career orientation according to the degree of its revelation is leading in 36% of female master students. It is moderate in 50% of the surveyed, and not marked – in only 14% of respondents. It was found that targeting at management depends on the specialty. In this vein, top "management” oriented women significantly prevail among female master students who are trained for managers of education.
Thus, over a third of female master students will try to integrate the efforts of others, to take responsibility for the common cause, and will be looking for a manager position in organizations. The features of their identities become the subject of further research.

**The results of comparative analysis of actual identity structure.** In the content analysis of the respondents’ self-descriptions subdivided into two subsamples there were found such features of identity among top "management” oriented female students:

First, it is found that the frequency balance of social and personal identity in both subsamples is shifted to personal identity. Consequently, female master students are experiencing themselves unique and different from others. The predominance of individualized depictions in all master students is favorable psychological conditions for selecting an individual path of self-actualization. The balance between social and personal determination of women is reflected in the following histogram.

![Fig.1. Balance between social and personal identities among female master students with different degree of “management” orientation revelation](image)

Secondly, it is found that the girls who categorize themselves more often through social characteristics are associated with management. They tend to identify themselves through a broader social context (a citizen, a Ukrainian); they mostly define themselves through professional and gender roles rather than family, and less often through interpersonal relations (a friend, a lover). The results characterize management oriented women as less loyal to traditional roles, more sensitive to the demands and recognition of reference groups and their social identity as such which is formed at the intersection of somewhat conflicting professional and family expectations.
Thirdly, regardless of their relationship to management, the personal identity of women represents emotional characteristics that reflect patterns of gender socialization. However, the frequency of emotional self-determination is significantly less emotional; and mental qualities are more frequently identified in the self-descriptions of management-oriented women than in the other group. It is shown in the following histogram 2.

![Fig. 2. The structure of personal identity of women with different degrees of “management” orientation](image)

It is established that top management-oriented women often identify themselves through qualities that are traditionally considered masculine (commitment, perseverance, determination) and less frequently through qualities traditionally considered feminine (sensitivity, caring, tenderness). It is shown in the following histogram 3.

![Fig. 3. The relationship between social and personal identity of female master students with different levels of "management" orientation](image)
Thus, among women who are management-oriented there are more of those who identify themselves as emotional, sensitive, caring, yet intelligent, purposeful, persistent, so those that tend to androgynous models.

**The results of the prospective identity research.** Drawing on content analysis of the narratives "I am in 10 years," it is found that the majority of surveyed top management-oriented women lack projection of being a manager in their vision of the future. They project themselves as working women at prestigious but not managerial positions (an employee at a foreign company, a PR worker or an entrepreneur).

In others (45%), the image of their being "manager in the future" embodies an attempt to find a balance in the "managerial career and family" and "self-realization and management femininity" based on reflective processing of information available about themselves, reference groups and models of female self-actualization in management.

Possible balance between "family and career" and "self-realization and femininity" is associated in the minds of master students with lower positions in managing hierarchy (head of a department, a school or kindergarten principal) where the role expectations are less controversial. These positions are considered most suitable for self-realization. The balance between social and personal aspects in prospective identity is reflected mainly in categorizing themselves as "a successful woman-mother", "a humane leader."

As for the comparison group, the "Self" projection in the future is linked to family and interpersonal roles alongside with work that corresponds to the traditional female role (teaching, charity, family business), and balance between social and personal is embodied in self-description "a happy wife, mother" and "a beloved wife."

**Conclusions**

1. Women with a top "management" orientation are not well aware of their career values and ways of their implementation. In the most cases, prospective identity is devoid of the determining potential, since it embodies current unresolved contradictions in personal and social identity. Women link climbing the managerial status ladder to the risk of losing family and femininity and inability to be happy, which can be considered an internal barrier to projecting their future in management.
2. The differences revealed in personal identity in comparison groups are associated with significant differences in social identity of women and are consistent with the results of studies conducted earlier (Bondarevskaya I.O., 2009).

3. Drawing on the results of the research, the initial stage of female career needs psychological support and young women should be led to finding personal balance between "career and family" and "self-realization and management femininity" options. Specific tasks may include:

- Help in understanding career values in the overall system of personal values of a woman;
- Enhancing “Self” resources needed for responsible planning;
- Counteracting stereotypes in female career;
- The expansion of information resources needed for decision-making and awareness of different models of self-actualization of women in management.

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GENDER, IDENTITIES AND EDUCATION

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Gender, Identities and Education

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Sadik Reddad
Hayat Naciri

Sultan Moulay Slimane University
Erasmus+ project “Gender Studies Curriculum: A Step for Democracy and Peace in EU-Neighboring Countries with Different Traditions” (GeSt),


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Adel Ben Youssef, University of Sousse, Tunisia
Foreword

All papers selected in this volume were subject to a rigorous peer-review process. They are reviewed and conceptualized into GIE volume. The papers selected are based on innovation, organization, and quality of presentation.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all authors and thank them all in considering and trusting GIE as the platform for publishing their invaluable work. All reviewers should be also thanked for their careful comments and advice. They have worked hard reviewing papers and making valuable suggestions for the authors to improve their work. We would like to thank the members of the program committees. Also, we would like to express our deepest and sincere gratitude to all the partners of the ERASMUS+ project who helped in the success of this work. A special word of gratitude is due to the President of Sultan Moulay Slimane University for his support. We are also grateful to the vice-president for his help. Finally, we sincerely appreciate the tireless efforts of Dr. Natalija Mazekiené (the Coordinator of the project) for her excellent contributions to make the volume a grand success.

Hayat Naciri
Introduction

This volume “Gender, Identities and Education” raises the issue of gender inequality in education and its impact on individuals and society. A prime motivation for editing this volume was to discuss different approaches to improving the quality of education. Thus, the major conclusion/recommendation of the volume is that the various societies the contributors represent must change attitudes towards gender in a very fundamental way if social, economic and political development and gender equality are to be achieved in education.

Dr. Hassan Zaid, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, and Dr. Ilham Bettach, Mohamed V University, reported that textbooks are important in the formation of children’s gender identity, and showed that the Amazigh textbooks serve to perpetuate the stereotypical gender roles which exist in Moroccan society.

In an inspiring contribution, Dr. Dorottya Redai, Central European University, addressed the issue of intersectional subjectivity constitution and social inequality reproduction in Hungarian secondary education and discussed how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered discourses and practices in a school.

Monica Porzionato, Central European University, analyzed how the introduction of a series of pedagogical programs aimed at sensitizing children to gender and sexuality in Italy has resulted in a rapidly growing body of discourses which, both explicitly and implicitly, aim at maintaining heteronormativity.

Dr. Lamia Azzouzi, Moulay Ismail University, reported on the socioeconomic situation of Moroccan women in her case study and their awareness of the necessity to change their social situation for their own well being. Through this survey, it has been demonstrated that housewives, today, can enjoy more and more independence, respect and success, thanks to running small businesses.

Dr. Mohamed Jaafari, Cadi Ayyad University, examined a significant feature of gender representation in the discourse underlying the current Moroccan EFL textbooks. He pointed out that multiple gender inequalities seem to persist in the textbooks. The results from the study imply that textbook designers should treat gender representation quantitatively and qualitatively.

Dr. Hayat Naciri, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, shed light on some of the most significant constraints to girls’ schooling in Morocco. She intended to make people in charge aware of the effects of
education and human development; and particularly NGOs regarding the role they can play to fight some negative traditional values to improve girls’ and women’s situation in Morocco.

Dr. Tetiana Lisova and Dr. Yury Kovalchuk, Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, presented an analysis of the answers of Ukrainian TIMSS-2011 participants to a student questionnaire in order to find the differences between boys and girls in matters related to Math and Science education. Overall, their results show that these differences are not significant.

Bouchaib Benzehhaf, Chouaib Doukkali University, presented an analysis of the results of a comparative study that set out to explore gender differences in the area of writing among Moroccan high school students. It has been found out that girls steadily out-perform boys in academic areas, and the differences are highly noticeable, thus suggesting a reversal of the traditional gender gap. However, it has also been found out that a peer perception gap persists, with boys refusing to recognize girls’ skills in spite of their higher grades.

Hind Elyoussoufi, University Sultan Moulay Slimane, examined how the contemporary Arab-American poet Mohja Kahf challenges the western and patriarchal interpretations of some Islamic cultural symbols like the “hijab” (the veil). In poems like “Descent in JFK”, “Hijab Scene # 7”, and “Thawrah Des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective”, Mohja Kahf offers an interesting counterpoint to challenge hegemonic narratives about Arab-American women rooted in the nineteenth century.

Dr. Souad Belhorma and Hajar Berghabi, University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, aimed to examine how NGOs exchange programs to help female university students reconstruct their social, economic, cultural, and gender identities in different Moroccan cities. They asserted that AIESEC exchange programs served both as tourism opportunities and a learning means.

Dr. Artūras Tereškinas, Vytautas Magnus University, analyzed postsocialist toxic masculinities as an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices characterized by excess and banality. The author emphasizes that fraught with fear and anxiety, Lithuanian politicians attempt to resolve their masculine ambiguities by resorting to dramatic performances of resentment, impetuousness, hatred, and denigration of others.

Dr. Hamid Masfour, University Sultan Moulay Slimane, maintains a practical deconstructionist analysis of the different relevant levels of patriarchal myths questioned in Gilman’s *Herland*, the work revises the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance.
Dr. Tetiana Lisova, Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, examines the internal structure of creative self-efficacy construct using unidimensional Rating Scale model. The author’s study confirmed the known fact about the best women’s ability to develop and improve existing ideas, while men better inherent ability to produce new ideas that differ from existing.

Dr. Oksana Shchotka, University Mykola Gogol Nizhyn State, explores female master-students’ structure of identity (actual and prospective) with leading management orientation. She argues that women with a top "management” orientation are not well aware of their career values and ways of their implementation. In the most cases, prospective identity is devoid of the determining potential, since it embodies current unresolved contradictions in personal and social identity.

Dr. Adel BenYoussef University Souss, asserts that the high percentage of female students in the three stages of education is not a coincidence but rather the fruit of historical developments, sacrifices and intellectual debate and controversy that the Tunisian society had gone through before the establishment of the French protectorate, and during the colonial period until the early years of independence.
Gender Identity in Amazigh Textbooks: Teaching Inequality

Ilham Bettach, Mohammed V University

Hassan Zaid, Sultan Moulay Slimane University

Abstract

Textbooks have a major socialization role; they define gender roles in learners’ minds and play a crucial role in determining their worldview of gender roles in a society (Delamont, 1980). Through exposure to stereotypical materials, children continue to associate personality traits with a particular sex, and consequently alter their behaviors and perceptions to conform to the perceived norm. In order to put the theoretical aspects of gender policy on textbooks into action and get rid of gender role stereotyping and sexism the researchers draw on Sandra Bem’s (1981) ideas on schemas to understand how gender identity is constructed and represented in primary level Amazigh textbooks of first and sixth grade. The main objective of this study was to discover how gender’s social roles are determined by the personality traits depicted in the currently used Amazigh language textbooks. The researchers used content analysis to quantify recurrent patterns and semi-structured interviews to deepen the understanding of gender identity construction in Amazigh classrooms. The results showed that textbooks’ gender representations reflect women and men’s current roles in the Moroccan society.

Keywords: Amazigh textbook, gender, identity, stereotype, sexism.

Introduction

Amazigh people are known to be the oldest inhabitants of Morocco and many other parts of North Africa. Therefore, Amazigh, also known as Berber, a Hamitic language of the Afro-Asiatic family, is the oldest language in North Africa (Gross, 1993). Its varieties stretch from western Egypt to Atlantic coast and from the Mediterranean down to Mali and Niger (Gross,
Amazigh speakers in Morocco are divided into three language areas: Tamazight, spoken is Middle Atlas Mountains, Tashelhit, in the Anti-Atlas Sus Mountains, and Tarifit in the Rif mountains. Although the presence of these languages was acknowledged some 5000 years ago (Boukous, 1995b, p.18), they have never been codified and the script currently used as the Amazigh writing system (Tifinagh) since 2003, was previously unknown in Morocco.

According to statistics provided by the High Commission for Planning (HCP, 2004), the overall Amazigh population is estimated at 30% of Morocco’s total population, while Tashlhit, Tamazight, and Tarifit varieties are spoken, by 52%, 31%, and 17% of the overall Amazigh population (Boukous 2011, p. 29). However, the statistics provided by other associations and other scholars estimate the Amazigh population at about 40% (Boukous, 1995; Ennaji, 1997; Tamzgha, 2003), and 45% (Sadiqi, 1997). The lack of agreement among these sources reveals that there are no exact and reliable statistics about the number of Amazigh speakers in Morocco as El Kirat (2004) argues.

Until recently, the Amazigh varieties were all oral and were not used in schools but were only used in informal settings, especially in rural areas. However, over the last three decades, the Moroccan language policy has witnessed influential changes. The first changes appeared in the new National Charter for Education and Training (Charte Nationale d'Education et de Formation), released in 1999. The Educational Charter (1999) referred to Amazigh as a national language, and allowed for an ‘opening’ on the Amazigh language in schools. In 2001, the state launched a change of the educational linguistic policy through the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) whose missions are, inter alia, the standardization and promotion of the Amazigh language.

In 2003 Amazigh was hastily incorporated in the Moroccan educational system. It was introduced in some 300 primary school across the country. We believe that the haste with which the Amazigh was integrated in the school curriculum has repercussions on the quality of the Amazigh textbooks. In this article, Amazigh language textbooks will be analyzed from a gender perspective based on Sandra Bem’s conceptualization and measurement of gender-related personality traits (Bem, 1981).

At this stage and before we can go any further, a distinction should be made between sex, gender and gender roles. Sex is determined by biology; gender refers to the kinds of social
relations commonly attributed to differences between males and females. Biologically, women do not have the same abilities as men; therefore, women will have different opportunities than men. The sexes are fundamentally different and social inequity is continually justified due to these natural differences. The biological determinants of gender have been intertwined with society’s constructs to result in the largely dichotomous gender structure that we have today. So while biology has had some part in the construction of gender, society’s impact on gender is very significant and cannot be ignored. The attitudes repeatedly expressed in textbooks might gradually distort learners’ perceptions regarding stereotypes about both sexes, and exposure to gender biased texts and materials may influence learners’ behavior in such a way as to restrict their social and behavioral roles.

Gender roles are “the assumptions made about the characteristics of each gender, such as physical appearance, physical abilities, attitudes, interests, or occupations” (Shaw, 1998, p. 24). These gender roles develop over time and are reinforced in our culture through the educational system. The gender schema theory as introduced by Bem (1981) proposes that children learn about gender roles from their surrounding culture and the process children go through when constructing their gender roles is an essential part of their knowledge construction. Bem (1981) expands upon the Schema theory by proposing that children develop schemas that define their understanding of what it means to be male or female. Frable and Bem (1985, p. 459) posit that problems occur when schemas cause stereotyping that represses “the full development of the child”. To counter this, Frable and Bem (1985, p. 459) suggest that children should be exposed to “gender-aschematic behavior” through which boys and girls see themselves in a particular type of role and at the same time possess the type of behavior that they would not typically see themselves in.

Most theories of gender role development (including psychoanalytic, social learning and cognitive developmental theory) focus on primary socialization. They deal with how children learn gender identity at the time they become aware of the two sexes having different gender roles and acting differently. Gender socialization and gender role development are influenced by a variety of significant elements such as biology, social constitutions, social interaction and personality. Different theories bring different insights to understand these elements (Lindsey, 2005).

Gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) focuses on the role of cognitive organization in addition to socialization. This theory proposes that children learn how their cultures and/or
societies define the roles of men and women and then internalize this knowledge as a gender schema or unchallenged core belief. Children’s perceptions of men and women are thus an interaction between their gender schemas and their experiences. Eventually, children will incorporate their own self-concepts into their gender schema and will assume the traits and behaviors that they deem suitable for their gender.

Gender schema theory indicates that every culture includes assumptions about certain characteristics within personalities of individuals. Bem (1983) used the term ‘cultural lenses’ to define culture’s values /beliefs and due to the influences of those cultural norms and forces, without questioning and altering them, children accept to organize their world. The gender schema theory highlights the importance of schemas in children as they mature. When children grow up their schemas change and through this, they learn different characteristics about their gender which in turn modifies their cognitions (Brannon, 2008). Problems arise when the textbooks’ illustrations and texts contain gender biases and gender stereotypical information. In this study, we drew upon Bem’s ideas on schemas to understand how gender identity is constructed and represented in the Amazigh textbooks. It also aims, by implication, to justify the possible effects of gender role messages on primary school students.

Textbooks frequently portray girls as acted upon rather than active (Fox, 1993). Girls are represented as sweet, naive, conforming, and dependent, while boys are typically described as strong, adventurous, independent, and capable (Ernst, 1995; Jett-Simpson & Masland, 1993). Boys tend to have roles as fighters, adventurers and rescuers, while girls in their passive role tend to be caretakers, mothers, and princesses in need of rescuing (Temple, 1993). Often, female characters in textbooks achieve their goals because others help them, whereas boys do so because they demonstrate ingenuity and/or perseverance. If females are initially represented as active and assertive, they are often portrayed in a passive light toward the end of the story. Female characters that retain their active qualities are clearly the exception (Rudman, 1995).

Pottker’s (1977) research on elementary language arts textbook analyzed 20 third-grade reading materials (1969-70 school year), which contained approximately 2000 stories, for personality and occupational stereotypes of females. He found that the female characters in the textbooks reflect feminine characteristics which he calls ‘little sister syndrome’. Most female characters in the texts were exhibited as being appreciative, affectionate, charming, attractive,
understanding and considerate. Females were helped out in every way in the stories while males were portrayed as smarter and with greater achievement. In family context, the mother was shown to be weak and passive, who was dependent upon her husband’s aid, whereas the father was portrayed as a firm figure and a master of his house. For children, school textbooks are among their first cultural encounters. Since textbooks present a social picture of the outside world to children, representation of gender in elementary textbooks plays an important role to establish children’s gender awareness and self-esteem.

Evans and Davis (2000) conducted a content analysis of 97 fiction stories found in 1st, 3rd, and 5th grade literature textbooks published by MacMillan/McGraw-Hill and Silver Burdett Ginn. Using a modified Bem inventory of eight masculine and eight feminine gender traits, they found that males were often stereotypically portrayed in the stories and that in the older, 3rd and 5th grade textbooks, males were shown as aggressive, argumentative, competitive, and less emotionally expressive than females (p.265). In this study, the researchers used a modified Bem Sex Role Inventory Model with definitions utilized in a gender study by Evans and Davies (2000).

Post 2000 progress in reducing gender bias in textbooks is modest in most countries (EFA, 2004). In the Arab world, Alayan and Al-Khalidi (2010) analyzed gender and agency in history textbooks of Jordan and Palestine. The authors assessed the textbooks from grades 7 to 12 (9 Jordanian and 13 Palestinian books) and found out that males outnumbered females in textbooks and were portrayed as superior and more capable, creative, productive and generally dominant; women on the other hand were seen as weaker, inferior and dominated.

Recent content analyses of a sample of textbooks studied by Hussain and Afsar (2010) in Pakistan, concluded that “gender bias is still embedded … and the dominance afforded to masculinity and male knowledge continues to be both naturalized and legitimated” (Ullah&Skelton, 2013, p.184).

In another study by Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012) four current EFL high school texts were analyzed and they offered the typical patterns of gender bias. 71% of gender-specific text references involved men, 76% of pictures were of males and 82% of those portrayed with masculine characteristics were also men.
More recently, in a Thai study, Vichit Vadakan (2014) found the usual pattern “…gender stereotypes in textbooks are overwhelmingly evident. Girls and women are relegated to the private (domestic) domain, whereas boys and men… have more visibility…and are also represented in positive roles with positive character traits” (p. 4).

This study utilized Sandra Bem’s Sex Role Inventory to quantify self-attribution of traits, indicatives of gender role. Traits were called ‘masculine’ if they were evaluated to be more suitable for men than women in society. Similarly, ‘feminine’ traits were those that were evaluated to be more suitable for women than men. Including the BSRI measure in this analysis suggests that healthy psychological functioning requires both masculine and feminine psychological characteristics.

The study

This study uses a qualitative content analysis as a method of examination of data material (Mayring, 2014). It combines both a deductive and an inductive method of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014). We chose purposeful samples of the language textbooks; particularly Amazigh language textbooks of grade 1 (G1), beginning of primary school, and grade 6 (G6), the ending grade of primary school. The choice of this sample aims at assessing the amount of stereotypes presented to pupils from six to twelve years old. By including these two grades of primary age range, we wanted to see how consistent the amount of gender stereotypes that children are exposed to is. The sampling procedure in our case concerned also the choice of textbooks to analyze. We selected the currently used textbooks “Adlisinu n tmażikt” (my Amazigh book) of first grade and “Tifawin a Tamażikt” (morning Tamazight) of sixth grade. “Adlisinu n tmażikt” was issued in 2007 by Amazigh inspectors not belonging to the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture to replace the old three first year textbooks, “Tifawin a tamzight” (Morning Tamazight) designed by IRCAM in 2003, each of which focusing on only one of the three Amazigh varieties. “Tifawin a Tamazight” was issued by IRCAM in 2008 for sixth grade students.

We coded the manifest elements that were present in the text and the analysis was extended later to the interpretive reading of the data coded earlier. The approach to content analysis was descriptive. The researchers read the textbooks in the sample and manually wrote down the occurrences of character traits using the coding instruments. We were interested in the
presence or absence of particular gender stereotypical traits as Evans and Davies (2000) noted, “If a character exhibited any of the relevant traits, the trait was checked once…The trait was coded only once partly because of the simplicity of many of the stories and also for accuracy of character portrayal” (p, 261).

To obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Amazigh teachers and activists. The interviewees both women and men were purposefully selected to be relevant to the current study (Neuman, 1997). In this feminist psychoanalytic approach to interviewing we intended to allow more visibility to the subjective experience (Ramazanoglu& Holland, 2002); the focus was not research-oriented but rather respondent oriented (Newman, 1997). The open-ended questions were flexible (Burns, 2000, p.350) and invited a ‘free-flowing conversation’ (Burns, 2000, p.280).

Results

The results of the Amazigh textbooks’ analysis were statistically treated to identify the frequencies and percentages. Masculinity and femininity traits were measured and explored using content analysis method and the portrayal of gender went beyond numbers to further include the qualitative analysis of the results.

Table 1.1 Percentages of Female Characters Exhibiting Masculine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100,00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Percentages of Male Characters Exhibiting Masculine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in table 1.1 and table 1.2, males were portrayed with typical masculine characteristics more often than females. Males overall were shown as significantly more ambitious (3/6% G1; 0/0% G6), argumentative (4/8% G1, 4/11% G6), assertive (10/19% G1; 22/59% G6); competitive (14/27% G1; 0/0% G6), masculine (3/6%; 0% G6), risk taker (2/4% G1; 2/5% G6), and self-reliant (15/29% G1; 8/22% G6). Females, on the other hand, were depicted less as assertive (2/29% G1; 4/36% G6); competitive (0/0% G1; 2/10% G6), and self-reliant (5/71% G1; 5/45% G6). All the positive traits associated with traditional concepts of masculinity were displayed by male characters with higher level of frequency in both levels. Females, on the other hand, were clearly less described with the stereotypical masculine traits.
Table 1.3 Percentages of Female Characters Exhibiting Feminine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23,00%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Expressive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33,00%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17,00%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetuous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13,00%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panicky</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Percentages of Male Characters Exhibiting Feminine Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Expressive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38,00%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetuous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panicky</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>100,00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>100,00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the stereotypically feminine traits in table 1.3 and 1.4 we can say that females are accorded the real feminine traits that they should possess. Females in both levels (1-6)
conform to the gender stereotypes of femininity. They were essentially presented as affectionate (7/23% G1; 3/7% G6), emotionally expressive (10/33% G1; 17/40% G6), feminine (5/17% G1; 1/2% G6), nurturing (4/13% G1; 10/24% G6), passive (0/0% G1; 10/24% G6), tender (4/13%; 0/0% G6). On the other hand, male characters were less depicted as exhibiting feminine traits. They were less described as affectionate (3/38% G1; 0/0% G6), emotionally expressive (3/38% G1; 4/80% G6) and tender (2/25% G1; 0/0% G6). Interestingly, males were described as purely more masculine than feminine while females were presented as more feminine than masculine.

In line with this and to support the results of the textbook analysis three female and three male Amazigh teachers and activists were interviewed. All the six participants mentioned that they are aware of the negative influence of gender inequalities in educational settings. They felt that there are power dynamics (societal pressure) that reinforce gender binary and favor masculine traits over feminine traits in Amazigh textbooks. As for their strategy to challenge gender stereotypes, some of the teachers contend that they intervene when representations are destructive, while others rarely make use of their own knowledge to address instances involving gender inequality in class. Below are the themes that emerged from the data with relevant testimonies from interviews with our participants:

**Gender awareness among Amazigh teachers**

When asked about whether they are aware of the negative influence of gender inequalities in educational settings, all participants agreed that they are aware of the gender issues and their influence on pupils. A female Amazigh teacher from Ouarzazate asserts that:

“I am aware of the gender inequality “inequity” in all fields including education…Everything including the colors distinguishing boys and girls...There are deep biases in Amazigh textbooks of all three grades that I teach (first, second and third) and girls are implicitly told in textbooks to be passive....”

When speaking of equality and inequality issues, teachers understand the gender stereotypes in classrooms, curriculum and textbooks that disvalue, alienate and eventually disempower girls. However, they all confirm that gender inequality has never been an important topic in their general education. A male participant form Ouarzazate explained that gender inequality is not promoted through the teacher-training process. He contends that:
“I am aware of gender stereotypes in Amazigh textbooks, school textbooks in general are bias as they are the social product of the Moroccan society. We are aware yes, but unfortunately our teacher training didn’t prepare us to tackle this issue in classrooms... And nobody tell us to challenge any kind of sexism in textbooks.”

**Exposure to societal influences reinforce gender binary**

All the participants reported the importance of the societal influences in framing the gender binary, thus reinforcing the role of Amazigh textbooks in creating deep biases. As a male teacher from Agadir explains:

“…if we look around us we will find that everything is framed around this paradigm of gender binary. People attach all sorts of things to this binarism: occupational roles, social roles, personality characteristics and so on... Stereotypes are embodied in all aspects of life including the school system. Amazigh textbooks rarely expose students to gender equality notions that target both female and male students…the greatest harm is caused by the reinforcement of traditional and societal gender norms.”

Another female participant (teacher and activist) from Meknes brought up the same issue. She points out that:

“…both girls and boys are impacted by gender stereotypes. They are affected academically, personally and socially...society in general does not allow for gender equality, these pupils are themselves aware of their own and each other’s prescribed gender and the character traits and social roles that they should perform.”

**Teacher’s strategies to handle stereotyping**

When asked about how teachers challenge gender inequalities embedded in textbooks, the same female Amazigh teacher and activist from Meknes stresses that:

“I am most of the time able to address important social issues in my classroom. I am an Amazigh teacher and activist my work focuses mainly on promoting social justice. Let me say that I am aware of gender issues and I am not afraid to bring my own gender perspectives to the primary school walls. I attribute social justice values, and I choose to work in an environment that aligns with these international equality standards…I intervene when representations are
destructive. To be honest, I don’t rely on textbooks while teaching… the last edition of textbooks was issued in 2008…we are in 2017!”

All the interviewed teachers seem to recognize the flaws of the currently used Amazigh textbooks, however not all of them take steps to challenge gender stereotyping characteristics existing in Amazigh textbooks. A male participant from Marrakech mentioned that he does not engage in conversations around gender equality and if an issue that requires challenging gender stereotypes comes up he does not intervene:

“I mainly rely on classroom discussions and activities to create my own space of learning and teaching. It might happen that I encounter some stereotypical moments in classroom settings but let me say that I don’t have a strategy for dealing with them. I deliver my lesson and rely mainly on the authenticity of information that I give to my students. My role as a teacher stops at teaching and creating a comfortable space for learning. I don’t have much to say on this matter, I believe that it is up to the ministry of education to challenge these traditional gender norms and stereotypes.”

The rest of this paper will deal with the discussion of the results of Amazigh textbook content analysis and interview data analysis in light of the gender literature reviewed.

Discussion

The school as a social institution dictates the type of personality trait a female or male student should acquire; it shapes their gender roles, personalities and identities. Textbooks are especially important in the formation of children’s gender. If children see only stereotypical personality characteristics in reading materials, their behavior will certainly be affected by the dichotomous gender structure that exists in the Moroccan society. Besides, Moroccan primary school students may think that this is the way they should behave or react to certain situations, and they may adjust their actions accordingly.

In line with previous research results, the findings of the present study reproduce gender inequality in classroom settings. Biased personality characteristics prevail in both primary level textbooks of first and sixth grade. Through the analysis of the two Amazigh textbooks we found out that males were shown to possess purely masculine traits. They were presented to be ambitious, argumentative, assertive, competitive, masculine, risk-taking, and self-reliant.
Females, on the other hand, are depicted as nurturing, affectionate and tender. It is clear that the male students are socialized towards ambition, competition and self reliance. The male students through textbooks are trained to suppress their feelings and emotions. These meanings are constructed and reconstructed in Amazigh textbooks.

Schematic processing seems to play a part in the development of gender roles. Bem’s theory (1975), for example, indicates that the behavior of men and women is shaped by the stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. In order for men and women to conform to a certain occupational stereotype, they develop certain traits. The results of the study show that men learn to be more self-reliant, decisive, assertive and competitive, which align to their active roles. This idea of men acting in a certain way to conform to the stereotypes of society is portrayed in the current Amazigh textbooks. The male characters in the two textbooks are presented as self-reliant, powerful, assertive, and responsible in prior preparation for his duty as a leader of the family. In other words, the male character is behaving the way he is because the society expects boys and men to fulfill the standards of masculinity. Females, on the other hand, are found to be affectionate, emotionally expressive, feminine, nurturing, and passive which align to their stereotypical gender roles in society. In other words, females are presented in the two Amazigh textbooks as nurturing, affectionate and tender in prior preparation for their future roles as mothers and wives.

Through textbooks children learn how their cultures define the roles of both women and men and then internalize the knowledge acquired as gender schema (Bem, 1993). They encode gender related information to observe and imitate models that are of the same sex. Children’s perceptions of men and women are thus an interaction between their gender schemas and their experiences. Through exposure to Amazigh textbooks gender-related stereotypes, pupils eventually make up and incorporate their own self-concepts into their gender schema and will assume the traits and behaviors that they deem suitable for their gender. As children develop in their environment, they learn what is expected from boys and girls in relation to a range of factors in terms of roles and genders. This develops their gender schema; moreover, what they learn becomes positively or negatively reinforced because of the reward they receive externally from families, their social interactions and more importantly from textbooks. The roles which they learn through texts and illustrations becomes so a part of their self-concept (Gross, 2005;
When the self-concept gets assimilated into the gender schema, children learn the contents of the society’s gender schema. Due to this schematic development Bem (1981) argues that the child learns to evaluate his or her adequacy as a person in terms of the gender schema. Arguing of the importance and dominance of gender role schema, Bem (1981) suggests that “it becomes a prescriptive standard or guide” as other internal mechanisms such as self-esteem and self-image. This phenomenon of gender role schema becomes a motivational factor that prompts the individuals to regulate their behaviors in order to conform to the cultural definition of maleness and femaleness (Bem, 1981), which perpetuated and maintained through textbooks. Moroccan children from age six encode gender-related information. They observe and imitate models that are of the same sex which they see in Amazigh textbooks. In other words, they take gender-related information that fits well with their gender schemas and apply them. The gender roles, therefore, are created to become hierarchical as a male-advantaged gender hierarchy.

Ideas of gender exist in terms of binary and dualistic expression. Two polarized terms exist: males and females so that one is the privileged and the other its suppressed counterpart (Grosz, 1994). According to Bem (1993), gender polarization organizes the social differences between men and women; male experiences are more valued than female experiences. ‘Androcentrism’ is another way for understanding the gender system; the superiority of males in the textbooks and their experience is the ‘normative’ standard. This male-centeredness suggests that female experiences are seen as deviating from that of males. The biological essentialism assumption argues that the biological differences between the sexes are the causes of the first two assumptions, providing justifications for gender ‘polarization’ and ‘androcentrism’. These three gender lenses, as Bem called them, influence the ways individuals construct social reality, produce gender attributes and perpetuate inequalities between both genders.

While biological factors determine some aspects of gender, gender identity is produced in this interaction between what is biological and environmental. When Moroccan students become increasingly aware of the standard characteristics and behaviors associated with each sex, they begin to form gender schemas which are self-constructed schemas about the traits and behaviors of males or females (Bem, 1993). As these schemas are self-constructed, their content varies considerably from student to student.
In sum, we can say that Amazigh textbooks are especially important in the formation of Moroccan students’ gender. If children are exposed to only stereotypical personality characteristics in reading materials, their behavior will certainly be affected by the dichotomous gender structure that exists in the Moroccan society. Moroccan primary school students may think that this is the way they should behave or react to certain situations, and they may adjust their actions accordingly.

Findings from Amazigh teachers’ interviews correspond to the findings from textbooks analysis. The majority of both female and male teachers pointed out that character traits are structurally embedded in primary level Amazigh textbooks; they asserted that textbooks reinforce the patriarchal gender division. The usual pattern of women being depicted as passive predominated in the first grade, as the female teacher from Ouarzazate explained that there are deep biases in Amazigh textbooks of all three grades that she teaches (first, second and third) and that girls are implicitly told in textbooks to be passive.

In the same vein, Amazigh textbooks portray women within the contexts of family and marriage holding the positive stereotypical qualities and traits. Females were argued to be tender and caring by nature, hence they are conditioned to be future mothers. The same pattern would recur in almost all data gathered from interviews and textbooks of first and sixth grade. All the interviewed teachers seem to agree that female characters are represented as caring, nurturing and generally passive.

All the six participants in this study agree that the whole environment allows for the stereotypes to exist. They assured that pupils bring their gender construction into their classrooms, and the textbooks through language and pictures reinforce the biases, thus creating an accepting space for gender inequality. The interviewed teachers admit that gender binary paradigm is alarming especially with the absence of a teacher training that challenges gender norms and stereotypes. They stress the need for equipping teachers with the necessary tools to combat gender inequalities.

All teachers were consistent in their responses as they all agreed that biased character traits are reinforced through Amazigh language textbooks and pupils’ identities are manifested in harmony with the social structure of power dynamics. However, they had contradicting views when asked about how they handle Amazigh textbooks’ gender biases. For instance, the female
activist from Meknes referred to the complex set of societal factors that construct pupils’ gender identities, which they think are beyond the teacher’s control. Nevertheless, she asserted that she is urged to intervene and fix the inequality only in case the representation becomes distractive.

Some teachers we interviewed claimed that their role is limited to providing favorable conditions for learning and they do not have to combat gender inequity in textbooks. For them it is the Ministry of national education that is responsible for promoting gender fair treatment of women and men. On the other hand, some other teachers adopted a negative attitude towards gender biases in Amazigh textbooks and asserted that he does not even attempt to redress the gender balance in his classroom. He argued that he would not take over the government’s role in ensuring equal opportunities for both genders. Clearly, Amazigh textbooks along with teacher’s attitude come with the risk of deepening gender divisions and producing less confident individuals. Moroccan children are destined in our Amazigh classrooms to wield a high amount of biases and negative influences in later life.

Our study findings call for the government to act with urgency and adopt pro-gender equity reforms in Amazigh textbooks of primary education. Reducing textbooks’ gender bias requires the involvement of policy makers and stakeholders to launch a reform wave that calls for gender sensitivity. Besides training should be mandatory in Teacher Training Programs, it must be provided for, teachers, administrators and local officials.

On the basis of these discussions the following recommendations for Amazigh teachers and textbooks designers are suggested. The following recommendations for policymakers, textbook designers, and Amazigh teachers derive directly from the findings of this study:

- A concerted effort is needed to include gender-balanced lessons in the curriculum, and gender equity considerations should be included in the process of textbook construction.
- Moroccan stakeholders and textbook authors should be made aware of their responsibility to make their textbooks more equitable for both sexes.
- Teachers should remind their students that they should not be bound to these gender traits in the outside world.
- In their teacher training, Amazigh teachers need to be equipped with the necessary tools to deal with gender inequality in class settings.
Conclusion

Textbooks are especially important in the formation of children’s gender identity. Through textbooks children learn how their cultures define the roles of both women and men and then internalize the knowledge acquired as gender schema (Bem, 1993). The results of this study show that the Amazigh textbooks serve to perpetuate the stereotypical gender roles which exist in the Moroccan society. Therefore, it is at this level that gender equity should be established.

References


Intersectional Subjectivity Constitution and Social Inequality Reproduction through Gendered Discourses in Schooling

Dorottya Redai, Central European University

Abstract

In this paper I focus on intersectional social inequality reproduction in secondary education and discuss how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered discourses in a school. The data I use for the analysis come from a school ethnography which I conducted for my doctoral dissertation between 2009 and 2011 in a combined secondary vocational-technical-grammar school in a large town in Hungary. The gendered discourses and practices I have identified and the subjectivities they constitute simultaneously create categories of exclusion and allocate people within and outside, leading to a re-inscription of social inequalities in schooling. In this short paper I offer two examples to demonstrate how axes of inequality get constituted intersectionally, and especially how ethnicity, gender and class converge to create student and teacher subjectivities. I argue that gendered discourses in this school constitute binary categories of race/ethnicity and class, and contribute to the formation of students’ subjectivities based on these categories.

Keywords: gender, class, ethnicity, education, subjectivity, social inequalities

Introduction

In this paper I focus on intersectional subjectivity constitution and social inequality reproduction in secondary education, and discuss how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered discourses and practices in a school. For the analysis I use interview excerpts from a school ethnography which I conducted between 2009 and 2011 in Marzipan, a secondary school in a large town in Hungary for my doctoral dissertation at the Department of Gender Studies, Central European University (Redai 2015). My research methods included observation in and out of classrooms, small-group interviews with cc. 90 students and individual interviews with 5 teachers, the school nurse and the headmaster. I argue that gendered discourses in this school
constitute binary categories of race/ethnicity and class, and contribute to the formation of students’ subjectivities based on these categories.

**Theoretical framework**

My analysis of how subjectivities are constituted through discourses is based on a Foucauldian understanding of the subject/subjectivities as constituted through the productive power of discourses (Foucault 1994, 1980). Butler broadens the notion of discourse to include Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ and argues that performativity works not exclusively through language (as according to Derrida) but is embodied, it is performed through routine, unconscious bodily actions, “embodied rituals of everydayness” (Butler 1997: 152). Habitus expresses social belonging in a way that is readable by others; it distinguishes between individuals’ positions in social hierarchy (Bourdieu 1984).

Classed, ethnic, gendered and sexual inequalities are re/produced in education, as the vast body of literature in the sociology of education reveals (e.g. Apple, Ball, & Gandin 2010; Aronowitz & Giroux 1991; Apple 1990). In a social system structured by power inequalities between social groups the distinction between social categories (such as woman/man, Gypsy/Hungarian) is at the same time the hierarchical ordering of these social categories where one group is subordinated to the other. Thus, subjectivity constitution is consequential to social inequalities, in and out of school. School is a central institution in young people’s life, both as an institution and a space where groups of people spend a lot of time together and performatively constitute themselves on an ongoing basis, thus it has an inestimable role in the re/production of social inequalities within and outside the walls of the institution.

Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of cultural capital is a critique of human capital theory and of theories that claim that educational achievement is the direct result of innate academic abilities and talents only. The economic and cultural investment in the child’s accumulation of cultural capital depends on the cultural capital owned by the family. Bourdieu and Passeron (1992: 10-11) claim that cultural capital differences and classed inequalities are reproduced by the educational system. The cultural capital of the school is only transmittable to those already equipped with the linguistic and cultural capital necessary for decoding the contents which implicitly reflect the values, ideological and economic commitments, perspectives and beliefs of the dominant classes. Thus, through offering ‘neutral’ knowledge transmission ‘equally’ to ‘all’
in principle, the education system contributes to the reproduction of the classed distribution of cultural capital and the conservation of the established social hierarchy (Bourdieu and Passeron 1992).

Butler’s gender performativity (1993, 1990) as a model can be applied to analyse how raced/ethnic, classed and sexualised subjectivities get constituted. As Joane Nagel (2003, 2000) explains: “[e]thnicity is both performed – where individuals and groups engage in ethnic ‘presentation of self’, and ‘performative’ – where ethnic boundaries are constituted by day-to-day affirmations, reinforcements, and enactments of ethnic differences” (2000: 111). She adds that “[t]he relative power of various actors in ethnic transactions can determine an individual’s ethnic classification as well as the content and worth of the individual’s ethnicity” (2000: 111). In Hungary, Hungarians constitute the white ethnic majority, and Gypsies are the most numerous (cc. 5-10% of the population), and most discriminated and oppressed ethnic minority. In Marzipan approximately 20% of the students were of Gypsy origin, which is why performative ethnicity constitution was of interest in my research.

School is a highly significant institution in young people’s life – and not only because of receiving an official education. The concept of the hidden or unofficial curriculum is well-known in the sociology of education (see: e.g. Ballantine 2001; Giroux 2001; Apple 1990). It is through the hidden/unofficial curriculum that teachers teach and students learn about gendered, classed and ethnic relations and actively participate in the reproduction of social inequalities.

The school

Marzipan combines the three main types of Hungarian secondary education: vocational, technical and grammar school, in which qualifications for food industry professions such as baker, cakemaker, sweets factory worker, baker/cakemaker-technician, food industry technician and food analyst technician can be acquired, except in the grammar school strand, where students do not acquire a profession. In 2010 cc. 1000 students attended the school, two thirds of whom belonged to the vocational school strand. The proportion of female and male students was cc. 50-50%. The majority of the students had working-class and lower-middle-class parents. According to my estimation, about 20% of the students were of Gypsy origin. Marzipan has a complex hierarchical institutional structure. Besides the most obvious hierarchy of students/teachers/school management/headmaster, there are hierarchies on every level and in every micro-
community in the school: hierarchy among students, and students and teachers within each form; among the different vocations, and among the vocational, technical and grammar school strands; among teachers teaching various subjects and professions and in various streams.

**Intersectional subjectivity constitution and inequality re/production**

In the analytical section of this paper I look at how class converges with ethnicity and/or gender and/or sexuality in the constitution of student subjectivities by teachers. I present two examples for the convergence of race, gender and class to mark the social positioning of Gypsy girls by teachers’ discourses about ‘cultural values’.

**Convergence of race, gender and class in teachers’ discourses about ‘cultural values’**

The following two excerpts are examples of intersectional subjectivity constitution and hierarchy reproduction, through gendered discourses about Gypsy girls. In the first example ethnicity intersects with gender, and in the second it is class and ethnicity that converge to constitute Gypsy girl subjectivity in a White educational institution. I argue that in White middle-class discourses of teachers, raced and classed discourses converge, raced ‘cultural’ values and behaviours attributed to Roma students by White teachers are at the same time constitutive of the class positions of both students and teachers.

In the following excerpt, Anna, a teacher relates a conflict she had the previous year with two of her students. In this case ‘improperly gendered’ behaviour for her means a Roma girl waiting on her boyfriend in an undignified manner, with the boyfriend being the ‘master’, taking advantage of the servility of the girl, and both claiming that ‘this is how it is with Gypsy people’. This example is a site where, to rephrase Butler, class and ethnicity not only meet but cannot be conceived without one another (1993: 168).

Feri, he was a Gypsy boy, a very handsome, very amicable child, but quite a rowdy chap. At the second week, he got together with Ági, who was also a very pretty, shapely Gypsy girl. They were very much involved, they moved together during the year. Feri’s mother took responsibility for the girl. (…) And there were situations which were completely unacceptable for me. The school day was over, and Feri walked out of the classroom with his hands in his pockets, and Ági was carrying his bag after him. “Because this is how it is with the Gypsies, Miss.” When Feri dropped something and both were sitting, Ági had to stand up to pick it up.
We argued a lot about it, and the problem was not that I couldn’t make Feri give up the habit, but that I couldn’t make the girl give it up. She insisted that this is how things were done, and it was me who didn’t know it right! (...) I tried to explain to her that she is not his servant, just because they live together, she doesn’t have to serve him. However, the original setup remained. (Anna, teacher, interview)

Here the couple seems to be in agreement on what the roles of a Gypsy girl and boy are in a relationship. In this situation Anna appears as an older White woman, against whose authority resistance takes the shape of playing out the ‘ethnicity card’: she is assumed not to know ‘how it really is’ with Gypsies. Obviously, Feri enjoys the advantages, and Ági resists the older woman’s intervention, despite the fact that Anna is trying to use her authority to help her achieve a more equitable position in the relationship. Anna finds Ági’s servility and Feri’s dominance excessive, Feri’s behaviour disrespectful, Ági’s disrespectful. Lawler argues that excess and being disrespectful are characteristics attributed to the working class by the middle class, respectability is a key feature of middle-class femininity (2005: 435). Also, today the working class is perceived by the middle class as “embracing archaic and overly rigid gender relations” (Lawler 2005: 437), and the middle class “is positioned at the vanguard of ‘the modern’” (Skeggs 2004: 92). In the above example Anna is trying to do exactly that: act as the ‘vanguard of the modern’, which implies White middle-class values. Being ‘modern’ here also means that Anna was aiming to ‘emancipate’ the girl, instead of challenging the boy’s hegemonic masculinity sold as ‘traditional ethnic’ behaviour. As I argue elsewhere (Redai 2015), supporting girls’ empowerment and agency but leaving hegemonic masculine behaviour unchallenged results in the domination of the latter over the former and in girls’ complicity to it.

In the following excerpt Anna talks about Gypsy girls and their reproductive patterns:

(...) [Gypsy] girls consummate very early. Technically speaking, they somehow make these girls come of age by this, and (...) quite obviously the number one task of these girls is not going to be working in a bakery, but giving birth to children for a long-long time. This is what the family prepares them for (...) and this is what their immediate surroundings expect from them. Well, until [the parents] get the family allowance after them they go to school, but from then on school is not [a priority]. (...) [T]his is (...) a form of livelihood, to give birth to as many children as they can, because the more children they have the bigger the support, and on the
other hand, well, (...) on this cultural level it is a biological expectation and a biological system. (...) If we look around among highly qualified young people with university degrees, then a European or North American person who has spent a lot of years in school, has read a lot and has a great insight into things will not give birth at the age of fifteen, because she expects it from herself that she would only give birth if the child can have its own room, if she can take the child to the doctor in her own car and if she can pay five hundred thousand Forints for a pram. (Anna, teacher, interview)

Gypsy girls are positioned here as the bearers of their ‘culture’ (see: Yuval-Davies 1997) and as being on a lower ‘cultural’ level than White middle-class women. This is manifested in their assumed attitude to work, reproductive patterns and education levels. Anna practically questions the worth of educating Gypsy girls for a profession by saying that on their ‘cultural level’ the aim is not to work but to have children. Echoing common public discourses, she positions White people as highly educated and middle-class and having few children, and Gypsy people as low educated, low class, having too many children, arguing that on Gypsies’ ‘cultural level’ it is a “biological expectation and system” that they have many children. Excess (in this case excessive reproduction) is also a characteristic projected on the working class (Skeggs 2004). Anna contrasts a vision of a monolithic Gypsy existence with that of a monolithic White middle-class “European or North American” existence. In this comparison Gypsiness becomes a classed category as well, not only an ethnic one, contrasted with a classed category of Whiteness.

Anna uses the discourse of ‘cultural difference’ a lot when talking about Gypsy students. While she takes great care not to appear racist in the interview, it is implied all along that for her ‘cultural difference’ is in fact a difference in hierarchical ‘cultural levels’ between Hungarian and Gypsy families, with the latter being on a lower level. Skeggs argues that in recent discourses ‘race’ has been replaced by ‘culture’, which is a shift from biological essentialism to cultural essentialism. “Whereas nature was used to legitimate racism, now cultur[e] performs this role” (2004: 138). The discourse of ‘culture’ comes in handy for Anna and other teachers, who are only aware that racist discourses on Gypsies are a taboo, but they are not aware that they use the concept of culture in a way that rearticulates race/ethnicity-based hierarchical distinctions.

The reference to ‘lower and higher cultural levels’ also appears as a tool of class hierarchy construction in Marzipan. In the above-cited narrative of Anna, as I have argued, class
and race/ethnicity converge and are mutually constitutive. Skeggs points out that there is an important difference in the discursive construction of class and race/ethnicity and also gender. As opposed to race and gender, nature was never used to construct class categories. Working-class females did get essentialised, but by gender, not class, “the division of labour was much more crucial to establishing and legitimating class inequality than biology” (2004: 138). Nevertheless, eventually classed and raced discourses which reproduce social inequalities and also hierarchical distinctions in positioning in the school, converge in the discourse of ‘culture’ and ‘cultural level’ or ‘cultural difference’.

Educational level and achievement strongly correlate with socio-economic and family background. Students from disadvantaged and lower education backgrounds are likely to attend streams that grant lower qualifications and spend less time in education. Therefore they remain low educated and the pattern is reproduced. Despite the commonplace fact from the sociology of education that schools have a great stake in the reproduction of educational and, consecutively, socio-economic inequalities (see e.g. Ball 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992), Anna talks about education as if it had no responsibility in the perpetuation of low qualification, low socio-economic status, and narrow life prospects. This is a common discourse among teachers: by claiming that their job is ‘teaching only’, they fend off responsibility for the reproduction of social inequalities.

Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed how power relations and social hierarchies in Marzipan are implicated in producing raced, classed and gendered subjectivities, and how the production of these subjectivities perpetuates social inequalities on various levels of the institutional structure. I demonstrated how class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality can converge and create well-defined power positions in the school. Although there is a large body of (mostly quantitative) research on social inequalities between students and a large body of (mostly qualitative) literature on the constitution of young people’s subjectivities in educational institutions, the two fields are weakly connected. I have demonstrated in this paper how discourses can be directly implicated in producing raced, classed, gendered subjectivities and at the same time in perpetuating social hierarchies in school and social inequalities within and outside the school.
References


The Discursive Defense of Heteronormativity in an Italian Debate over Gender Education

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Abstract

This paper analyses how the introduction of a series of pedagogical programs aimed at sensitizing children on gender and sexuality in Italy has resulted in a rapidly growing body of discourses which, both explicitly and implicitly, aim at maintaining heteronormativity. By deconstructing the Italian debate on education, this work firstly presents both anti- and pro-gender education perspectives’ on concepts as gender, sexuality and identity; secondly, it reflects on the potential(and duty) the school has in fighting gender and sexual inequalities by proposing a pedagogy that critically and reflexively teaches the cultural aspect of social discriminations, starting from a revision of the role of the teacher.

Key words: inclusive education, gender and sexuality education, gender pedagogy, ideology of gender, education in Italy.

Introduction

This article is about gender and sexuality and how these two concepts have been framed within a debate on education that spread in Italy between 2014 and 2016. Specifically, it intends to analyze the ways in which both parties of the debate – which I call ‘anti-gender’ and ‘pro-gender’ – through different conceptions of what gender and sexuality are and how they should enter the pedagogical curriculum, maintain and reaffirm heteronormativity as a social system of power based on sexual and affective relations between women and men. In fact, by critically deconstructing the bases of their discourses, in this work the main argument I propose is that the Italian debate on gender education barely scratches the heteronormative societal system, as both parties, explicitly or not, fail to envision the potential and duty the school has in fighting gender and sexual inequalities. After presenting both parties of the debate on gender education, this article then focuses specifically on the discourse of pro-gender advocates and, ultimately, proposes possible ways to educate about differences and inequalities without reproducing normative and unequal dynamics within the classroom.
The Italian debate on gender education: the anti-gender discourse

From 2013 till now in Italy there have been a number of important events connecting the issues of gender and the realm of education. Among them, two educational projects (*UNAR pamphlets* and *The Respect Game*) were meant to raise awareness on gender inequalities by sensitizing teachers on the stereotypical aspects of certain classroom settings (i.e. colors, the location of activities), and on the use of gender stereotypical language. Quite soon after their promotion, these initiatives activated an escalation of openly oppositional rhetoric in the pages of Catholic newspapers and the protests of Catholic parents’ associations which, eventually, obtained their interruption in the schools’ curricula. According to anti-gender exponents, these materials were dangerous for children’s natural sensibility, innocence and vulnerability, and have the potentiality to lead youngsters to prematurely wanting to perform sexuality in irresponsible ways. In this scenario, young people are believed to be free from sexual interest and curiosity and, if reached by discourses on sexuality, they would not only prematurely be willing to perform sexual activity but they would also be pushed to have sex in the ‘wrong way’ (homosexual sex). As a result, for anti-gender advocates, within the classroom students can only approach sexuality and gender discourses when they either concern the biological aspects of sexuality or images of loving relations as long-lasting and heterosexual (Allen 2007; Jackson & Weatherall 2010; Santelli et al., 2006). In this realm homosexuality is a sin that is best avoided and those who advocate for sexual equality, or those who identify themselves as homosexuals, are perceived as forms of social corruption able to reverse the ‘natural’ order of things, dynamite for the heterosexual order as a political regime based on reproduction.

Pitfalls in the pro-gender discourse

Two of the pro-gender responses to conservative discourses are the letter of the Italian Society of Historians to the Minister of Education Stefania Giannini, which affirms the necessity to activate pedagogical programs on gender in schools and to contribute to “the development of a more just and tolerant society”; the second is the publication of the book *Papà, Mamma e Gender* (in English: *Dad, Mom and Gender*) on October 20th 2015, by Italian philosopher and politician Michela Marzano. In both examples, one of the main arguments used by gender education exponents is that gender and sexuality education mainly aims at teaching to young people both the naturalness of their sexual bodies and of their sexual orientations (their sexuality) and the feeling derived by being masculine or feminine (their gender), in order to acknowledge human complexity and combat harmful prejudices and stereotypes. Thus, pro-gender see sexual
identity as a combination of a cultural aspect (gender) and two natural ones (sex and sexual orientation), in which the feeling of being masculine or feminine is independent from one’s own body and more culturally influenced while, on the other hand, both sex and sexual orientation are natural in their being more physical, biological and chemical aspects of one’s own subjectivity, from which derives their impossibility to be culturally changed. Therefore, gender is considered cultural but in its combination with a certain sex (being either male or female), the identity that derives is seen as natural and, as a consequence, the different combinations of sex and gender presuppose the natural realm of human sexual and gender complexity:

In the majority of cases people who are biologically males (sex) have a masculine gender identity and behaviors which belong to the cultural canons of masculinity in a given society. In the majority of cases people who are biologically females (sex) have a feminine gender identity and behaviors which belong to the cultural canons of a given society. In a minority of cases, instead, people can have a gender identity which is different from the sex they are born with (transsexuals or transgender FTM or MTF). In another minority of cases, some people can have an identity conforming to the sex they are born with but certain behaviors do not perfectly align with the gender cultural canons.

In this paper I claim that to consider gender and sexuality as two aspects of subjectivity as a combination of a cultural aspect (gender) and two natural ones (sex and sexual orientation), in which the feeling of being masculine or feminine is independent from one’s own body and more culturally influenced while, on the other hand, both sex and sexual orientation are natural in their being more physical, biological and chemical aspects of one’s own subjectivity, from which derives their impossibility to be culturally changed. Therefore, gender is considered cultural but in its combination with a certain sex (being either male or female), the identity that derives is seen as natural and, as a consequence, the different combinations of sex and gender presuppose the natural realm of human sexual and gender complexity:

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As a result, pro-gender argue that to fight inequalities and prejudices through education means to teach human sexual complexity and that, no matter the differences, sexual identities must all be perceived as equally valuable and in need of respect.

In this paper I claim that to consider gender and sexuality as two aspects of subjectivity
that can be combined into a fixed amount of equally natural, identitarian configurations (being heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, polysexual, transsexual etc.) still relies on a dualistic vision of sexuality which creates identities as either normative or non-normative. Hence, against the conservative fear that heterosexuality is in danger by a discourse that depicts homosexuality as equally natural, pro-gender depicts homosexuality as being naturally belonging to certain people and not to others, in this way perceiving human differences as casts into homogenous essences of unchangeable naturally sexual subjectivities (we are either heterosexual or homosexuals, transsexuals etc.). In this regard and in my opinion, advocates of gender education ultimately fail to take into account both the fact that sexuality itself is to some extent constructed and the fact that human differences are not just differences but are, instead, placed into hierarchical positions within complex structures of power that are constantly produced and reinforced through social institutions and political apparatuses. As C.J Pascoe writes (2007, p. 10): “[H]eterosexuality is not just a private matter but one that links a person to certain state benefits [because] what seems like a private desire is part of the mechanisms through which the micro processes of daily life actually foster inequality.” Differences between human beings are not only natural consequences of the complexity of human sexuality, but they culturally signify as such into a cultural environment which positions them into a hierarchical structure of power. Sex and gender, as knowingly Butler states (1990, 1993, 2004), are not only properties of individuals, some sort of transcendental aspects of identity, but are also discursively constituted in the social and cultural realm the body is embedded in; they are both present as irrefutable characteristics and comprehensible through the social institutions and signs which give the sexual body its cultural meanings. As a consequence, human differences gain meaning within a particular structure of power present in society in which power is distributed unequally to human beings according to their gender, their race, their class, their religion, and their sexual orientation. Thus, when thinking about diversity among human beings we must pay attention to power relations, otherwise we risk being left merely with a list of differences (Zinn and Dill, 1996). In the next section, I focus on the possible repercussions of these understandings of sexual and gender identity on a pedagogical level.

**Rethinking ‘inclusion’ as a pedagogical project**

A consequence of the tendency to teach that differences should be seen as equal examples
of human complexity (i.e. to categorize human identity into fixed combinations of axes of significations like race, gender, sex and class) risks to naively teach that social inequalities and power relations are only a matter of the ways individuals behave and relate to each other and that correcting those behaviors would result in the consequential end of social discrimination. In other words, if teaching that gender inequalities derive from the ways different people relate to each other (alias, that gender violence derives from the ways men treat women, homophobia derives from the ways heterosexuals treat homosexuals, racism derives from the ways whites treat blacks etc.) then, as a consequence, it can seem that the solution for social discrimination lies in a process of unlearning oppressive codes in order to then re-learn politically correct behaviors and traits (Gatens 1983: 144). The main point of this work is to underline how such a vision fails to recognize the cultural, historical and social systematic aspects of inequalities between genders, races and classes and tends to perceive subjects as self-sustainable and self-responsible for their own well-being.

Paradoxically then, while Italian educational curricula aim at fighting gender discrimination and violence, they do it by trying to fight discriminatory and violent behaviors in students without framing them in the larger cultural environment which creates the soil for these actions to take place. Even though I agree that those subjectivities which manifest different sexual and gender behaviors should be integrated and respected in the school and in society at large, I propose the use of a discourse that it is not only “pro inclusivity and tolerance” among individuals but that it especially claims the importance of teaching the ways in which inequalities are continuously reproduced and maintained through normative discourses of sexuality and gender, class and race, and especially, within the educational environment. In other words, to merely work on the effects of discrimination (change your behavior to be more inclusive) is not enough; if we really want to fight sexual and gender oppression in the school we should to teach how discrimination works and the mechanisms that are in place. In fact, the school as an institution should not only be a place in which minorities are accepted by normative subjectivities that are taught to respect those who are different in order to “promote […] a society of tolerance and respect in which those young people and adults who express their gender in non-conventional ways can be welcomed” as Bernini writes. Rather, those who embody normative positions of identity should be not only taught to respect others different from them but, especially, to understand the ways in which they themselves come to be positioned where they
are because of a systematic structured of dynamics of power. In other words, inclusion does not work fully and extensively work as a pedagogical approach since inclusion relies on the idea that there are people that need to be included ‘because they are different’ by other people who are already included ‘because they are normal’. On the contrary, to see identity in its cultural aspect means to see and let student see how in our culture social positions depend most often on unequal distributions of power according to which those ‘outside’ are outside because of the same mechanism that keep the ‘insiders’ inside in the first place. This is finally to say that to fight social inequalities in the classroom means to teach and rework the social distribution of power.

Towards a pedagogy of difference

The goal of a feminist, holistic gender pedagogy is not only to expand students’ knowledge about gender, sexuality and other axes of social signification but to offer them tools to critically understand how these axes work in their own lives and how they can contribute to de-construct them (hooks 1994). This pedagogy is not only a project aimed at giving students the tools to understand them both as identitarian elements, as roles or as expressions, but as an education that proposes the tools to students in order for them to reflect on what gender and sexuality are, how they function in society, what these functions imply in their and others people’s lives. In this way, gender and sexuality are taught as being relationalities and transformations, performativities and complexities, rather than two aspects of an immutable identity. Following this, there are some pedagogical areas which could be rethought in order to make the classroom a more feminist and equal space. In the next paragraph I pay attention to the role of the teacher.

The Role of the Teacher

Due to the predominant idea that sexuality should not be part of the educational curriculum, teachers tend to represent themselves and students as asexual (Irvine, 2002) and to conceive the classroom as ‘a safe space’ (hooks, 1994). On the contrary, teachers should be willing to present themselves as sexual and gendered beings and should not refer to differences among students in terms of fixed identitarian characteristics but as open processes of development embedded in specific structures of power. Thus, as adults, to challenge the power relations present in the classroom means, on the one hand, to avoid the tendency to show
ourselves as gender-neutral and asexual and instead to acknowledge our own gender and sexuality, while, on the other hand, it means to avoid picturing sexuality as something closed and unchangeable, but rather as complex and plural, “to risk [our] own sense of expertise, to remember [our] own feelings of helplessness” (Gamberiet al., 2010, p.74), so as to construct “a community of learners together” (hooks, 1994, p. 153). In fact, teachers must transform the classroom into a democratic place where everybody feels the responsibility to intervene and participate, where students learn to hear each other, to listen to one another, to recognize one another; where pain and emotions and freedom of expression can happen. However, this does not mean that teachers do not have to use their power, that students and teachers are equal, rather, as hooks argues (2014, p. 153), “that we are all equal here to the extent that we are equally committed to creating a learning context.” Teachers themselves should become learners in the classroom rather than show a pre-fixed identity that remains un-affected by the educational environment. They should become educators in front of their students, making the educational process one which is transformative for everyone.

Conclusions

In the Italian debate on gender education both advocates’ and opponents’ discourses explicitly or implicitly maintain and reaffirm heteronormativity as a social system of power in and outside the school. In fact, while anti-gender depicts the school as asexual, pro-gender represents the school as a place of inclusion and tolerance of those sexualities that are socially considered different from the heterosexual norm. In this article I argued that, instead of a school of ‘inclusion’, ‘integration’ and ‘tolerance’ of those ‘minoritarian’, ‘different’, ‘other’ subjectivities, what is needed is a school in which mechanisms of control and of production of normative subjectivities, discourses and practices are questioned, brought into light, analyzed and deconstructed. The school is not a neutral place but a highly political one that mirrors the social structures outside of it, and in which subjectivities are constructed daily as either normative or non-normative. Therefore, even though progressive discourses make a step further from conservative homophobic affirmations, in perceiving sexual identities as naturally different from one another, they keep in place the social structure that positions these identities into a hierarchical distribution of power. Thus, as a consequence to their understanding of sexual identities as fixed ‘natural’ essences, pro-gender risks considering social issues like homophobia,
violence against women, racism etc. as the result of individual shortcomings which can be resolved through an education that aims at unlearning oppressive codes in order to then re-learn politically correct ones (Gatens, 1983). Instead, in this article I argue that through a revalorization of sexuality as public and cultural (Butler, 1993, 2004) it is possible to imagine the school as a place which, rather than wanting to include in the realm of the ‘natural’ those ‘different’ sexualities, can help reflect on the complex system of power that creates ‘the natural’ and ‘the different’ in the first place.

Education can make a difference in fighting gender and sexual inequalities, but it cannot teach gender and sexuality without teaching power and domination. Understanding how discrimination works is the first step towards its overcoming.

References


Moroccan Women and Socio-economic Well-being: The case of Home-Based Businesses in Fez region

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Abstract

This paper is a report of a survey conducted on the socioeconomic situation of women in Morocco (Fez region as a case study) and their awareness of the necessity to change their social situation for their own well being. As a methodology of research, I have relied on a face to face interview. 25 women with varying age groups, social classes and educational levels were interviewed. The majority of these women confess having strong desire to take their lives at hand and try to find adequate alternatives to improve and empower themselves at a financial, social and mainly at a personal level independently from partners’ help or family financial aids. The discussion revolved around their own experience on how they convert from simple housewives to businesswomen or else. This survey is also a tribute to all Moroccan women who have achieved their goals either by perseverance, commitments or trust to the self.

Key words: Moroccan women, socioeconomic situation, home-based businesses.

Introduction

Most women today see themselves on an equal footing with men. This is due to the fact that lives of women have improved dramatically in many respects. They have more access to schools, receive better health care, get better jobs and acquire almost legal rights and protections. In the same realm, women, around the globe, declare being financially satisfied even with a low income as far as they have an occupation. Women with no occupation, however, declare being unsatisfied, marginalized and have no real social integration. Moroccan women are not an exception to the global concepts on women empowerment through descent and honorable socioeconomic status. The present study is meant to report amazing stories of 25 ladies from Fez city aged between (22 and 55 years old) who willingly accepted to share with us their adventures, challenges and strong believe on themselves. The focal questions of this research revolved around their educational attainments, their journey as women home-based start-ups and their personal achievements. More specifically, they were asked about the main reasons that push
them to convert from housewives to businesswomen claiming that it was a case of emergency to improve their socio-economic status emphasizing the need to social integrity, self improvement and family well being. The paper will be articulated as follows: Section 1 will shed light on Moroccan women history; Section 2 will briefly portray Moroccan women in business as well as an overview on home-based businesses in Morocco; Section 3 will be devoted to a survey on the socioeconomic status and social integrity of women in Morocco; it will be demonstrated that women drive social power from being educated, civilized and modern; Section 4 will deal with methodology and, more specifically, the instrument used and the population sample targeted; Section 5 will present the results of the survey, and attempt a preliminary interpretation of them; a deeper data interpretation, statistics and analysis will be dealt with in its sub-sections, and finally a conclusion to this study will be provided in section 6.

1- Moroccan women History

Through history, the traditional role of women was to stay at home splitting up the household chores and also doing various activities such as traditional embroidery and crafts. There was a strict code of behavioral conduct and practices that must be followed by females mainly that they were allowed to go out only for the steam-bath (traditional hammam) or to their husbands’ house which was considered another prison in the life of women at that time. Women were given more value only according to their age, importance and status. For instance, married women were treated better than divorced women who were looked down upon. Women were and still are responsible for raising children and are increasingly likely to raise children alone nowadays.

Within the French colonization, the right of women to go to school started to be applied among modern and rich families first, then step by step some conservative families started to accept females’ schooling. At first, females were, exceptionally, allowed to join coranicschools; meanwhile, the idea of learning other languages, different subjects and, notably, to become intellectual had been considered a sort of power. Therefore, females belonging to conservative families joined either French or Moroccan schools. As a consequence of studying in foreign schools, the concept of females’ studying abroad started to be implemented as well among Moroccan Families. Many Moroccan females continued their undergraduate and post-graduate studies in different foreign universities around the globe. The experience of embarrassing other
cultures, mentalities, as well as of exploring new horizons of knowledge empowered women in different domains, the business field is one of them as will be referred to in section 2. Last but not least, Morocco as a Muslim country follows the chari3a based on the Coran that women have: the right to live, the right to be honored and respected as a mother, and the right to own a business and work. These rights enormously effected women’s lives and their treatment in society by men. Thanks to education, women were gradually enabled to rise their status remarkably and have managed to change some practices to their own favor, yet much to be done to reach equality. In this respect, women development across the life span either locally or globally is remarkable through history. Moreover, the Modawana, reformed in 2004, adds more value in the life of women since this latter allows women to enjoy more rights. Divorced women, for instance, can obtain child custody and support and can own and inherit properties.

2- Moroccan Women and Business

Business is one of the most activities of modern life. The creation and growth of new companies are at the heart of economic dynamism. Business used to be a male domain but after independence women started to get interested to. Today, female founders in our country are growing in number, as are businesses with women co-founders. According to the 2015 statistics closely tracked by economist, investors and policymakers among others, women set up about 1,200 startups per day. Through these initiatives, women are solving problems by creating jobs, participating in productivity, and help in supporting their community. In this respect, women in Morocco, have demonstrated that they are competent, skillful and creative equally to men by holding positions of power. Worth mentioning here, that the problem of equality between males and females is not a question of power but a question of authority. Business, in particular, is a field where women have shown great intellect, competence, spirit of challenge and a distinguished feminist presence. Female business figures like Meriam Bensalleh Chaqrourn, Miriam Belqziz, Amina Belkhadra, Asmaa morine Azzouzi among others are models for other women who virtually and spiritually share this success with them, are inspired from them and are motivated by them.

Setting a business, for women, is mostly related to find a way out to change ones social and financial situation, self-satisfaction, and turning a passion into a profit. The type of business that concerns us in this study is home-based business. This type of business is not a new concept
in Morocco, women used to work from their home location mainly on sewing and embroidery, and traditional cookies. These businesses were known thanks to neighborhood, family members and it was a fact because women based-home start ups was a norm. But within the changes happening worldwide, the norm becomes to own a business or become a working girl. Thanks to girls’ education the number of working-girls and business women increased and the norm becomes to have a job or a business outside homes. Today, home-based businesses are challenging alternatives to women who cannot have a job because of family constraints or lack of qualifications as well as to women who wants to set a business but don’t have an initial capital. Before deeply going into the core of this survey, I will go through a sketchy description of current home-based business in Morocco.

2.1- Types of home based businesses in Morocco

Home-based business is as a small business that operates from the business owner’s home office. It is usually defined by having a very small number of employees in order to minimize initial expenses. The business can be any size or any type as long as the office itself is located in a home. The old and traditional home based-business in Fez city and probably around Morocco is sewing and embroidery. Women used to be called in this case lm3almaand refer to her occupation lm3alma trraza‘artembroidery’, lm3almaxiata‘seweing’,lm3alma nbbata‘art of pearling’ etc… Also women used to be and still are wedding planners from their home location Naggafa or Tabbaxaa ‘chef or a cook, or qabla‘midwife’. These occupations are still practiced in the same way, but this new generation propose new and fresh touch of modernity to today products and services. More precisely, women start adopting trendy and up-to-date visions in order to satisfy an extremely demanding young girl and woman community in terms of quantity and quality. For example, today modern women’s needs are ‘bio food’, ‘modern and trendy cloths and caftans’, ‘personalized products’ ‘modern handmade decoration’. Another example, is modern baby siting. Current moms explore their valuable skill-set and resources that can be incredibly useful to other parents. In other words, some modern and educated mothers suggest babysitting services with specific activities for children, like music and dancing, reading stories, drawing, tutoring sessions and sports. Working women respond positively to these services as far as they responds to some standards as security, discipline, and professionalism. With the advent of the internet women are able to publicize their offering and monetize their skills and abilities
through blogs and social networks. It is worth mentioning in here that youtube tutoring offers creativity, self education and originality to educated women. Illiterate women, on their side, rely on traditional type of media as TV and radio to learn more about new practices and trends. Most of home-based businesses today are solicited by a great majority of women and find it an adequate alternative for both clients and suppliers.

3- Socioeconomic status and social integrity

Socioeconomic status is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. When viewed through a social class lens, privilege, power and control are emphasized. Research indicates that socioeconomic status affects women development as well as their physical and mental health notably when women have no real and sustainable income, a jobless husband or abandoned by their partners and have to raise their children alone. Therefore, the socioeconomic standing of women is of great importance to the well being of themselves, their families as well as future generations. In other words, socioeconomic status is a key factor in determining the quality of life of women. In this respect, for women, quality of life is measured by the others esteem and respect and by being able to integrate socially. Brigitte, Cohen and Seeman (2000) noted that: ‘’social integration is the extent of participation in social networks, indicated by active engagement in social roles and social activities, and cognitive identification with network members ’’ (p.151).

Researchers on ‘women and society’ indicate that women socialize and establish good relationships very quickly with their community members Sadiqi (2003). In other words, females’ socializing with other members of their community can positively affects their well-being, as it can negatively affect them if they feel that they are marginalized or looked down up on because of poverty or lack of education, or more precisely lack of interesting occupations. These phenomena engender a lack of linguistic and communication competences considered as essential in relationship ethics. As an alternative to this delicate situation, most of stay at home moms (notably divorced, abandoned and illiterate women) have decided to make a change in their lives and stop being considered as a stay at home person with no real occupation. Women drive social power from being educated, civilized and modern. Therefore, their own and family well being is related to finding a way out to take their lives at hand. The best alternative has been
to start home-based small businesses adopting the concepts of ‘from kitchen to company leaders’ and ‘From Zero to Hero’. This idea will be elaborated on in the following section.

4- Rational of the Research and population samples

The growth of working at home has paved the way for women to keep their family at the central part of their day-to-day lives, while also managing to bring in extra income with their own business. Stay at home women start businesses that reflect their own abilities like sewing, cooking, hand crafting and any artistic endeavor. In this research 25 women from Fez region aged between 25 and 55 years old, belonging to different social classes were interviewed on their home-based businesses, the reasons that push them to start a business at home and their feeling today as a change women as well as the difficulties they have faced before and after settling their business.

The research targeted at first, women from popular class, but I noticed that the number of upper class women home-based startups surpasses low or middle class start ups. Upper class women home-based businesses rely on fur and jewelry, haute couture clothing, wedding consultancy and planning, handmade decoration, modern babysitting, Moroccan dishes revisited in a modern way etc…while low class women start ups rely on bakery and pastry, sewing, maid services at home. It is true that high class women are running luxurious and prolific businesses but the concept is the same. In other words, either rich or poor, women from either class have decided to achieve their personal work dreams.

The idea to conduct research on home-based business emanates from the number of services and products that my neighbors, friends, family members and my own students proposed to me. My curiosity has grown when women started to market their products in public places like gymnasiums, hair-dressers and mostly at the door of their children schools. Moms were always ready to exhibit their products on their smart phones and always proposed to exchange phone numbers with other mothers to send them pictures of their products or explain about their services through WhatsApp or Facebook, and/or propose a home visit. As a result of their excellent marketing performance, I was tempted to buy their products or use their services, and I cannot deny that most of the time I was satisfied and convinced by their professionalism. This is also a pertinent reason that has pushed me to conduct research on home-based business in my region.
4-1 Methodology

4-1-1 The Interview

To well investigate on this study, a face to face interview was adopted as a methodology of research, the languages used are both French and Darija ‘colloquial Arabic’. The interview comprises 10 questions. The respondents were first asked about their age and level of education. The second question focuses on the based home start up idea and the reasons that push them to start a business from their home location. They were also asked about the persons who supported them before and after setting their businesses, how the respondents manage to marketize their products from their home location, how they get in touch with their clients as well as how they deal with their profit.

25 ladies from different social class, different age, different occupations, and different marital status, willingly accepted to respond to my request and shared with me their stories around a coffee or a cup of tea and some cakes and cookies mostly handmade which was one of the starting point of our conversation. The interview took place between mid-February and mid-March, 2016. The interviews weren’t scheduled for a specific timing, but they took between 1:30 to 3 hours, this depended on hospitality of women, the time it took to expose their products, to demonstrate their services, as well as to consult their web-sites. At first, I used my smart phone to record my respondents’ conversations, but after interviewing 5 females, I started to rely on observation and note-taking which were more practical for my research. Because of the similarities between some cases and the limited scope of this research, only three case studies will be reported in this paper.

5- Data Interpretation and Analysis

5-1 Main reasons to start a home based-business

In the era of globalization and the rapid changes happening worldwide, being a full timer housewife is not anymore adequate. The economy is getting tougher and the income of men alone can no longer sustain a family especially that a wife’s and children's needs and desires grow bigger day after day. Housewives feel desperate and marginalized by their partners when these latter cannot satisfy them financially. Worse than that, women are psychologically harassed by their husbands when they are told that they are just staying at home doing nothing. They feel
more frustrated when their husbands describe other women, namely a colleague, or a working-woman neighbour, as elegant, well-educated, open-minded and have an interesting job. Others feel bored and suffer from long days routine. Housewives suffer also from mental and eating disorder especially when they feel that their days are similar and endless. The routine of life is apparent on their faces. Young ladies claim that they are getting old at an early age and the olds claim that they are useless with an extremely tired body. Housewives who managed to find solutions to their endless days seem to enjoy each single moment of their life. To be clearer, women who establish quick relationships with other females with whom they share the same interest, engage in sport and social activities, and decide to start their weeks with new resolutions and new challenges are breathing a fresh air of victory, liberty and mostly self-satisfaction. Therefore, socioeconomic status is a key factor in determining the quality of life of women. To overcome life difficulties, stay at home mothers find a win-win situation to earn money and at the same time to fulfill their daily duties. Therefore, self-employment among women is becoming more and more a norm. As referred to earlier, women start businesses which reflect their abilities and skills as will be demonstrated in the following section.

5-2 The Interview Report

Through this report, I will briefly project the respondents’ stories, how their lives have changed, and how socio-economic status can contribute to women as well as to their families’ well being.

My first respondent is Khadijah, 40 years old, mother to three daughters, her husband is an office-boy and she is living in a very small flat. She started her first job as a maid. When she gave birth to her second daughter she stopped her job and decided to start her business. Khadijah decided to keep the same activity but from her home location. Khadijah relied on her own savings as well as the aid of the people she used to work with to help her buy an oven and washing machine. Khadijah decided to propose several services to her clients such as laundry services, cooking, and mainly bakery and pastry services. She claimed that her need of money urged her to think of different services at a time. She added that it was too difficult at the beginning but step by step, she managed to organize her time, bought another washing machine and another oven. Thanks to the support of her husband, her family and her neighbors she managed to make new clients by mouth to ear, clients who trust her, and rely on her in different
events and ceremonies. Khadijah considers herself a successful woman today because she helps her husband and at the same time she is financially independent. Khadijah enthusiastically said that the most important thing she is proud of is the amount of clients she has today and the professional relationship she managed to establish with them. One of Khadijah’s biggest challenge is to buy a big apartment to her family.

Our second respondent’s name is Bahia. She is 55 years old, a BA holder in French. She divorced when she was still pregnant of her twins. Bahia couldn't find a stable job because of her too babies. Though she was living with her parents, she was in a great need of money to raise her children as she dreams of. Bahia started home tutoring sessions when she was in the second year university but she stopped this activity when she got married. Once her children integrated the kid garden, she decided to go back to her old occupation. She got in touch with some mothers at the door of her twins’ school and suggested her service as a teacher of French. She started to teach primary and secondary school pupils. She managed to have a group of 10 students at first. She got 300 MDH per student, for four hours tutoring per month. Because of her efficient methodology of tutoring, she managed to have more students, then more groups. Bahia started tutoring at her own bedroom then turned the underground garage into a classroom. She said that her love for teaching helped her a lot. Bahia’s difficulty resides in being a divorced woman with no income. She suffered from a depression after her divorce; she said that she could have overcome this depression if she had a job. Staying at home made of her a vulnerable woman, most of the time sad and anxious. Bahia received a great moral support from her family and friends and realized that only a home-based business can change her life radically. Bahia considers herself a brave and successful woman today. Her income covers all her needs and even her desires and notably her children’s needs. One of Bahia’s biggest challenge is to have her own private school.

The third respondent is Fatima, 30 years old from an upper class Family. Fatima is married and has three children. She is selling luxurious garments, bags and accessories from her home location. I am actually one of her clients. Fatima was living in the United States of America and decided to come back to Morocco. Once settled in Fez city, she started selling some of the products brought from the States. She immediately noticed that her business can be lucrative. She started her journey by a back and forth to Paris, Turkey and New York to select
brandy garments, jewelers and bags to her demanding clients. She converted her dining room to a big shop. I asked Fatima about her choice of business in her home location rather than in an outdoor shop, knowing that she can afford a luxurious shop if she wants. Fatima laughed and replied that to run her business at home make of her a present mom and a successful business woman at the same time. Sometimes, women set up business not for money’s sake but for self challenge. A home-based business is similar to a go-to-work or an outdoor business. It is led in the same way, you are a manager, an accountant and a secretary at a time. You open an account, you make plans and strategies of sales, you think about reinvesting as well as saving. You decide about the prices and sales. You remain trendy to satisfy your clients’ needs. It is an exciting occupation since you get ready to meet your clients everyday while you are fulfilling your house duties. Being a housewife doesn’t mean to be condemned to earning little or no money, many housewives are earning significant income by offering a whole variety of products and services. In other words, to be financially independent, women feel empowered, joyful, and gain more self esteem, this, indeed, can affect society as a whole. Fatima’s biggest challenge is to export Moroccan traditional caftans to different parts of the globe.

5-3 Statistics

Home-based startups ‘success is related to many factors. The main factors were attributed to: 1) educational attainments, 2) tolerance and support of partners, 3) availability of budget. The following tableaux are the survey statistics of the contributing reasons to start a home-based business:

Educational attainments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year university</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA degree/master studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tableau above demonstrates the educational level of the 25 females interviewed. We can notice that 10 females from the low class are illiterate, and however, managed to find a way out to help themselves. 7 Middle class’ females stopped their studies because of marriage, pregnancy or because of some other circumstances. And finally, 1 female belonging to the upper class stopped her studies at the baccalaureate level because she got married and her husband obliged her to stay at home and take care of her children. Whereas, 4 upper class females are BA and/or Master holders either from private schools or foreign universities, which explains their easy access to social and business networking, have regular clients, and have enough budget to enlarge their activities.

2) Partners support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s moral support</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s financial support</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics on Partners’ moral and financial support has been much revealing about the hurdles that females’ in the low class may face in comparison to upper class women as the tableau shows. However, and according to the respondents’ revelations, this situation has not affected in a way or another their determination to set up their businesses.

3) Budget availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial capital</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>90 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Tableau shows that low class women are more in need for an initial capital to start their business than middle or upper class’ women, which push them to make their home locations a starting point to a business and with the minimum money they have.
6- Conclusion

In this research paper, the focus has been mainly on Moroccan women and home based start ups. Through this survey, it has been demonstrated that housewives, today, can enjoy more and more independence, respect and success thanks to small businesses that can be run from their home locations. The growth of home-based businesses is still increasing day after day where women are exploring more business horizons. The report also exhibited some housewives challenges claiming that the main challenges have been how to get started, to know how to market and sell products and services, and to change social and cultural stereotypes on housewives as ignorant, with no occupation and no real status. It is also a challenge to prove that home-based businesses are real, descent, and honorable occupations to stay at home women. It is a way to prevent psychological and health problems as well as life routine. And it is a way to realize their dearest dreams.

Last but not least, home based business is the best alternative for a woman to realize her dreams, practice her passion and take care of her family. In other words, it is the jack-pot for every woman who has decided to change her socioeconomic status from a stay-at-home mom to a successful businesswoman. Finally, this survey is only the first part of my research on home-based businesses in Fez city. The second part will be on home based business and the role of corporations in the rural areas of Fez region. Most exactly, this part will cover the important role that corporations fulfill either financially or psychologically. How stay-at-home females who are not aware of business networking get to marketize their products and/or services. This part will also handle the role of government and financial agencies in supporting corporations, especially in the way they proceed, communicate and put into practice home-based business either at the national or internal level. Are these initiatives going to create sustainable jobs for needy females? Answers to these questions will better clarify the socio-economic status of women in Morocco and their well being.

References


Gender Representation in the Moroccan EFL Textbook Discourse

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Abstract

The overriding purpose of the present paper is to examine a significant feature of gender representation in the discourse underlying the current Moroccan EFL textbooks. Indeed, the paper discusses findings brought about by a research paper conducted in the fulfillment of the requirements for degree of doctorate at the faculty of Letters in Beni Mellal (Jaafari, 2015). The study has quantitatively processed 252 pieces of the gendered dialogues and talk exchanges embedded in the eight textbooks officially employed in the Moroccan high schools. Particularly, the study examines the manifestations of unequal distribution of power to genders in discourse as language in use. In this endeavour, the study is guided methodologically by the works of the Critical Discourse Analysis scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Lia Litosseliti and others. The research is also characterized by the implementation of M.A.K Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, mainly modality analysis at the interpersonal level and transitivity analysis at the experiential level. The conversational methods and techniques are employed to map out the way people exert power over interlocutants, reproduce or challenge prevailing gender ideology in talk. The importance of the results is proved by their implication for textbook industry, language pedagogy, human rights and the improvement of society as a whole.

Keywords: CDA, gender, equity, discourse, power.

Introduction

The present study finds its rationale in the ideological, social and educational context of change currently running in Morocco. Furthermore, gender equality as a trend has become a field of study universally undertaken to assess the status of human rights and equality within gender communities. In Morocco as a case, the efforts to bring change in the field of rights as a whole started by signing the universal human rights conventions in the late nineties. Eventually, the policy assumed to foster gender equity in education was integrated in The Charter of Education
and Training (2000). The new policy expects the newly devised school textbooks to reflect in form, content and methodology the attempt to abolish gender discrimination and instruct young citizens on gender equity.

Taking into consideration the context of study discussed above, the research purpose becomes obvious which is to answer the following question:

To what extent does the pedagogic discourse via the EFL textbook, in its current form, transmit successfully the principles of the national policy regarding the construction of the Moroccan gender identity?

The question above was forwarded to serve as an overarching inquiry for a better orientation of the research. Such a question was approached by hypothesizing on the role of discourse in the production or reproduction of the citizen's gender identity. Two hypotheses directed the investigation:

Hypothesis 1. We assume that there is quantitative imbalance in the distribution of power and knowledge between the gender roles in the Moroccan EFL textbook discourse based on dialogues.

Hypothesis 2. We expect to find that the Moroccan EFL textbook discourse only reproduce implicitly and explicitly the traditional gender roles existing at the macro level of the society.

To test the hypotheses, the study examined the manifestations of unequal distribution of power to genders in discourse, which is language in use. To achieve this purpose, the investigation extracted and analysed 252 gendered dialogues embedded in all the eight textbooks officially accredited and currently running in the Moroccan high school.

In this endeavour, the study is guided methodologically by the works of the Critical Discourse Analysis scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Lia Litosseliti and others. CDA theoretical framework conceives that the structures of discourse are linked to the structures of society. Class, gender and ethnic relations, for instance, are “systematically associated with the structural units, levels, or strategies of talk and text
embedded in their social, political and cultural contexts” (van Dijk, 1995, pp. 135-136). Such links, though far from being explicit, are communicated by meaning.

Accordingly, the textbook as educational discourse plays multi-dimensional roles, namely psychological, cultural and ideological. Within this scope, van Dijk (1989) advances that the school textbook is a source of power for institutions of societies and a means of establishing unanimous consensus on particular attitudes and beliefs. He states that:

Together with instructional dialogues, textbooks are used extensively by all citizens during their formal education. The knowledge and attitudes expressed and conveyed by such learning materials, again, reflect a dominant consensus, if not the interests of the most powerful groups and institutions of societies. (p. 48)

Van Dijk links the value of the school textbook as educational discourse to its powerful impact on the orientation of the citizens’ attitudes and the contribution to the building of the social identity. He compares this impact to the effect of media discourse on society, essentially because “textbooks are obligatory reading for many people, which is a second major condition of their power” (van Dijk, 1989, p.48). Hence, textbooks are not only vehicles of language instructions and learning, but also devices for orientating thought and positioning social roles. Such influential aspect is the main reason behind choosing the school textbook as a sample for investigation in this paper.

Equally valuable for the present research is the way dialogues represent models of social roles in social interaction as they introduce new linguistic structure and functions for learners to practice in meaningful contexts. Expanding on the same assumption above, Fairclough (2003) probes in the essence and properties of dialogues and conversations in general; he declares that “…even informal conversation shows inequalities which can be attributed to social relations between participants” (p. 78). That is, unequal social relations between participants inevitably results in inequalities in talk and discourse. These inequalities, he adds, are most explicit in the distribution of turn between men and women in conversations. In similar vein, van Dijk (1995b) states that:

The more specific interactional nature of dialogue may reflect the ideologically based power of interaction strategies more generally, by which speakers who share
egalitarian ideologies may feel entitled to verbally treat their speech partners as inferior. (p. 31)

VanDijk here highlights the aspect of inequalities in interaction which is explicit in the inequality of using interaction verbal strategies.

In conclusion, the choice of textbooks as a sample and textbook dialogues as a corpus for quantifiable analysis reflects awareness of the social role such material plays in community. As a powerful socialization agent, the school textbook by means of instruction dialogues make learners internalize unconsciously portrayals of people, explicitly representations of gender roles and speeches. Such phenomenon is the focus of the present paper with the purpose to locate recursive inequalities in these gender representations.

The central question is, ultimately, how to spot and reveal linguistic structures of dominance and power in text and talk? How meaning is constructed to transmit knowledge with the purpose to shape thoughts and constitute identities? Then, what linguistic tools underpin CDA in this endeavour?

Quantitative analysis

Theoretical background

To answer these questions, the present research focused on the implementation of M.A.K Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, mainly modality analysis at the interpersonal level and transitivity analysis at the experiential level. For the purpose of the general aims of the present analysis, the modals extracted from the textbooks dialogues are classified in terms of two distinct categories: epistemic and non-epistemic modalities which Halliday (2004, p. 150) terms ‘modalization’ and ‘modulation’, respectively. While epistemic modality relates to the proposition in the utterance and is concerned with “matters of [human judgment,] knowledge, belief and opinion rather than fact” (Lyons, 1977, p. 793), non-epistemic modality refers to facts or events and is performative such as imposing obligation, making promise, giving permission as facts to be acted out by the addressee. They involve an attempt to influence, direct or control the event and regulate the behaviour of the addressee. The latter category Coates (1983) labels ‘root modality’. Non-epistemic and root modality are interchangeable in this paper. They are used as
umbrella terms to all the other types, namely deontic and dynamic modalities, distinguished from epistemic modality.

Methodologically speaking, the choice of a method of analysis appropriate to the objectives and theoretical approach of the research helped to come out with reliable results. Indeed, this project intended to be quantitative in terms that the search for data is in a large sample of texts. The analysis statistics are performed by Wordsmith software which spotted and counted the frequency of modals and verbs, names and job titles as linguistic items across the numerous samples of dialogues. This project is also qualitative because it falls under discourse-analysis type where "the results tend to be richer with regard to understanding the way that information is presented in a text" (Nicholls, 2003, p. 3).

Variables

Defining the variables in research is also a decisive procedure which is clarified within methodology. Concerning modality, the basic modals are stated as follows: can (ability), could, may (permission, probability), might (possibility), must, ought to, shall, should, will, and would. Don’t have to, have to, mustn’t+ can’t (prohibition), might have + past participle, had to, should and ought to (advice and recommendation) + needn’t modals in the present and past.

As for transitivity, the verbs are extracted from the dialogues and studied within the context of use. This thesis adheres to Hallidays’ view of transitivity which forms the core of representation. As a system of lexicogrammatical choices, transitivity offer meaning potentials for the language user to choose a possibility that convey a meaning that suits most her/his social and personal needs and the view s/he holds about him/herself and the world around. In this paper, four types of processes are analyzed: material (doing, happening, creating and changing), mental (feeling, thinking or seeing), relational (being, identifying, attributing), verbal (saying or speaking). It is an attempt to assess how the world of experience is perceived by either genders, namely the material world and the world of inner consciousness. In one word, transitivity in this paper probes the different gender’s utterances embedded in the dialogues to find out which type of processes dominates the discourse of either gender roles. The first step in the procedure has isolated quantitatively the verbs, then the processes in the dialogues. The second step computed the gender of the participants involved in each process. It means to answer the following questions: who acts? Who thinks and feels? Who acts on the other? Who has the agent role in
material processes? Who is the recipient of these ideas? The overall aim is to discover which gender has more power and influence on the events and acts and who is most affected by these acts; that is the protagonist of the representation.

Results and discussion

Modality

Quantitatively, both genders have their share in the occurrences of modal verbs of all types analyzed. The following table exhibits the overall distribution of modals to males and females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Modality</th>
<th>Root Modality</th>
<th>Epistemic Modality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig2: Distribution of modality to genders in the textbooks

The overall probabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probabilities</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Gate1</th>
<th>Ticket1</th>
<th>Ticket2</th>
<th>Gate2</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Freq</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
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<td>M 8</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>M 6</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>M 11</td>
<td>F 8</td>
<td>M 7</td>
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<td>M 0</td>
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<td>M 0</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>M 0</td>
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<td>M 2</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>F 9</td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>might</td>
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<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>F 0</td>
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<td>F 0</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>M 6</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>F 3</td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>F 3</td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Frequency of the epistemic modals

It is worth noting that the most frequent core modals are the probability will and possibility can. Concerning the use of can, all the textbooks, except Insights and Ticket1, give evident prominence to males over females. Besides, the overall analysis shows that males exceed females in the frequency of use of will by 16 hits and can by 20. In sum, the analysis shows that the discrepancies between female and male’s number of uses of epistemic modality reveal inequality in gender representation.
Non-epistemic modality. Contrary to epistemic modality, non-epistemic modality relates to event and behavior rather than knowledge. As such, speakers use modals to attempt a change in the behavior of the interlocutor such as imposing obligation, giving permission, requesting, expressing ability and willingness. The forthcoming table displays the distribution of the different semantic categories belonging to non-epistemic obligation, and prohibition between males and females in the dialogues in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obligation &amp; Prohibition</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Gate1</th>
<th>Ticket1</th>
<th>Ticket2</th>
<th>Gate2</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Freq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must I</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shall</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Frequency of the obligation modals

The analysis shows that the deontic Should hits the greatest rate of frequency which is 76. Must, have to and ought to follow with 40, 16 and 3 hits respectively. Important are the overall frequencies that indicate that men use deontic obligation modals more than women. This is true also when analyzing the instances of using the obligation modals by males and females in individual textbooks. This idea is made clearer in the table below.

Fig 2: Frequency of the deontic obligation and prohibition modalities
Except for Window, the textbooks show that men more than women exhibit strong inclination to use modals expressing obligation. In Outlook, women exceeds male in using obligation modals just by one beat that is 13 for females to 12 for males which is negligible.

To conclude, the discrepancy between the frequencies of obligation modals expressed by males and those mentioned by females is very conspicuous. The former outnumber the latter by the double, 97 to 50 respectively. So, it can be said that females are less represented than males in the cases of obligation modality.

Further concordancing of modal auxiliaries embedded in the textbook dialogues showed that males and females use core modals for various functions according to the speakers’ gender and social roles. The table below demonstrates the frequencies of the auxiliaries expressing different functions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: Request 2: Decision, 3: Volition, 4: Ability, 5: Offer</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Gate1</th>
<th>Ticket 1</th>
<th>Ticket 2</th>
<th>Gate2</th>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Freq</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Will</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Frequency of modals expressing different functions

The first remark is that the modal can has got prominence over the other modals in use for different functions, and it is the only modal in addition to its past form, could, which is able to express ability. The frequencies of requests outnumber the other functions with 88 instances, followed by ability with 60 instances, decision making, volition and offering with 36, 32 and 24 instances each. Quantitatively speaking, the distribution of dynamic modals to genders is
irregular and its frequency is changing from one function to another and from one book to another. Such a fact doesn’t give opportunity to draw substantive conclusions concerning gender representation. However, the qualitative analysis of the discourse demonstrates the reasons and the way males and females use some of the non-epistemic modals. The following example relates to deontic obligation:

Mrs. Plump: Well, I always feel weak and tired when I get up in the morning. I look at myself in the mirror and I say: “... Yes, I'm putting in weight, and I can't get into my clothes" Must I go on a diet? Must I see a nutritionist?

Doctor: No, you don't have to go on a diet and you don't have to see a nutritionist, either. But you must change your eating habits. (Outlook, SB, p. 70)

By directing the obligation must to herself and requesting instructions from the doctor, the female is expecting the male doctor to dictate to her the obligations according to which she should tune her future life style. The male doctor, by contrast, confidently enumerate to her the dos and don’ts. He first illicits her attention by successive expressions of absence of obligation. Then, he exhibits his expertise in his profession by a must-directive.

In other instances, females’ propositions of obligation are either directed to themselves or another interlocutor of lower status.

**Pharmacist:** who's next please? Can I help you?

Customer: yes please. Can I have a couple on injections like these?

**Pharmacist:** Let me see. I'm sorry. Do you have a prescription?

Customer: They are not for me. They are for my mother. She is very sick, and I must get her shot now.

**Pharmacist:** I know but I must respect the rules. So you don’t have to wait. You call your doctor.

Customer: Ok. What about bandage for my arm?

**Pharmacist:** No problem. You don't have to produce a prescription for that. (Outlook, SB, p. 71)

The male doctor initiates the conversation by offering to help the female customer. This help is offered out of duty rather than humbleness or sympathy. He uses the expression ‘Can I’. The same expression is used by the lady but as a request to fulfill a need. The female customer expresses self-directed obligation ‘I must’ out of care for family while the male pharmacist does the same but out of care and respect to law and professional rules. Therefore, the male is
depicted as a source of power producing directives to the helpless woman who lacks knowledge of the rules.

However, there are moments when females give directives to a different person. This latter may be of lower social status. Such a use of deontic obligation relates, for example, to the case when the mother is addressing talk to her daughter saying: “You must be careful with that knife”. (Outlook, SB, p. 72). Hence, the use of obligation in context endows males with more power than females who are described as lacking knowledge hence power. This conclusion goes in line with previous research’s findings. Lakoff (1973) states the following:

The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of. In appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favored. (p. 45)

In fact, these numerical insights offer a solid support to the assumption that men are depicted as being more inclined than women to change the occurrences in the immediate world of reality by means of producing performative acts such as commands, invitations and ordering which influence, direct and regulate the addressee’s behaviour.

**Transitivity**

The second phase in the quantitative analysis goes further to probe into the frequency of the transitivity processes in the textbook dialogues. Being at the core of reality representation, transitive processes reveal noteworthy discursive facets of the social context as they contribute to the interpersonal meaning of discourse. The distribution of the frequency of the processes in the dialogues studied is illustrated in the following diagram:

![Diagram of Distribution and Percentage of Processes](image)

Fig 3: Distribution and percentage of the 4 processes
The illustration above ranks the four types of processes according to their rate of frequency in the dialogues studied. Out of 4929 clauses extracted from the dialogues with the help of Wordsmith Concord software, 1898 instances of gendered transitivity are selected and categorized in terms of process type and gender role. It is worth noting that two types of processes dominate the majority of the clauses extracted; they are material and mental processes. Material processes rank first (36%), followed by mental processes (30%), then relational (28%) and verbal (12%) processes. The following table indicates the quantified instances of gender representation in individual textbooks.

![Fig 4: Frequency of gender representation in transitivity](image)

Accordingly, the investigation settles on the conclusion that males are more represented than females in Outlook, Visa, Gateway1, Ticket2, Gateway2 and Insights. In contrast, only two textbooks out of eight which are Window and Ticket1 give noticeable prominence to female gendered transitivity instances.

Conspicuous enough is also the high frequency of the material processes acted by males in contrast with those acted by females in the majority of the textbooks, which is 5 out of 8. In Outlook as a case, men are the actors of 93 out of 146 material processes versus 53/146 material processes acted by females. Hence, the fact that males run the utmost amount of material processes attests to their inclination towards action and the material world.

The succeeding implication was unexpected; following the mainstream gender studies, our hypotheses postulate that females would have monopoly on mental processes, hence show more preference for thinking and feeling than men. Indeed, one of the main conclusions Lakoff (2004) comes out with from her research is that “Women are person-oriented, interested in their
own and each other's mental states and respective status; men are object-oriented, interested in things in the outside world” (p. 101). On the contrary, only two of the textbooks studied (Ticket1 and Insights) give supremacy to females over males in thinking and feeling. It can be concluded, then, that males dominate the frequency of gender representation as they do most of the doing, feeling and thinking processes.

Equally significant results rise from the scrutiny of the frequency of relational and verbal processes. All the textbooks, except for Window, Ticket1 and Insights, tend to describe males as recurrent agents of relational processes in the dialogues. Males are thus depicted as more capable of identifying and consciously establishing relations between elements in the material world of experience which they monopoly. Unlike relational processes, verbal processes communicate and speak out the inner world of consciousness. The analysis of gendered verbal processes yields that the instances where males perform verbal processes outnumber those where females are subjects. This fact further attests to the assumption that males, besides being more disposed to act, tend to communicate their thoughts and feelings more than females would.

In brief, the results from the quantitative analysis on gendered modality and transitivity in the Moroccan EFL textbooks concur with the thesis set for the study. The modality analysis demonstrates that female’s less assertive language reflect their powerlessness. In disparity, males address directives to females with noticeable self-assertion. Furthermore, the analysis of the gendered process types brings proofs to the assumption that males are more represented in the textbooks’ discourse and are regarded more than females as active agents in all areas of experience of the real world: acting, sensing, relating and communicating. The quantitative analysis has, therefore, brought to knowledge that a sexist undercurrent and ideology permeates implicitly the Moroccan EFL textbooks. Such a claim needs to be confirmed and consolidated by applying a different level of analysis to the same data and some semiotic features accompanying the dialogues such as pictures and illustration.
Qualitative analysis

Firstness

The first illuminating results come from the reconsideration of female firstness in the dialogues. If in the quantitative analysis the focus question was on the number of times each gender initiates dialogues, what matters more in the qualitative analysis is the way genders start their dialogues. The assumption drawn from the extracted exchanges destabilizes the preliminary meaning conveyed by the results from the quantification of the frequencies of female visibility at the onset of the dialogues. Journalist or reporter as a career fulfilled by female gender is quite gratifyingly respectful, but in the textbooks, it is recursively juxtaposed to socially and intellectually higher professions that male characters have such as scientist and specialist. So, although females are given the prominence of initiating considerable amount of dialogues, males are depicted as a source of knowledge from which females seek information and, thus, receive high unconscious and conscious attention from the young learners. One reason is that the interviews are exploited as main reading or listening activities in the unit. Second, the questions incorporated in the follow-up activities invite the learner to focus on the utterances delivered by the interviewees who are males.

It is worth noting also that questioning is a predominant course both females and males employ to initiate talk with each other. Obvious from the analysis that both females and males frequently employ three types of speech functions to initiate speech with each other: wh-questions, yes/no questions and statements. The former counts 59 instances with 23 for males and 36 for females. By contrast, males ask more yes/no questions than females, 40 instances for males and 29 for females. The assumption to draw from this comparative counting is that the textbooks assert that females ask more wh-questions than men. That is, they illicit knowledge which they don’t know before. Males, on the other hand, propose knowledge to accept or refute through the use of yes/no questions. Concerning statements, the discrepancy is minimal, because females state 22 while males state 26 which make the total of 48.
Social spheres

Biased gender representation is most salient in gendering the spheres of life in the textbooks. The present table is meant to provide numerical data concerning occupational and household roles that the characters perform in the textbooks’ dialogues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational &amp; Household Role</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Gate1</th>
<th>Ticket1</th>
<th>Ticket2</th>
<th>Gate2</th>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Total Frequency</strong></td>
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female activities relate to shopping and organizing social activities. Males, on the other hand, are the family main breadwinner.

To conclude, the Moroccan EFL textbooks may, at the first encounter, appear to be equal in gender representation through distribution of talk initiation, turn-taking, professional and social roles. However, a closer analysis of what and how the language is used in talk and context in addition to the roles the genders assume recursively in the different spheres of life makes it clear that the authors’ conscious endeavour is subverted by the persistent traditional gender ideology which prevails the hidden thinking of the Moroccan people.

In general conclusion, the methodology in this dissertation proposes alternative assessment of gender representation. First, it shows that gender bias is multifaceted and can be both explicit and implicit in different components of the school textbook. To uncover the underlying gender ideology embedded in the textbook components, a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analyses would yield richer account of gender status than a single-way method of textbook analysis. Methodology as such in this paper is a combination of quantifying data analysis and context-sensitive approach.

Conclusion

Equally important are implications for pedagogy. The present research has focused on gender imbalance in the current Moroccan ELT materials. The outcomes obtained by the study indicate that the authors of the textbooks have consciously invested enormous efforts to represent both genders in different components of the textbooks such as themes, characters and language. However, multiple gender inequalities seem to persist in the textbooks. The results from the study imply that textbook designers should treat gender representation quantitatively and qualitatively. A balance should be struck between the rates of gender roles within each theme in line with the rate of males and females in society. They should pay more attention to both the number of times, how, when, with whom and for how long a gender perform speech acts in dialogues. Special attention should also focus on the ideology that the topic orientations of dialogues, the portrayal of men and women in occupational, social activities and places may produce. Authors, for example, should be considerate to recurrent illustrations of gender roles that impute females a very confined range of activities limited to shopping, cooking and caring. If such instances of gender inequities persist in textbooks, they may create a sense of normality
towards discrimination in the learners’ concept of gender. This fact may affect negatively students’ learning styles and trigger prejudice in their subconscious socialization processes which will have repercussions on their adult life such as gender hostility. Such is the social phenomenon that this study intends to change in community.

Apart from authors, teachers and students are also meant by the implications of the results of this study. The impacts of the extreme prevalence of traditional gender stereotyping on the students’ values can be minimized, if teachers and learners are consciously alert to the sexist ideology and they are willingly committed to challenge it. Here comes the role of sharpening the students’ critical thinking. Empowering both teachers and learners with gender literacy and gender critical awareness is therefore one strong way to boost citizens’ immunity against stereotyping in language.

References


Constraints to Girls’ Education in Morocco and a Gender Approach to Literacy

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Abstract

The development of any country is often measured by its citizens' level of education. Most western countries are developed because they have provided education for all their citizens. Developing countries, on the other hand, have lagged behind, and many of them find it increasingly difficult to educate all their citizens because of inadequate financial and human resources. Morocco is among the countries where the number of illiterates is high despite all the efforts made by the government and by nongovernmental organizations (NGO) to eradicate illiteracy and provide education for all. Thus, the present paper explores this social phenomenon, with specific reference to Moroccan women. Its purpose is to shed light on some of the most significant constraints to girls’ schooling in Morocco. Also it intends to make the people in charge aware of the effects of education, and human development; and particularly NGOs regarding the role they can play to fight some negative traditional values to improve girls’ and women’s situation in Morocco.

Therefore, this paper is mostly concerned with displaying some aspects of gender inequality in education and elucidating how education is a crucial means for women’s empowerment and its impact on the development of her family and entire society.

Keywords: Identity, gender inequality, gender stereotype, segregation, empowerment, development.

Introduction

Education is considered as one of the crucial factors in determining the social, economic, and political development of a society. According to the World Bank, “girls’ education yields some of the highest returns of all development investments, yielding both private and social benefits that accrue to individuals, families and society at large…” (World Bank, 1995). However, in Morocco, girls’ acquisition of knowledge is fervently opposed; regulated to
secondary importance as compared to boys or impeded with so many restrictions as to make it almost impossible for female students to get a decent standard of education, especially in the rural areas. Despite attempt at transformation of education in Morocco, it seems that little has been achieved to facilitate and boost girls’ education. The purpose in this paper is to shed light on some of the most significant constraints to girls’ schooling in Morocco. The objective in this article, thus, is to make the people in charge aware of the effects of education, and human development; and particularly NGOs regarding the role they can play to fight some negative traditional values to improve girls’ and women’s situation in Morocco.

1. The Causes of Female Illiteracy

The causes of female illiteracy are varied and different. Illiteracy is attributed to extreme poverty, customs and traditions, the geographical distance of schools, personal decision, and school failure. Thus, the principle determinants of schooling can be classified as follows: the educational constraints, the socioeconomic constraints, the environmental constraints, and the cultural constraints.

1.1. Educational Constraints

In this category, constraints are related to the educational system and the mechanisms that govern its functioning (structures, cadres, culture, etc.). Among other factors contributing to gender differentials in enrolments are the location and the physical facilities of schools, the lack of female teachers, and the lack of basic amenities. Other obstacles include the distance between home and school and the lack of roads and means of transportation, which affects females more than males where female mobility is restricted.

The nature and the quality of schooling: Schooling in the rural areas is characterized by the inadequacy and the non-satisfaction of the populations’ needs. Schooling is poorly distributed among the regions and the rural douars, and are not arranged with the entire pedagogical structure at the financial level, and educational level. This leads to sharing classrooms, the dispersion of schools, failure and then premature dropping out particularly among girls. In this respect, Ibaaquil (1996) notes that the budget allotted to the pedagogical stuff in the Moroccan primary school is in most cases less than 6 percent of the whole budget.
adds that due to lack of material, teaching methods are rather traditional and based on memorization and authority.

The Content of the school programs: In the rural areas, there is an inadequacy, on one side in the contents of the programs or “schooling culture”, and on the other side, in the values and the elements of the rural culture. This inadequacy concerns particularly the means and dynamics of the social formation of the girl; in addition to the values, customs and the conception of the woman’s role within family and society upon which this formation is based. This negatively affects the situation of rural girls in spite of the significant changes that these contexts underwent due to their acculturation with the urban values and the behaviours.

The inadequacy of the available educational services: One factor accounting for the lower rate of girls’ participation in rural primary schools is the low proportion of female teachers in such schools. The data show that whereas 50% of urban primary school teachers are female, only 18% of rural teachers are female. Improvement of this proportion could help overcome the reluctance of conventional rural parents to send their daughters to schools. Unfortunately, the importance of the presence of female teachers, especially in the rural areas, is primordial. It is worthwhile to point out that the presence of female teachers would provide an incitement for girls to enroll in schools; they would create a safe atmosphere that would encourage parents to send their daughters to school, and would provide positive role models. In a patriarchal society like Morocco with cultural barriers, female teachers would allow parents to feel more comfortable with the school because their daughters are supervised by other adult females. Female teachers are also less likely to perpetuate gender discrimination and harassment, creating a safe space for girls to learn. In other words, simply because they are women, female teachers would be gender sensitive in their attitudes and behaviors, fight for more gender sensitive curriculum and provide a safe environment free from sexual harassment. Thus, An increase in the numbers of women teachers would accelerate, if not ensure, sustainable gender equality in education.

If women are to achieve equality on Moroccan society, women teachers must be in the forefront of those who encourage social transformation for girls. They must themselves be, and help young females to be, critically aware of their society’s norms that include an understanding of patriarchy and how and why females have been traditionally relegated to a secondary position
within society. They must help female students to challenge accepted gender roles. In this vein, UNICEF has noticed that the greater the presence of female teachers, the higher the female student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates. UNICEF has also noted that the better the amount of education the female teachers received, the more likely that they will be effective teachers with increased student learning.

1.2. Socio-Economic Constraints

These constraints concern, on one hand, the economic and the financial conditions that deprive the rural areas, and on the other hand, the disparities and the social stratification characterizing the rural context.

As previously mentioned, many factors have an influence on girls’ educational opportunities. However, poverty is the main reason why families either fail to enrol their girls in schools or withdraw them prematurely from primary school. Thus, family socio-economic status is often regarded as an influential factor affecting school achievement. It is commonly assumed that children of the middle and upper classes achieve better in school than do classmates who are economically less fortunate.

Families with few resources may select boys to get an education at the expense of girls. Girls are often considered as a source of household work that will leave their families upon marriage and become part of the work force of another family. Boys, on the other hand, are expected to support their families of origin when they become adults. When this is the case, it is economically sounder to invest in the education of boys than that of girls, particularly where money for education and basic necessities is scarce. Therefore, and as stated by the study on the schooling of girls in five provinces of Morocco (2012), the high cost represents the major obstacle that occupies the first rank among the constraints related to schooling, (84.5%) to the weak access to school and (81.5%) to the dropping out. Thus, the economic factor significantly elucidates the work of children belonging to the disadvantaged categories. In fact, those children take part as a human capital in the domestic production, either in the household, the care and the education of little children (for girls); or in the field work (for boys).

However, research into the constraints to girls’ schooling explains the persistence of gender gaps. Girls in poor households are particularly likely to miss out on schooling because of
the perceived and actual costs to households of girls’ schooling. These costs are both direct (e.g. fees books, pencils, paper, required clothing, transport) and opportunity costs. For example, data from Morocco reveals that reasons for non-attendance differ by gender, and that poverty was more likely to be a constraint for girls. Poverty was found to be a reason for non-attendance for 15.8 percent of girls, but only 8.9 percent of boys. In the poorest expenditure group, girls were much less likely to attend school with 48.5 percent non-attendance for girls versus 22 percent of boys (World Bank 1994, cited in Baden 1995b).

1.3. Environmental Constraints

Parents are often very concerned about a daughter’s safety and the preservation of traditions such as male-female segregation, and therefore, attention needs to be paid to the physical environment in which girls are educated. In Moroccan rural areas, especially in mountainous regions, schools are not available and if so, they are not accessible as the children have to walk long distances before reaching the school, a fact which does not encourage parents to send their daughters since it involves many moral and physical risks (Belarbi, 1992). Given this situation, distance to school, safety of access routes used by girls, sanitation arrangements, security and seclusion of school buildings are all important factors influencing parental decisions whether to send a girl to school or to keep her at home. Physical inputs such as the supply of water pumps and suitably designed latrines can be key elements in improving girl’s basic education. Researches in Morocco undertake as part of a project to promote girl’s education highlights conditions that impact access, retention and attainment by girls. So, the distance of school from the community is particularly important. However, girls are more likely to enrol in schools less than a mile from home. Where intermediate schools are less than 10 miles from the community, enrolment in primary schools also increases. Where primary schools have water, electricity and latrines, girls’ attendance is higher by 11 percent (Spratt, 1992). In this situation, girls are the most negatively affected about schooling than the other categories of the rural population because of their penalized social situation.

A gender perspective on education suggests attention to the content and value of what schools teach and the kind of environments they provide for girls, not just whether girls attend school or not. Girls’ sense of second class citizenship may be reinforced by the school
environment, where the curriculum or teacher attitudes perpetuate sexist stereotypes, or where there is a lack of female role models (Womankind 1995).

1.4. Socio-Cultural Constraints

The superstructures that include values, mentalities, or culture in general are characterized by resistance to change and a high capacity to fight against the new values. Cultural elements are implemented in the social body thanks to mechanisms allowing their reproduction. This ensures their capacity for resistance, their self-renewal and their striving against factors that can block them. This situation applies notably to the problematic and the feminine question. At the present time, through woman’s crucial participation in the active life and her relative emancipation, there is still the persistence of the traditional beliefs and thoughts. Those beliefs contrast woman’s autonomy and gender equality, particularly in the marginalized and rural areas.

Thus, under the effect of ignorance, poverty and marginalization, those cultural elements hold back the schooling of girls. In this respect, the parents’ attitude towards mixed teaching environments, the presence of male teachers, the acquisition of the values that challenge rural traditional values, the conception of the social role and the future of girls, etc. are extremely negative. All these cultural elements determine the opportunities of girls and their rights to education. Stromquist (1990) argues that traditional societies are, for the most part, sexist in the way girls and women are treated. This treatment affects many dimensions of their lives that school texts strengthen traditional sex-role stereotypes, and that these factors cumulatively result in continued female subordination and denied access to education in male-dominated societies (Wagner 1993).

Obviously, prevailing cultural values and norms appear to have a great impact on the female education’s state. Many parents in rural areas lack interest or are openly hostile to the formal education of their daughters for reasons related to social and religious norms in general and to marriage prospects in particular. The opinion is still widespread that education spoils a girls’ character and undermines her willingness to fulfill her traditional role properly. Early marriage and the importance of preserving a girls’ good reputation lead to extensive girls’ withdrawal from school at puberty, especially if they attend co-educational institutions.
Research on parental attitudes towards female and male education, however, suggests that the education of males is more highly valued than that of females. Marriage and motherhood are envisaged as the eventual girls’ ‘career’ in all social classes, and by the time they are teenagers, girls themselves see their future in this way, whereas boys stress on careers and work but rarely mention marriage or children. Sharpe (1976) argues that many parents stated explicitly that education was ‘not important’ for girls. Boys were constantly urged to study, work, or ‘do well’ often in relation to a specific career while the common attitude towards girls’ education was a passive one. On a wider level, parents bring their daughters up to be protected and dependent: ‘a girl is seldom given the opportunity to test, develop, and assess her abilities for herself, and is unconfident of doing things alone.’ (Garett, 1997)

Similarly, in a study undertaken in Northern Morocco, Bourqia (1996) reports that rural people laugh when asked why their daughters do not go to school. There are two main types of response. The first emphasizes that education is irrelevant to the efficient performance of the wives’ and mothers’ roles, and even that of daughters’; she makes bread, she cooks, she holds children on her back. There is no point in a girl’s staying at school if her mother needs her help in these chores at home. The second is a proud statement of fact, “we don’t send our girls to school”. It is correspondent to seclusion for preserving family honor intact. Schools, then, are seen as a corrupting influence, giving access to the public sphere. In Sadiqi’s terms, “lack of schools only partially explains Moroccan women’s illiteracy. Another important factor is men’s attitude in a patriarchal society: men are generally reticent to encourage women’s literacy as the latter is synonymous to ‘emancipation’ which is believed to make women less compliant and more independent. Illiteracy is a powerful means of perpetuating the gender gap between women and men, as well as a means to subdue women.” (Sadiqi, 1999)

1.5. The Vicious Circle of Illiteracy

One factor that is often overlooked is the vicious circle of illiteracy. An illiterate mother is far less likely to send her daughters to school. A traditional culture that sets little value on girls’ education is least embarking upon daughters’ education or adult literacy.

A combination of mutually reinforcing customs, traditions and attitudes places greater value on males than females. Moreover, improved employment opportunities and earning-power as a result of educational opportunities can lead to greater independence for women, which may
be threatening to men’s sense of superiority, control, and conviction about the status of men and women in society. Thus, these attitudes act as a restraint to women’s educational opportunities. This intricate reality requires a planning conception based on scientific foundations. It needs a planning that should be able to evaluate the determinants, the dimensions and the typology of the social demand on education in the rural area.

Morocco’s High Commissioner for Planning Ahmed Lahlimi revealed statistics from the 2014 census, which show that illiteracy dropped to 32 percent, compared to 42 percent ten years ago. Lahlimi stated that Illiteracy rate in Morocco is more common in adults over 50 years old at 61.1 percent, but drops to 3.7 percent for children who are less than 15 years old. According to the same source, illiteracy rate decreased by 18.7 percent in 2014, and the number of illiterate people decreased to 8.6 million people in comparison to 10.2 million in 2004. In rural areas illiteracy is still high at 41.7 percent, in comparison to 22.2 percent in urban areas. The illiteracy rate among women (41.9 per cent) is higher than that of young men, 22.1 percent, respectively. The results show that illiteracy in rural areas dropped proportionately, although it still exists at a high percentage in comparison to urban areas. In rural areas, illiteracy dropped by 21.2 percent while in urban areas it dropped by 6.9 percent. Men represent 17.5 percent of the drop, while women represent 14.6 percent. (Haut Commissariat of Planning, 2014)

In this connection, success in getting girls to schools and keeping them there requires a partnership between government, the private sector, and the community. Government policy and practice directly impact educational access. Keeping girls in school requires a society where girls are encouraged to participate and excel; where the curriculum is relevant to their daily lives; and where they participate fully in learning (USAID, 1998). Experience worldwide indicates that an effective strategy to improve educational access and quality for girls is to form partnerships with parents, teachers, the private sector and NGOs. Governments have a key role to play because support is needed for teachers, schools, and quality-enhancing inputs such as learning materials.

It was indicated that in almost every country where illiteracy rates are high, illiterate women are more likely to represent the majority. These two facts when combined, show that women have been throughout time, systematically marginalized from educational and learning opportunities right from early childhood. Thus, if large-scale educational activities and strategies in their favour are not endorsed, it is unlikely that a situation of equality will not be achieved.
This in turn will limit women’s participation and contribution to the social, political and economic development of society.

Thus, by making education available to all members of society, Morocco can create a larger and more skilled labor force. These skills are driving force behind technological and economic advancement. Also, by becoming part of the labor force, women will be able to add to their family’s income, allowing many families to raise their standard of living. These facts alone are an incentive for the Moroccan government to create a national policy which will overcome illiteracy. In Morocco, the most significant public policies regarding gender equality in education are the Charter for Education and Training (2000) and the Najah Emergency Plan (2006), which were instituted to accelerate the attainment of universal education and to eliminate gender disparities. Morocco’s charter for Education and Training (2000) focused on providing universal education and gradually making it compulsory in order to eliminate gender disparities, even in rural areas, which suffer from the highest rates of gender disparity; it also seeks to fight illiteracy, improve the quality of education, and improve schools’ infrastructure. To achieve these objectives, the Charter implemented institutional, socio-cultural and financial measures. On the other hand, the Najah Emergency Plan (2006), a national strategy, was adopted to accelerate the implementation of the Charter and to achieve its goals. Mainstreaming gender in education is one of the main objectives of the strategy. The plan also intended to build 600 boarding schools, provide 650 school buses, and increase the number of scholarships and canteens eight-fold, allowing more girls to go to schools. As such, primary school populations went from 3,878,640 in 2007-2008 to 4,030,142 in 2013-2014 and school enrolment of children 6 to 11 years old went from 84.6% (80.6% for girls) in 2000 to 97.5% (96.3% for girls) in 2010-2011 and (99.1% for girls) in 2013-2014. These results reflect the efforts deployed to promote primary education and improve education opportunities in this cycle in urban as well as rural areas, while focusing on rural girls that have been so far the most disadvantaged. (Report, Morocco 2011)

Therefore, during 2007-2008 to 2013-2014 period, enrolment opportunities have been improved through the creation of 455 primary schools, i.e. almost 2,742 new classrooms, in addition to the program on the establishment of community-based schools in rural areas. Community-based schools as a new concept in the implementation of the compulsory and universal primary education in rural areas, is defined as a public school with an attractive
education space with boarding facilities to provide accommodation and meals to students, accommodation for teachers as well as other vital services for a good education. Such schools would be quite open to their environment and their management is usually provided by highly engaged civil society actors. (Report, Morocco 2011)

To overcome socio-economic and geographic obstacles that impede access to compulsory education, promote learners’ retention, and support students of underprivileged social backgrounds, an integrated action plan was set up with a number of social support services, and that has continuously increased the number of beneficiaries. From a financial perspective, the annual budget allocated to this action plan increased from 800 million Dirhams in 2008-2009 to 1.9 billion Dirhams in 2011-2012. Therefore, during the academic year 2013-2014, 3,230,946 students have benefited from school bags and stationary under the Royal Initiative “one million school bags”. 1,212,628 students benefited from school canteen services and 2,114 students from school transportation services. One of the innovative programs of the social support strategy, with a positive impact on enrolment and retention rates, is the “Tayssir” program. It provides a direct and conditional financial support to needy families in rural areas; the aim is to improve the attendance rate in class and reduce wastages. The total number of beneficiaries out of this program was 88,000 students in 2008-2009 and 730,000 students in 2011-2012, i.e. a growth rate of 730%. The impact of this mechanism on the efficiency of the education system is quite significant. It is an improvement of the enrolment rate of 6.5% of gender parity (equal access to boys and girls) of 2 points, and a reduction of drop-outs by 1.5 points during the same period. (Report, Morocco 2011). Admittedly, a progress has been made in recent years in the indicators of gender parity in access to different levels of education and training; however, this progress would be more beneficial if it is followed up on and consolidated by improving equity in retention and success.

However, the efforts made by both the governmental institutions and the non-governmental organizations, the democratization of education is still far from being a reality in a number of areas in Morocco. The persistence of illiteracy which is “regarded as one of the worst social problems of our time and a major challenge to the international community” (UNESCO, 1993) is one of the most serious aspects of the inequalities which characterize Morocco. Therefore, the elimination of illiteracy presupposes a firm political will resulting in the
mobilization of all available resources. It likewise means that the struggle against this phenomenon must be conducted on two fronts: the development and renewal of primary education.

In short, to improve human development, an active political leadership is required. Therefore, firm and important decisions should be taken to develop and implement ambitious and well designed literacy programs.

A sound national plan should be designed to eradicate illiteracy through efficient coordination between various Ministries and other concerned departments and institutions.

A national observatory needs to be set up to follow the status of illiteracy in society, and to conduct basic research and fieldwork, executed by experts to develop effective strategies and pedagogical methods. Plans for practical and successful programs need to be designed to meet the needs of heterogeneous groups of individuals or communities. Therefore, target populations should be properly defined to achieve the desired results, and to provide adequate evaluation.

Accurate, reliable and meaningful literacy statistics are also essential to successful literacy campaigns, for targeting communities and subpopulation in need, for targeting skill areas in need of development, and for evaluating the results of the campaigns. Sound literacy statistics are critical to the planning of effective development programs and the judicious use of literacy materials in health and family planning, agricultural extension, small-business development, and credit activities.

Field studies about the causes of drop out especially among girls in the rural areas and about the traditions hindering women’s education and which constitute serious obstacles to the elimination of women’s illiteracy.

The necessity of studying the cultural and geographical specificities of each region to better define the contents and the instructional means to be adopted.

The textbooks and the different didactic means need to be redesigned, to take into account the different needs of the target categories, especially girls. New textbooks with new effective contents and methods need to be adopted to achieve the targeted aims.
Conclusion

Importantly, women’s education is not only the key to development, but also for achieving peace, prosperity harmony and co-operation in the society. Literacy and other education programs for women, therefore, assume the highest importance in the planning for development of any nation. Hence, the higher the level of education of women, the faster would be the development process. As a matter of fact, women’s education needs to be strengthened to empower them, to play an active role as partner in the development process.

In short, until we live in a world where the decision makers value the importance of education, and the interrelationships between care-taking, relationships, economics, power dynamics, health, culture, disabilities, generational transfer of skills, and literacy, women will continue to lag behind men in their literacy skills and generations of children will be born in communities where low literacy is an issue. Only when systems that oppress women on the basis of gender are abolished, women and the families they are responsible for will continue to face restrictions that keep them poor, with no access to the literacy skills to empower them and make them independent and financially secure. Because women and children make up the majority of the world’s population, it makes sense to work to end the obstacles that would hold them back from achieving economic, physical and emotional health and growth. It is not just a societal issue it is also a humanitarian issue.

References


Gender Differences of Ukrainian Eighth Graders in Matters Related to Education Obtained From TIMSS-2011 Results

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Abstract

This study examines the answers of Ukrainian TIMSS-2011 participants to a Student Questionnaire in order to find the differences between boys and girls in matters related to Math and Science education. Three subsets of answers (attributes) were analyzed according to three subtopics: students’ attitude toward learning and school subjects; relationships with parents; things happened to students at school. Students’ answers on these attributes were used for training machine classifiers to obtain gender patterns in form of decision rules and partial decision trees. It is found that largest difference among girls and boys appear in answers to the questions center around talking about their schoolwork with their parents, and liking the job using some school learning subject. The predictive power of each pattern were calculated and interpreted.

Keywords: gender in education, educational data mining, large-scale study, TIMSS.

Introduction

Large-scale studies in the form of tests of students’ learning achievements complemented with questionnaires covering contextual variables are good source for obtaining statistically reliable data about personalities of interest. Gender differences are permanently important aspect of such studies. See, for example, Baye and Monseur (2016) for general analysis of gender differences in variability and extreme scores in an international context based on twelve databases from IEA and PISA.TIMSS refers to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, dedicated to improving teaching and learning in mathematics and science. First conducted in 1995, TIMSS reports every four years on the achievement of fourth and eighth grade students. The 63 countries and 14 benchmarking entities took part in TIMSS 2011. Each participated student took tests in Math and Science. Also students, their teachers, and school principals answered the questionnaires on educational contexts such as home environment support; students' backgrounds and attitudes; features of the Math and Science curriculum;
teachers’ education and training; classroom characteristics and activities; school contexts for learning and instruction.

Ukraine took part in the Study only in 2007 and 2011, with only 8th graders participated in 2011. 3378 8th graders participated in testing and interviewing. As follow from the official TIMSS-2011 report, on average across the all eighth grade Math test participants, boys had higher achievement than girls in number but girls had higher achievement in algebra, geometry, and data and chance. In Ukraine, boys outperformed girls in number, the differences in other content domains is not significant. Across the eighth grade countries, girls outperformed boys on average in both the knowing and reasoning cognitive domains. As for Ukraine, there boys significantly outperformed girls in applying. Gender differences in science achievement at the eighth grade were larger, on average, than at the fourth grade, with the difference favoring girls (international average: 480 vs. 474). Across the countries, girls outperformed boys in Biology and Chemistry, but boys had higher achievement in Earth Science. As for Ukraine, boys outperformed girls in Earth Science as well, but also in Physics. There is no significant difference in Biology and Chemistry. It is interesting that across participant countries girls performed better than boys in all cognitive domains, whereas no significant differences were found for Ukraine. All mentioned data are available in the PIRLS and TIMSS internet site.

In this article, we analyzed the answers of Ukrainian TIMSS participants to a Student Questionnaire in order to find the differences between boys and girls in matters related to Math and Science education. We were looking for patterns in data, not interpreted them or made suggestions. But we did it in manner somewhat different from traditional statistical analysis. Namely, we used technology connected to fashionable term Big Data. This technology is so called Data Mining.

Data Mining is a way to teach machine to discover patterns in raw data. First, computer builds the model based on full data on objects of interesting (so-called training sample). These models can be used later whether to explain data or for predicting. For a detailed description of the methods and algorithms of Data Mining as well as WEKA software, which we used for the analysis, see book of I. Witten, F. Eibe, and M. Hall (2011). A good overview of research in the field of Educational Data Mining can be found in the article of C. Romero and S. Ventura (2010). The main task of Data Mining is building classifiers. For example, we can build the
model to recognize for which class, “boy” or “girl”, belongs given person, if it attributes (answers on the questions of questionnaire in our case) are known. Usually the built model has the form of set of “If... than...” rules, or so called, or partial decision tree, or even mathematical formula. A decision tree is a graph that uses a branching method to illustrate every possible outcome of a decision. If the decision (tree root) is gender identity of the person and leaves of tree are attributes, then motion along tree branches from leaves to root helps to understand for which sets of attributes the difference between boys and girls is the largest. The main characteristic of accuracy of the rule or tree prediction is the number of persons that it predicts correctly, expressed as a proportion of all persons to which it applies. The WEKA Data Mining computer system was used for pattern obtaining and analysis.

Analysis

As usual, some preparation work was done first manually. Set of 68 potentially sensitive to gender questionnaire items (attributes) was chosen and then reduced to 17 ones best useful for predicting gender classes, using Attribute Selection tool of WEKA. Dimensionality reduction yields a more compact and therefore easily interpretable representation of the target pattern, focusing on the most relevant variables.

Students’ answers on these attributes were used for training machine classifiers to obtain gender patterns in form of rules and partial decision trees. First, so-called One-rule algorithm has helped us to identify the most distinctive attribute in terms of differences between gender classes. It turned out answers to question “How often you talk about school works with parents?”. The WEKA One-rule output was as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often you talk about school works with parents?</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVERYDAY OR ALMOST EVERYDAY</td>
<td>-&gt; GIRL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMITTED OR INVALID</td>
<td>-&gt; BOY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2013/3375 instances correct)
Correctly classified instances 2013 59.6444 %
Incorrectly classified instances 1362 40.3556 %
So if a person claimed that she talks about school works with parents everyday or almost everyday, then it was likely that she was a girl. All other answers, including missed ones, point to a boy.

Decision tree, obtained using J48 (modification of known C4.5) algorithm for selected 17 attributes and reduced by “minimum 300 instances (persons) per leaf” option, is in text form as follows:

```
| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER: BOY (137.0/48.0) |
| Would like job using physics = DISAGREE: GIRL (1283.0/447.0) |
| Would like job using physics = AGREE: BOY (625.0/303.0) |
| Would like job using physics = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (17.0/4.0) |
| Would like job using physics = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (3.0/1.0) |
| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = EVERY DAY OR ALMOST EVERYDAY |
| Would like job using physics = DISAGREE: GIRL (1283.0/447.0) |
| Would like job using physics = AGREE: BOY (625.0/303.0) |
| Would like job using physics = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (17.0/4.0) |
| Would like job using physics = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (3.0/1.0) |
| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK |
| Would like job using physics = DISAGREE |
| Students like learning biology = LIKE LEARNING BIOLOGY: GIRL (302.0/142.0) |
| Students like learning biology = SOMEWHAT LIKE LEARNING BIOLOGY: BOY (300.0/144.0) |
| Students like learning biology = DO NOT LIKE LEARNING BIOLOGY: BOY (88.0/25.0) |
| Students like learning biology = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (3.0/1.0) |
| StudentsLikeLearningBiology = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (2.0) |
| WouldLikeJobUsingPhysics = AGREE: BOY (326.0/86.0) |
| WouldLikeJobUsingPhysics = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (16.0/5.0) |
| WouldLikeJobUsingPhysics = LOGICALLY NOT APPLICABLE: BOY (2.0) |
| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH: BOY (234.0/100.0) |
| How often you talk about schoolworks with parents? = OMITTED OR INVALID: BOY (37.0/9.0) |
```

In the table above each vertical bar at the beginning of the statement means a new branch of the decision tree. Each branch has the format: statement = degree of consent: class prediction.

This example of tree under strict limit on the number of objects per leaf allows seeing the main variables, which split up the boys and girls in their answers to the questionnaire. More lenient restrictions allow to get a more detailed tree with the inclusion of a larger number of attributes.

Also three subsets of attributes were analyzed according to three subtopics: (1) students’ attitude toward learning and school subjects; (2) relationships with parents; (3) things happened to students at school.

It was found that the best predictive regarding gender class is the answer to the question number 11.b of the questionnaire: most often girls talk about their schoolwork with their parents
every day or almost every day, while boys do it less often. About 60% of Ukrainian 8th graders are classified correctly by this rule. It is important to remember that attributes were designed around students’ achievement in Math and Science.

Partial decision trees produce the set of 14 main patterns that describe gender classes more accurate (more than 62% of correctly classified students). For example, if some person talks about school works with parents once or twice a week and that person would like a job using physics, than it probably is a boy. 326 out of 3378 survey participants was answered so, and only 86 of them were classified incorrectly by the model.

The attribute subset on students’ attitude toward learning and school subjects produces differential patterns such as follows: boys would like a job that involves using physics; boys value learning mathematics; girls like learning biology and would like a job that involves using biology; girls do not value learning physics and somewhat value learning mathematics. The “would like a job that involves using physics” statement is most decisive here.

The attribute subsets on other two subtopics produces the main distinctive statements toward gender as follow: I often talk about school works with parents (2); I was left out of games or activities by other students (3). Also the sets of more complex patterns on each subtopic were obtained. The predictive power of each pattern were calculated and interpreted.

Conclusions

Machine learning models such as set of rules or decision trees allows obtaining patterns from raw data easy to interpret. In our case, we got some patterns that allow seeing gender differences in Ukrainian 8th graders responses to the TIMSS Questionnaire. Overall, the model accuracy shows that these differences are not significant. Most likely, they are explained by the traditions of upbringing of children of different genders and early orientation in “male” and “female” activities in family and school.
References


“Girl power” in education: The case of high school students in El Jadida

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Abstract

Education today is increasingly being feminized with girls accounting for the large majority of the student population at all levels. This feminization is happening not only in terms of number of girls but also in terms of performance. The present paper reports on a comparative study that looked into the differences between girls’ achievements and boys’ achievements in high education. More specifically, the paper explores gender differences in written linguistic proficiency by analyzing a sample of high school students’ pieces of writing in English. The research sample consisted of 130 high school students in the city of El Jadida, 59 males and 71 females. Using Hunt’s T-units as a method of language measurement, the paper outlines gender differences in the sample in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity. Results showed that girls significantly outperformed boys in different aspects of writing, thereby suggesting a reversal of gender inequality. However, care must be taken so that these differences which favor girls are not misinterpreted in such a way as to reproduce traditional gender inequalities in educational institutions (for instance, some people are advancing the idea that boys are differently, not deficiently, literate). In light of the results, the paper ends with recommendations for justice to be done to female students as well as for the adoption of best classroom management practices that maximise all students’ achievements.

Key words: gender, achievement, written competence.

9. Introduction

Gender inequality has been defined as unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender, attributed to differences in socially constructed gender roles. In this context, Beauvoir (1973, p. 301) says that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. This statement distinguished between sex, the anatomically given aspect of the female body, and gender, the culturally acquired aspect of the female body or the acculturation process that the body of the female undergoes.
In schools, there has been a long-standing gender gap with boys being favoured over girls. For instance, at the beginning of the previous century, girls couldn’t go to school or couldn’t continue their schooling in case they went to school as priority always went to boys when school fees were short. Parents reasoned that girls were expected to marry and give birth to children while boys were expected to become breadwinners. Even when both sexes went to school, it was pronounced that boys were more intelligent and fared better than girls in different subjects.

The first wave of feminism was, therefore, focused on eliminating these sorts of gaps besides the suffrage right. With time, efforts of the proponents of women’s rights did bear fruit, and tremendous progress has been made since the first wave; the traditional gap closed and a discourse of equality was launched that led to more girls going to school. Nowadays, education is being feminized not only in terms of number of girls going to school, but also and mainly in terms of increased performance on the part of girls.

In Morocco, too, more girls are going to school today than ever before. In spite of the fact that the Gender Parity Index still shows a slight favoritism for boys in school enrolments (in 2012 for instance, the index was 0.91 meaning that more boys than girls were being enrolled in school), higher repetition and dropout rates among boys lead to higher numbers of girls in advanced stages of education, namely in high and higher education.

Thus, a rapid increase in female educational attainment has become a striking trend in education in the latest decades. Such a discourse of girls’ increased achievements is being pitted against another discourse of boys’ underachievement. Girls’ effortful learning and less disruptive behavior have been designated as key factors in girls’ increased performance while boys’ underachievement has been attributed mainly to their disruptive behaviour and ‘anti-school culture’. Owing to this female advantage in school achievements, gender is being recognized as a factor in determining student performance besides other traditionally decisive factors like motivation and ability.

Against this backdrop, the present study is a contribution to the debate on gender equality/inequality in educational achievements. The paper is motivated by the observation that girls are becoming more successful in schools, thus fueling a discourse of girl power and problematizing traditional feminist discourses of gender inequality. This observation triggered
our curiosity to conduct the present study and find out whether the observation has a physical reality and girls are really achieving today in such a way as to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

More specifically, the study aims to explore gender differences in school achievements in high school with a view to documenting the latest gender trends in education. It wishes to clearly determine whether the traditional disparities in school performance between boys and girls persist, or the stereotypical superiority of boys no longer holds. In particular, it addresses the following research questions:

4. Is there a gender gap in students’ writing ability (and in favour of whom)?
5. Is the difference statistically significant?
6. Do male and female students perceive each other’s abilities similarly?

10. Theoretical framework

The present study is situated within modernization theory and value change. The theory refers to a model of a progressive transition from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘modern’ society characterized by new concepts of and new ways of thinking about men and women. It is used to explain the process of modernization and value change within societies. As modernization takes hold, traditional beliefs, values, cultural traits and traditional conceptions of gender roles are increasingly being replaced with newer, more revolutionary ones, with the objective of creating a de-gendered, more equity-based world.

Women’s movement organisations have been playing an important role in this shift. They have had a big impact on attitudes and traditional perceptions about the abilities of men and women. For instance, the concepts of gender and sex are decreasingly being used interchangeably thanks to the work of women’s movements. Increasingly, it is being explained that while sex is anatomy, gender is socialized behaviours prescribed for society’s members based on their sex. As a result of these efforts, women are no longer viewed as exclusively the homemakers; they are increasingly assuming the role of breadwinners working side by side with men.

Modernization is also a process of socio-cultural transformation in the sense that education plays an important role in it. Education is viewed as a decisive tool which helps in the
diffusion of the values of modernization, namely, equality, freedom, individuality, independence. Thus, education and modernization are closely linked and affect each other in equal ways.

As the world is being interconnected in a way unprecedented before, modernization theory is shaping the world at large. Thus, the pace of change in Morocco is determined not only at a national level but also globally as we find ourselves required to catch up with the rest of the world and keep up with what is happening elsewhere. Thus, modernization theory and value change are exerting much influence in our society particularly in the educational sphere which also provides individuals with the tools of change.

Within the modernization framework, there is no denying the fact that people’s attitudes, views and behaviours regarding women are being changed. Therefore, more and more parents are sending their daughters to school, and are giving equal support and encouragement to their boys and daughters for all of their school work and aspirations for their future. Likewise, women are increasingly participating in the paid workforce, traditional family units are being broken up, and sex roles are being transformed in such a way that people are being familiar with working moms and stay-at-home dads. Hence, traditional fixed roles are fading away, and girls are constructing their identities in newer terms.

Nowhere are these social transformations more evident than in the educational sphere. Girls have managed to close many of the gender gaps in subject choice. For instance, they are now opting for science and mathematics subjects, previously monopolised by males. Besides, while gender parity is being achieved at the level of enrolment, new gender gaps are being opened up in terms of achievement patterns, with girls outperforming boys now in most school subjects, fueling a discourse of girl power in education. The high number of female teachers in schools plays an important role in this new trend as they serve as positive role models for the girls to follow.

11. Literature review

“Gender gaps in education” is an old issue. Traditionally, girls have suffered from a discourse of inequality with boys. On the basis of this discourse, they could not go to school or stay at school when they went to it. They have also being designated as less intelligent than boys.
According to Lips (1997), prior to the 20th century, it was a commonly held view that men were intellectually superior to women.

However, a number of countries, including Morocco, have made tremendous progress since then. Gender disparities are not only narrowing in many parts of the world, but turning in favour of girls. According to Lips (1997), there are no overall differences now in educational achievement, though commonly held myths about gender continue to make girls less able in at least some cognitive tasks. However, different studies have been conducted which proved that girls are not inferior to boys. On the contrary, most studies showed that girls are doing better than boys in schools.

Hyde (2005) performed 46 meta-analyses, and found that 78% of effect sizes for differences were in the small or close-to-zero range. Only few main differences between the two sexes appeared in the studies analysed. Further, these small differences fluctuated with age, growing smaller or larger at different times in life. Thus, Hyde concluded that there were more similarities than differences between the two sexes. On the basis of this observation, she developed her famous “Gender Similarities Hypothesis” according to which boys and girls are more alike than different on most psychological variables.

In a subsequent study, Hyde, Lindberg, Linn, Ellis, and Williams (2008) investigated large amounts of data (7 million students). Consistent with the findings of the previous study, the researchers reported again that traditional gender differences in math performance no longer hold, with the mean for gender differences being trivial (d = -0.05). As a result, the researchers called for thoughts on gender gaps to be revised in such a way as to do justice to girls.

In contrast to the findings of the studies by Hyde (2005) and Hyde et al (2008) which proved absence of gender differences in most school subjects, other studies showed gender differences but in favour of girls. In point of fact, stable female advantages were reported in most courses by different researchers. For instance, Fergusson and Horwood (1997) examined gender differences in educational outcomes from school entry to age 18. They looked at the results of standardized testing, teacher ratings of student performance, and the final outcomes measured by school certificate success. Three major conclusions were evident: i) in all educational stages, males achieved less than females. Gender differences were evident in the results of standardised testing, teacher ratings of school performance and in the school leaving outcomes of the
participants of the study. ii) These gender differences in educational achievement could not be explained by gender differences in intelligence since boys and girls had very similar IQ test scores. iii) There were gender related differences in classroom behaviours with males being more prone to disruptive and inattentive classroom behaviours. Thus, the cause for male underachievement was not low IQs but ill behaviour in classrooms.

Another study which also proved female advantages but this time exclusively in writing was conducted by Kanaris (1997). In particular, Kanaris (1999) looked closely at differences in writing between boys and girls and noted that girls wrote longer more complex texts that contained more subordinate clauses and a wider range of adjectives. Kanaris argued, therefore, that girls were more skilled both at word and text level. She also noted the existence of an identifiable gender characteristic in writing which would, she says, develop further in future.

Kenney-Benson, Pomerantz, Ryan, and Patrick (2006) have drawn attention to the fact that girls are surpassing boys in school grades even in stereotypically masculine subject areas like maths and science. Interestingly, these researchers went beyond documenting girls’ academic excellence to investigate causes for it. In particular, they examined how each sex approaches school work. The main variables were achievement goals, classroom behaviour, learning strategies, and self-efficacy. The findings showed that girls were more likely than boys to hold mastery over performance goals and to refrain from disruptive classroom behaviour. Mastery goals emphasise understanding the material, whereas performance goals emphasise marks. Hence, learning strategies accounted for girls’ advantages in terms of grades.

Jones and Myhill (2007) explored gender differences and similarities in linguistic competence in writing. Based on the results of a large-scale analysis of the linguistic characteristics of secondary-aged writers, the researchers reported the existence of evidence, though small, which supports the argument that boys and girls are differently literate. They noted small statistically significant differences at sentence level and at text level. The differences were considerably fewer than those identified by achievement level which showed that girls outperformed boys.

Similarly, Geisler and Pardiwalla (2010) documented girls’ academic advantages for girls in all courses and in all stages of education. The researchers reported that boys’
underachievement and underparticipation at both primary and secondary levels was well
established. They also noted higher dropout rates, higher levels of truancy, and greater discipline
problems among boys than among girls, which could account for boys’ lagging performance.

In another meta-analysis which spanned data from 1914 to 2011 and which evaluated
gender differences in a wide variety of subjects, Voyer and Voyer (2014) reported a stable female
advantage extending to all school subjects (language, math, science, …). The researchers have
also noted that this female advantage “seems to be a well-kept secret considering how little
attention it has received as a global phenomenon” (p. 1191). According to the researchers,
although the reported gender differences would be classified as small based on Cohen’s (1988)
categorization of effect sizes (the values were kept within 0.2 indicating a small effect size), they
were so consistent that they should not be ignored.

Along the same lines, Reynolds, M. R., Scheiber, C., Hajovsky, D. B., Schwartz, B.,
Using a large, nationally stratified sample of children and adolescents, the researchers
investigated gender differences in writing and concluded that writing was an academic subject
that may be an exception to Hyde’s similarity hypothesis. They reported that girls outperformed
boys, scoring higher mainly on spelling and written expression, with effect sizes inconsistent
with the gender similarities hypothesis.

12. Method

The present study follows an observational exploratory design. Exploratory research
refers to research conducted to explore, clarify and define the nature of a phenomenon. The
objective of this study is to explore gender differences in writing, and if they are statistically
significant. Another objective is to explore how each sex perceives the other sex’s abilities in
writing.

12.1. Setting and participants

The study was conducted in April 2015 in three different high schools all located within
the province of El Jadida. The participants were 130 students in their first year at high school
distributed between 59 boys and 71 girls. The slightly higher number of girls reflects the
tendency of girls to participate in studies more readily than boys, but it does not affect the
reliability of the conclusions as group means are calculated separately. Following is an brief overview of the setting and participants:

**Table 1: Overview of the participants and participating schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>N. of boys</th>
<th>N. of girls</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 November</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChouaibDoukkali</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoulayAbdella</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of students</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**12.2. Research instruments**

Data collection tools consisted of a proficiency test (a free writing task) in addition to a question regarding the participants’ views about students’ abilities in writing. The proficiency test was responsible for identifying differences between boys and girls in writing as it provides concrete realisations regarding what learners can do in their language productions, whereas the question was in charge of determining the way each sex views the other sex. The question required the participants to nominate students who are good at the writing skill.

**12.3. Data analysis method**

It is widely believed that L2 writing proficiency constructs are multi-componential in nature, and that the notions of complexity, accuracy and fluency can satisfactorily capture their principal dimensions (e.g. Skehan, 1998; Ortega, 2003; Ellis 2003, 2008). These dimensions are believed to best describe language performance in general and determine variation among students. They are most frequently used as dependent variables to assess variation with respect to independent variables such as attained level of acquisition or the features of a language task. Thus, we adopted CAF (complexity, accuracy and fluency) dimensions to analyse students’ written pieces in this study. To reduce the subjectivity usually associated with holistic ratings, the present study used a more objective measure, namely, Hunt’s T-units (1966).

To measure CAF constructs in students’ writing, we used Hunts’ T units defined as one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it (Hunt, 1966). According to Hunt, the length of a T-unit determines the cognitive development of a learner, thereby providing a satisfactory and stable index of language development. Further, T-units have been found to be more reliable indicators of language measurement. They have proved to be better than scoring rubrics which showed their subjectivity as rarely would two scorers agree on one mark for a
single test. T-units involve a fairly high degree of inter-rater reliability with regard to identification of units and unit boundaries and thus are more reliable; different scorers would rarely produce different analyses. The following table describes how these dimensions were operationalized in the study:

**Table 2: CAF measures adopted in the analysis of students’ written products**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total number of words</td>
<td>number of error-free T-units</td>
<td>mean number of words per T-unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total number of T-units</td>
<td>error free T-units per total number of T-units ratio</td>
<td>mean number of clauses per T-unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obtained data was fed into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to be analysed. Descriptive statistics was used to generate means, percentages and standard deviations. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was used to test for the significance of the differences between boys and girls. This test is the most common form of t-test that helps us know if the difference between two groups is unlikely to have occurred because of random chance in sample selection.

### 13. Results

The study looked into differences between boys and girls in writing. The first research question addressed the issue of the existence of a gender gap in students’ writing ability, and in case it existed, it was in favor of whom. The following figure presents the results obtained:

**Table 3: Results by gender (CAF measures)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Standard error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word number</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40,2712</td>
<td>7,90205</td>
<td>1,02876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56,5070</td>
<td>10,72896</td>
<td>1,27329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-unit number</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,3729</td>
<td>1,53014</td>
<td>1,19921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9,1408</td>
<td>2,56513</td>
<td>1,30442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free T-units</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,4407</td>
<td>1,82200</td>
<td>1,23720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4,7746</td>
<td>2,85456</td>
<td>1,33877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free T-unit ratio</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>,3464</td>
<td>,22461</td>
<td>,02924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>,4785</td>
<td>,21837</td>
<td>,02592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words per T-unit</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,5107</td>
<td>1,33898</td>
<td>1,17432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6,4935</td>
<td>1,63552</td>
<td>1,19410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clauses per T-unit</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>,1153</td>
<td>,0150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>,1046</td>
<td>,0124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The table above shows clearly that girls achieved higher than boys in fluency, represented by word number and T-unit number. The mean obtained by girls was 56.50 compared to only 40.27 by males and 9.14 against 6.37 successively. In accuracy, girls’ superiority was again obvious as they scored 4.77 against 2.44 obtained by males in error-free T-units and ,47 against ,34 by males in the ratio of error-free T-unit to total number of T-units. In complexity, however, only slight differences emerged with boys scoring 6.51 in words per T-unit and girls obtaining 6.49; similarly, in number of clauses per T-unit, the difference was very slight as girls obtained 1.08 and males scored 1.05.

The second research question addressed the issue of the significance of the differences obtained in the measures of fluency and accuracy. To that end, an Independent-Samples T-test was conducted to compare the means obtained by girls and the means obtained by boys. There was a significant difference in the scores for males (M=9.1532, SD=.24169) and the scores for females (M=9.5429, SD=.58102); t(101)=−4.294, p = .000. The t value is negative indicating that group 2 mean (girls’ mean) is larger than group 1 mean (boys’ mean).

Regarding the third research question, it addressed the issue of how each sex views the other sex’s abilities in writing. To that end, a question was delivered to the participants which asked them to nominate the students who they thought were good at the writing skill. Notwithstanding girls’ superiority in most areas of writing in particular and in language ability in general, answers came inconsistent with students’ grades. 80.85% of the male participants nominated boys only while 71.42% of the female participants nominated girls and boys.

14. Discussion

This study examined gender differences in one particular area, namely writing among high school students in their first year. The findings showed clearly that males were at a disadvantage compared with girls. A comparison of the mean scores showed that girls scored higher in fluency and accuracy but not in complexity. Besides, the difference between the mean of the male group and the mean of the female group has been found to be statistically significant according to Cohen’s conventions. In complexity, however, there were no differences. Such an absence of gender differences in complexity may be attributed to the factor that students are at a level not yet exposed to complex sentences. May be in a more advanced educational stage such as in tertiary education, complexity would also produce itself as an area where girls achieve
better than boys. Another reason may be linked to the nature of the topic which could have prevented students from displaying more complex levels in writing.

The findings obtained are consistent with the literature. For instance, Reynolds (2015) also reported female advantages in writing and concluded that even if we accept Hyde’s Gender Similarities Hypothesis (2005), writing would offer itself as an exception. Along the same lines, the study conducted by Voyer and Voyer (2014) not only confirmed female advantages, but also extended them to all school subjects. In data spanning from 1914 to 2011, gender differences in favour of girls were consistent in different school subjects. The findings are also in line with English Proficiency Index, an international test which measures people’s competency in English, according to which Moroccan girls scored 51.21 as compared to 48.17 by boys. Girls were closer to the global average while boys lagged far behind. Now, having documented girls’ academic advantage in writing, the question that comes in order is: “what is the cause of such female increased performance?”

In the absence of tests on intelligence, we cannot claim that boys are less intelligent and we do not think that intelligence is the cause of boys’ underachievement. More potent explanations suggest themselves. One such explanation is general school behavior with high rates of disruptive behaviour and high truancy levels among boys than girls according to the records at the administrations of the schools where the participants of this study belong. Probably male academic achievement would not be less than female academic achievement had boys been as well disciplined as girls. Such an explanation is also empirically based. It has been voiced, for instance, by Fergusson and Horwood (1997) and Kenney-Benson et al (2006). These researchers argue that boys’ inattentive and disruptive behaviours account for their underachievement in school. In turn, Geisler and Pardiwalla (2010) noted a strong correlation between boys’ underachievement and higher levels of truancy and discipline problems.

Another explanation may go to learning styles adopted by the two different sexes. Learning styles are applicable to all course areas and not only to writing, which is why girls are doing better than boys in all academic subjects. According to Kenney-Benson et al. (2006), the learning style adopted by females makes them more mastery and less performance-oriented and more attentive in class and less disruptive. Such positive attitudes to school work are likely to enhance grades as they foster more effortful learning and higher concentration levels.
Another possible explanation is grounded in the theoretical framework within which this study is situated, namely modernisation theory and value change that ensues from it. As girls are receiving more recognition, opportunities, freedom, equality and occupational options, they are striving to show that they are up to the challenges including school performance. Besides, girls are learning to construct their identity in newer, less domestic terms. While increased female participation in the paid workforce, break-up of traditional family units, and transformation of sex roles have a role to play in this shift, education offers the tools of change.

Consequently, female students are highly motivated and more focused on their studies. They are also adopting more positive attitudes to school work. Besides, girls can also be claimed to have higher aspirations than boys; they want to enroll in tertiary education and earn a higher degree while boys, in general, aim for a lower vocational degree or enrolment in the police force. Additionally, the presence of a high rate of female teachers in schools further motivates girls to work hard and have similar occupations.

Regarding the last research question, the findings indicated a peer-perception gap. This means that boys refused to recognize female achievements in school while girls’ answers showed that they recognized boys’ presence although boys were generally performing less well. One possible interpretation of this peer perception gap may be connected with the way boys are socialized. Boys probably have been educated into exercising bias against girls even if girls are high-achievers. This is an extension of female invisibility in society which we may paradoxically also use to explain female academic advantages by advancing the argument that girls’ increased achievements are one way of making themselves visible and one way of resisting traditional gender roles mapped for women.

The peer perception gap provides us with evidence that there are gender stereotypes impacting on students and young people in general. Although girls are achieving better than boys and are more likely to go on to tertiary education, these advantages are not yet fully recognised by society as they should be and they do not yet fully translate into equality at home in particular and in society in general. Thus, what is happening in schools is an extension of what is happening outside school which underscores that notwithstanding women’s achievements, males still refuse to acknowledge their skills. It also raises our attention to the fact that the opportunities women are benefiting from are still fragile and need consolidation.
15. Recommendations

In light of the results obtained, there are a number of recommendations worth considering. The most pressing issue related to gender gaps is the lagging performance of boys and the peer perception gap. First, as girls have proved that they are not less able than boys, they need to be highly regarded, empowered and given opportunities. Consequently, a culture of socialization into not acknowledging girls’ efforts even if girls score higher needs to be redressed. Second, care must be taken so that differences in favour of girls are not misinterpreted to reproduce traditional gender inequalities. Some people, for instance, are advancing the argument that boys are not deficiently literate but only differently literate. In this context, Cohen (1998) observes that women’s accomplishments in language domains have hardly been recognised as intellectual advantages; on the contrary, they have historically been interpreted as shallow talkativeness providing evidence of innate inferiority to men who displayed more reserved and self-regulated verbal skills that testified to masculine intellectual strength.

Third, educational reforms should now give greater priority to boys’ educational difficulties. More precisely, efforts should centre on best classroom management practices that address the issue of disruptive behaviour in a way that maximises all students’ achievements. Boys need to be disciplined, attentive in class and less disruptive, and need to learn to focus on their studies. They need also to learn to set higher expectations and goals. We suggest that we should start this process by connecting with them and meeting them where they are. In this context, social networking technologies have to be channeled to the educational service.

Last but not least, while we recommend that sound policies should be put in place to consolidate women’s rights and make them equal partners to men, the increased female achievement should not blind us to the girls who are left behind, namely, the girls who have been deprived of their right to go to school. We should not forget that the Gender Parity Index still shows a slight favoritism for boys in school enrolments, an issue that needs to be fixed immediately in order to bring all girls to school. Further, we should move beyond generalizing schooling to school-age children to guarantee quality education to all so that everybody participates in the sustainable development of the country.
16. Conclusion: A reversal of gender gap?

This study set out to explore gender differences in the area of writing among high school students. More specifically, it examined differences in fluency, accuracy and complexity in a writing exercise administered to first year high school students from three different schools in El Jadida. It has been found out that girls steadily out-perform boys in academic areas, and the differences are highly noticeable, thus suggesting a reversal of the traditional gender gap. However, it has also been found out that a peer perception gap persists, with boys refusing to recognize girls’ skills in spite of their higher grades.

Possible interpretations of female advantages at school go primarily to their good behaviours and attentiveness in classrooms. Other sources are connected with modernization theory which is responsible for the change of values in our society. Girls are being given more freedom, more opportunities and recognition for their merit in society. These are main factors motivating them to work harder and prove their worth in society. As to the peer perception gap, we interpreted it in light of the process of socialization that the boys are subject to at home.

While we commend girls for their academic performance, we also raise questions regarding the new gender gap because we cannot achieve sustainable development based on one half of the country’s population. Indeed, the new gender gap should be a cause for concern to promote a discourse of “both sexes win” because no country shall progress if its half is idle. Unless action is taken, males will continue to perform below the level of females in all courses.

Lastly, the present study focused on writing. Such a focus is likely to limit the generalizability of the conclusions reached. Therefore, we recommend that other studies be conducted that explore gender differences in other school areas. Another important area for exploration in future studies is identifying the factors for the new pattern of boys’ underachievement in school and addressing the needs of boys to bridge gender differences rather than reinforce them.
References


Abstract

This paper examines how the contemporary Arab-American poet Mohja Kahf challenges the western and patriarchal interpretations of some Islamic cultural symbols like “Hijab” (the veil). In poems like “Descent in JFK”, “Hijab Scene # 7”, and “Thawrah Des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective”, Mohja Kahf offers an interesting counterpoint to challenge hegemonic narratives about Arab-American women rooted in the nineteenth century Orientalist discourse, and foregrounds the paradoxical experience of what it means to be a veiled Arab-American Muslim woman in a non-Muslim country. While this paper focuses on Kahf’s use of poetry as a form of resistance, it also rethinks the contemporary history of Arab-American women’s stereotypic repertoire.

Key words: Mohja Kahf, Arab-American women, hyphenated identity, Muslim feminism, Diaspora, poetry.

Arab women and, by extension, Arab-American women have long been perceived through the lens of Orientalism, a hegemonic discourse frequently configuring them as silenced, oppressed, veiled and timeless. In her critique of the deeply-held misconceptions of the veil, MohjaKahf says:

Once a journalist who was supposed to be reviewing my poetry reading reviewed my mode of dress code instead. All she could find to say was: Here’s this woman in Hijab who reads poetry! Look, she’s in Hijab and reads poetry!

(Darraj, 2004, p. 14)

According to Kahf, being simultaneously an educated Muslim and an American is ‘irregular’ to many even to the highly educated people who disregard her ability to be “an intelligent woman schooled in literature and philosophy” (Darraj, 2004, p. 2). It is this restrictive way of thinking about Arab-American women—reducing her to a piece of cloth and questioning her artistic abilities—that Kahf tries to resist.
In fact this view of the Arab woman is not new; it dates back to the European invasion of the East and to many misrepresentative writings about Muslim women. Marsha Hamilton in her essay, “The Arab Woman in U.S Popular Culture”, states that the image of the Middle Eastern woman in the nineteenth century was that “of an alien creature of a different nation and religion, sometimes dark-skinned, and by the late nineteenth century, the symbol of a defeated and occupied empire” (cited in Abdulhadi, Naber, and Alsultany, 2005, p. 152).

Arab/Muslim-American women are facing pressures from within and from without. The pressures from within emanate from their dual identity and the intricacy of getting along with their fellow citizens. Whereas the pressures from without lie in the Orientalist heritage of western representations of the East. These pressures have given rise to a religious crisis that subsequently affects their identity. For many Arab/Muslim-Americans, it’s more a question of realizing who they are according to their nation, and how to reconcile their dual positions of their hyphen, balance their hyphenated identity ‘Arab/Muslim-American’ and bring cohesion to their multiple contexts.

The nascent wave of Arab-American feminist writers offers an interesting counterpoint to challenge hegemonic narratives about Arabs and Arab-Americans. Mohja Kahf is one of the contemporary Arab-American women writers who bring the Arab-American experience to the forefront in her writing. In her volume of poetry *Emails from Scheherazade*, Kahf challenges the Manichean opposition by questioning and challenging the deeply-held American misconceptions eroticizing Arab-American women and their identity.

In her volume of poetry, Kahf breathes life again into the mythological figure *Scheherazade*. She says: “I’m back for the millennium and living in Hackensack/ New Jersey, I saved the virgins from beheading by the king/ who was killing them to still the beast of doubt in him (Kahf, 2003, p. 43). We can deduce that just as the power of Scheherazade’s oral storytelling art form in the *Arabian Nights* helped her to “still the beast of doubt in the king”, the power of her poetry in the twenty first century is used as an attempt to correct the Western dominant paradigm that perceives Arab women only as oppressed females.

In some poems, Kahf juxtaposes the fossilized and distorted images of Arabs and Muslims with positive counter hegemonic Arab-American voices. In her poem “Descent into JFK”, she reflects on the external gaze any Muslim woman is subjected to when she lands in an
American airport and the hardship she endures because of her sartorial choices that makes her look “anomalous” compared to the American woman. Kahf deconstructs this sense of being an “aberrant” identity:

Descent into New York airspace is hard.

……

If they saw Uncle Shukri
In his checkered headscarf,
Like when he let her ride
Behind him on his motorbike,
They’d think he was a terrorist.
They would never know Khaleda
Has a Ph.D.
Because she wears a veil they’ll
Never see beyond (Kahf, p.37)

In these few lines, MohjaKahf realizes that other Americans see her as an oppressed victim, just as they see all Arab males as patriarchal terrorists. Whether Khaleda and Uncle Shukri are American citizens or not is irrelevant, since the whole focus is on the negative connotations that their dress code implies. Khaleda, for instance, is reduced to a piece of cloth and viewed as illiterate. In this regard, Doaa Hamada (2014), in her piece “Arab American Muslim Women and the Experience of Being ‘Irregular’ in MohjaKahf’s Emails from Scheherazad”, puts it bluntly that “the western mind cannot grasp the idea that the Hijab is a cover of the hair, not the mind” (p. 5).

Being simultaneously a ‘hijabi’ Muslim woman and an American causes the Arab-American woman to be looked at differently. That compels the speaker in the poem “Hijab Scene #7” to start responding to the questioning looks around her and uses language to dismantle the persistent misperception from within negating boldly all the restrictive interpretations of her dress and by extension her identity:

No, I’m not bald under the scarf
No, I’m not from that country
Where women can’t drive cars
No, I would not like to defect
I’m already American. (Kahf, 2003, p.39)

In her poems, Mohja Kahf presents a real life situation frequently faced by Arab-American women consisting of an obligation to choose between their multiple identities. Arab-American women are somewhat different from non-American Arab women and non-Arab American women. Their identity is caught up in the “in-between world”, feeling that they are suspended in the seemingly empty space between “Arab” and “American”, standing in that undetermined threshold space, and ‘going from one Otherness to the next’ as the Arab-American poet Nathalie Handal puts it (p. 2). Hence, Kahf’s poems try to confirm the nexus between Arab-Americans and the US, with their various identifications (as Americans, Muslims, Arabs) complementing rather than contradicting each other.

Mohja Kahf, like many of her fellow hyphenated people—being a Muslim of Syrian origin and raised in the small farming town of Plainfield Indiana—embraces an insider/outsider perspective. Thus, Arab-American women are often challenged by what Lisa Suheir Majaj calls “split vision” or what W.E.B. Du Bois calls “double consciousness”, “as Arab-American writers turn one eye to the American context, the other eye is always turned towards the Middle East” (Abdelrazek, 2005, p.151); which means that they cannot forgo the two cultures to which they belong. To quote Trinh Minh-Ha, the Arab-American woman is, “this inappropriate ‘Other’ or ‘same’ who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming ‘I am like you’ while persisting in her difference, and that of reminding ‘I am different’ while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at” (cited in Abdulhadi et al, 2005, p. 149).

In the following lines, the narrator is speaking from a universal experience of ethnic stereotyping, while also using words as a weapon to confront the American society’s fear of Muslims and to stress that it is possible to be simultaneously both a ‘Muslim and an American’. The narrator subverts her image of being a terrorist:

What else do you need to know?
Yes I speak English
Yes I carry explosives
They are called words
And if you don’t get up
Off your assumptions
They’re going to blow you away (p.39)

Using a sarcastic tone, the Muslim American speaker emphatically challenges the skeptical looks directed at her through her powerful words that she claims to be her real explosives. Actually, while using words to confront and negate the reductionist interpretations of her dress code, and by extension, her identity, she asserts her Americanness claiming that this piece of clothing does not make her less American nor limit her spatial freedom but rather deprives her from the right to belong. Hence, this poem becomes a reconstruction of the Arab-American identity against all sorts of de-humanization and stereotyping. Here appears the power of art; through poetry Mohja Kahf can resist these rigid stereotypes even if it takes one thousand and one nights to break their silence. More significantly, behind Kahf’s practice of writing as an art form, the main desire is resistance which is the driving force that prompts her to write because the voice of her ancestral Muslim women has been silenced for too long.

It seems that the spirit of Scheherazade “forever persists in Arab-American women, who use their art and storytelling as a powerful means of resistance, defining themselves, naming their own experiences; it symbolizes her alternative to marginalization and exclusion from main discourses such as history” (Abdelrazek, 2007, p. 104). Actually, reviving Scheherazade’s spirit of resistance is aimed at halting the long-standing misrepresentation of ‘Hijabi’ Muslim women.

In her poem *Thawrah des Odalisques at the Matisse Retrospective*, Kahf continues to shed more light on the issue of the veiled Muslim woman’s invisibility in the Western discourse. This poem stages a revolution (‘thawrah’ in Arabic) against the misrepresentation of Arab women. It tells the story of a group of painted odalisques who felt tired of being fixed in their position for long years in Henri Matisse’s paintings, declaring that Arab women in particular have had a long history of being defined and misrepresented in the western Art. Throughout the poem, we see how much these painted odalisques are frustrated, struggling to gain their freedom from the hegemony of their artistic representation. One of the odalisques says:

Yawmmin al-ayyam we just decided: Enough is enough
A unique opportunity, the Retrospective brought us all together
I looked across the gallery at Red Culottes and gave the signal
She passed it on to Woman in Veil and we kicked through canvas
“She must be so uncomfortable in that position”
These two museumgoers murmured in front of two Odalisques
Suddenly I felt my back aching
A seventy-five year kind of ache (Kahf, 2003, p.64)

While the narrator starts with Arabic words “yawmmin al-ayyam”, meaning “once upon a time”, she simultaneously restores the voice of Scheherazade’s oral tradition of storytelling. Kahf’s 21st century Scheherazade is depicted here as the strong Muslim feminist female who lives in the Arab-American Diaspora sending e-mails to her Western reader as a way of rethinking and deconstructing the stereotypes of the Oriental sexual figure as she used to be portrayed in the Western culture. In the third millennium, Scheherazade is an Arab-American writer who negotiates her identity in the Diaspora, and a rebellious odalisque. However, even though Scheherazade and the odalisques revolt against these labels, they continue to be torn between the prejudices of Western feminism and the patriarchy of Arab nationalism.

No one wanted to know about us
Statements were issued on our behalf
By Arab nationalists, Iranian dissidents, Western feminists
The National Organization for Women got annoyed
After some of us put on Hijab,
And wouldn’t let us speak at their rally,
Then someone spread conspiracy rumors about us
Among the Arabs
Like, why had we hung around so long? In the capitals
Of the Western world so long (Kahf, 2003, p.66)

In these lines, the odalisque narrator bristles at the idea of dismissing the agency of Muslim/Arab women by Western feminists because of wearing the veil. Unlike Western feminists, their Arab-American counterparts have to fight on two fronts: the Arab and the American. On the one hand, they have to face the prejudices in America and that of Western feminism for looking different—wearing Hijab—and on the other hand the patriarchal values within nationalist ideologies that limit women’s agency. In this regard, the Arab-American feminist Susan Muaddi Darraj argues:
The battle against sexism fought by Arab women is more layered and intricate than the one fought by Western feminists because Arab women are simultaneously fighting patriarchy in their own societies, colonialism by the West, and nationalist forces in their own societies who interpret feminism as another branch of imperialistic domination. (2003, p. 193)

Yet, in their battle against discourses of Arab patriarchy and that of Western feminism, the odalisques refuse to give up their cause of freedom. They all joined “a support group” they “had to get back together awwalb’awaal/ Maybe from a support group, as in/ “Hi I’m Odalisque with Big Breasts/ I was painted by Matisse, / but I’m in control now” (Kahf, 2003, p. 68). Here, the odalisques announce a dominant presence, deciding to break away from their patriarchal captivity. In her academic study titled Western Representations of Muslim Women: From Termagant to Odalisque, Kahf points out that ‘the dominant narrative of the Muslim woman in Western discourse from about the eighteenth century to the present depicts the Muslim woman as ‘innately oppressed…submissive nonentities or rebellious renegades, rebellious against their Islamic culture while conforming to Western gender roles’ (1999, p.177). Because of this oriental translation, these odalisques have decided ‘enough is enough’ and then ‘tore down museum banners’ so as to dress nude fellow odalisques. Kahf offers her characters agency that transforms them from being sexual objects into strong subjects who are able to reclaim identities which would not to be smothered by some aesthetic form. Thus, Kahf re-positions the Arab women’s agency in which she seeks to voice the narratives of the lost voices of her ancestral Arab women. So, one can claim that her poem embraces the strategic position of “writing back” against the long-standing misrepresentation of Muslim women.

Actually, the odalisques in this poem protest not against art, but, against the Oriental representations in which their bodies are objectified: “we just don’t want to be made something we’re not/ it’s a lie. The paintings lie about us/ we were made to live a lie” (Kahf, p.68). It is clear that Kahf’s transnational feminist standpoint defies the western feminists’ assumption that all women have the same subjectivities, interests and experiences. Hence, “there cannot be one version of feminism to apply to all women everywhere; each woman has a voice and a story that qualifies her to deconstruct any theoretical frame of feminism” (Fouad Selim & Eid Mohamed, 2014, p. 11); and the Arab-American story is about defending her culture and self from the embedded Orientalist translation, and trying to strike a balance between her Arab and American
backgrounds. This is obviously clarified through the transcultural title “Thawrah des odalisques at the Matisse retrospective” which makes a reference to the Arab-American writer’s ability to write from both sides of the hyphen. The code switching, here, serves to resist the patriarchy whether in the West or the Arab World and at the same time highlights her experience in the Diaspora. So, Mohja Kahf invites her reader into

the linguistically and culturally heterogeneous world of a Syrian American woman, living in the Diaspora with her cultural ‘articulations’. In this manner she inscribes the language of her poems with the multiple cultural and linguistic landscapes she inhabits, never completely succeeding in rewriting English into Arabic. (Sabry, 2011, p. 93)

However, identifying with both Arab and American sides of the hyphen becomes difficult for the Arab-American woman when her “Arabness” is negatively connected with oppression, harem, and terrorism because the world “is unprepared to recognize her wit, humor, lyricism, passion and intellect, and all too ready to negate her worth as a Muslim woman” (cited in Safaa Alahmad, 2016, p. 49). Susan Muaddi Darraj echoes this idea of being “irregular” in both cultures: “while Americans thought I was a “foreigner”, Arabs regarded me as “Americanized” (Darraj, 2004, p.1). Thus, even if her hyphenated identity feels essentially part of each world, neither world fully accepts her.

By way of conclusion, we can argue that in her poems, Kahf gives a strong poetic voice to her invisible minority subjects using “the political language of identity that levels out distinctions between chosen connections and given particularities: between the person you choose to be and the things that determine your individuality by being thrust upon you” (Gilroy, 2004, p. 106), and negating the persistent apprehension of it as an outsider and relating it as part of the ethnic tissue in the United States. Kahf’s diasporic figure ‘Scheherazade’ becomes the representative of other Arab American women writers through which they can negotiate belongings and affiliations. These women writers believe that writing is “a process by which a person goes to a place and moves the dirt in order to understand why he or she is there at all. And this is where Arab-American writers find themselves today, ‘moving the dirt’ and ‘sifting through the little things overlooked or abandoned or discolored by others” (cited in Golley, 2007, p.176). Hence, to move this dirt, Mohja Kahf’s characters tend to start their revolution inside the
archival walls of the museum which is “the storeroom of a nation’s treasures providing a mirror in which are reflected the views and attitudes of dominant cultures” (Simpson, 2001, p.1). It is from this dominant space where the odalisques obtain their powerful stance, allowing them more power to recreate an alternative image to their history, recover their agency, subjectivity and their status in history.

References


The Importance of Exchange Programs in the Re-Construction of Female Students’ Identities

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Abstract

In a globalized world, the experience of overseas exchanges can play an outstanding role in reshaping the identities of the Moroccan female students. Indeed, culture, religion, tradition, patriarchy, gender based discrimination are some stumbling blocks leading to the marginalization and exclusion of some of these students. To better their situation, civil society emerges as a springboard to pave the way for female students in higher education to benefit from new challenging opportunities in an international context. The present paper aims to examine how the NGOs exchange programs help the female university students reconstruct their social, economic, cultural, and gender identities in different Moroccan cities. The methodology used in the study is based on a mixed method approach. Its main target is to discover the attitudes and experiences of AIESEC exchange program participants. The main techniques of data collection are questionnaires and interviews. Therefore, this paper illustrates that these program beneficiaries become able to move from the constraints of the Moroccan society based on their gender to a world of new horizons. In other words, this article provides a lens to the fact that exchange programs abroad have positive outcomes. On the one hand, they offer an opportunity of academic, professional, and cultural experiences. On the other hand, they help them develop new identities in terms of leadership, agency, and independence, to name but a few.

Keywords: Exchange programs, Development, Gender, NGOs, Identities.

Introduction

The emergence of new types of identity in Morocco has become an important issue over the past decade, for researchers, civil society activists and participants alike. A growing number of civil society activists argue that the development of international integration projects is a facilitating tool for the reconstruction of identities. At the same time, researchers and policymakers have puzzled over the means by which such identities can be fostered, while being
increasingly frightened by some stumbling blocks such as culture, tradition, gender and others. Despite some of these stumbling blocks, women’s situation in Morocco has been changing over the recent years thanks to the implementation of several reforms which aim at empowering women in different fields. Access to higher education allows students to gain more independence in terms of thought, beliefs and behaviors. However, conventional ways of education are not the only tools which make students’ identity grow and develop at many layers. Involvement in extracurricular activities and especially traveling abroad in exchange programs with NGOs proved to be among the devices which serve to reinforce and reconstruct identities. Consequently, the paper focuses upon the efforts made towards the reconstruction of female identities, through student exchange programs provided by civil society organizations. More specifically, it explores the impact of the introduction of these overseas programs towards the transformation of social, cultural, economic, and gender identities of the beneficiaries.

We argue in this paper that AIESEC exchange programs have a positive impact upon fostering new identities. Female university students through their participation in AIESEC exchange programs realize and develop social, cultural, economic and gender identities in a transnational context. As assessment of these identities is necessary since they will allow the examination of the situation of the Moroccan woman. The overriding research question is how female students in higher education benefit from new challenging opportunities - like overseas exchanges - to reshape and reconstruct their identities? This question has two sub-questions: 1) Are exchange programs organized by AIESEC able to change the situation of female students in terms of their cultural, economic, and gender identity, how and to what extent? 2) Can female students within the framework of civil society organizations become agents of change? To meet the objectives and to try to answer the research question, the paper follows a mixed methods approach. It uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques, especially through the use of questionnaires and interviews.

1 - Theoretical background

1.3 Gender and Identity

A gender study is an interdisciplinary area of research that incorporates methods and approaches from a wide range of disciplines. It is a field of research, which triggers a heated debate in the academic field. Its main interest is the understanding of gender identity and/or
gendered representations. Gender theorists, in particular, look very closely at these questions of identity and representation based on social, political, economic structures of particular societies. In this section, the purpose is to explore the different forms to construct a gender identity that is about men and women. It examines the social and cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities through the socialization process, as it does not refer to the state of being male or female. Consequently, this overview deals with the distinction between being a man or a woman. By so doing, it leads to power relations between both sexes and, ultimately disregard women in a subordinate position in different contexts and societies.

The traditional linguistic distinction between gender and sex differentiates gender as the linguistic description of words as feminine, masculine or neuter, from sex, as a designation of biological differences. Gender denotes women and men depending on social and cultural factors, as social role or identity, which has been confirmed by many scholars. Humm, for instance, defines gender as “a culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviors given to the female or to the male.” West and Zimmerman confirm that “It is individuals who do gender.” In contrast, sex denotes human males and females depending on biological features. In this respect, in its distinction between sex and gender, Rob states:

Sex refers to our physiological makeup and those biological differences, which determine us as female or male: differences of chromosomes, genitals, hormones. Gender, however, refers to our social make-up and those culturally constructed differences, which distinguish us as feminine or masculine: differences of dress, social role, expectations, etc.

In this specific sense, gender becomes a kind of shorthand to reflect its social relations. These later seek to make apparent and explain the global asymmetry, which appears in male-female relations in terms of sex roles in power sharing, decision-making, the division of labor, return to labor both within the household and in the society. In their attempt to introduce the theories used in the discussion of gender, Francis et al., claimed that: “not only does the system of gender divide the human race into two categories; it privileges the male over the female. Gender operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society, which makes the masculine half of the equation positive and feminine negative.”
Many feminist theorists maintain that gender becomes part of their analysis. Undeniably, they focus the attention on all attributes acquired in the process of socialization. Indeed, this process helps in determining the individual’s appropriate roles, values and behaviors, as expected and acceptable interactions in relationships between women and men. Francis et al., for instance, asserts that:

When gender is used in feminist analysis, it is traditionally defined in relation to sex: gender as the cultural or social construction of sex. As a sociological or anthropological category, gender is not simply the gender one is, that is, a man or a woman, but rather a set of meanings that sexes assume in particular societies. The operation of gender in our society takes up these sets of meanings, organizes them as masculinity or femininity, and matches or lines them up with male and female bodies.

West and Zimmerman confirm that gender is the individual social construction of sex. They assert that: “the ‘doing’ of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production.” The distinction between sex and gender is criticized based on the assumption developed by Jackson and Scott: “The concept of gender is insufficient to capture the interplay between the specificity of women’s embodiment and the social and cultural definition of women as devalued other.” That is, according to this interpretation, all-human beings are either males or females. Their sex is fixed, but cultures interpret sexed bodies differently and project different norms on those bodies, thereby creating feminine and masculine persons.

The distinction between gender and sex remains unsolved. However, many scholars prefer to use of gender rather than sex to refer to the distinction between men and women. This distinction is based on the social constructions of gender, which concentrates on men and women as social rather than neutral categories.

In the current research, gender is viewed as an artificial and humanly constructed concept that may not be related to biological sex. The process of this construction is known by socialization by which gender roles are acquired. In their prominent article “What’s Wrong with Socialization”, Stanley and Wise define socialization as: “that process by which children are transformed into social beings who have taken on particular norms and values, and know what
kinds of behaviors are expected of them.” In this regard, individuals vary in degree of adherence to gender roles, which results in large amounts of behavioral differences between the sexes.

Gender roles are typical roles. They are classified by sex. This classification is social and not biological. In this respect, Rob distinguishes between the binary opposition of the gender identity: “we are all born female or male, but each of us learns to be feminine or masculine according to our experience of the prevailing social norms. Thus, sexuality, women (not men) are equipped to convince, carry and give birth to children. However, sex roles may be contrasted with gender roles. This is because sex roles refer to an occupation or biological function for which a necessary qualification is to belong to one particular sex category. For example, pregnancy is a female sex role because only members of the female sex may bear children.

Although attitudes toward gender roles are now much more flexible, different cultures retain varying degrees of expectations regarding male and female behavior. An individual may personally disregard gender expectations, but society may disapprove his or her behavior and impose external social consequences. For instance, an individual may feel internal shame if he or she experiences emotions or desires characteristic of the opposite sex.

In this sense, one may interpret the famous claim by De Beauvoir “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” as a process of gender socialization. This means that females/ males become women/ men through social and cultural teachings. Consequently, they acquire feminine/ masculine traits and learn feminine/ masculine behaviors. In other words, biological features, then, do not cause behavioral traits relative to men and women. Rather, they are acquired through cultural aspects of particular societies. De Beauvoir describes ‘woman’ as other or ‘not man’. This concept of otherness reflects various categories of contrasting characteristics labeled feminine and masculine.

Masculinity and femininity relatively drive the individual to think about them as products of nurture. Humm defines masculinity as “not constructed on the basis of man’s real identity and differences, but on an ideal difference constituted most essentially in the cultural differentiation of Man from his other.” Femininity, on the other side of the coin is seen as “the construction of ‘femaleness’ by society, and which connotes sexual attractiveness to men.” Millet provides another relevant idea in her book Sexual Politics, where she makes use of gender differences as an “essentially cultural, rather than biological bases.” This is a result of differences in treatment.
For Millet, the process of the development of gender identity takes place through: “the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interest, status, worth, gesture, and expression.”

However, the distinction between feminine and masculine gender based norms is problematic. Indeed, gendered behavior conveniently fits with and reinforces women's subordination so that women are socialized into subordinate social roles. They learn to be passive, ignorant, docile, emotional helpmeets for men. In the same line of argument, Francis et al., stated that: “gender is the culturally variable elaboration of sex, as a hierarchical pair (where the male is coded superior and the female inferior.” In brief, it can be stated that gender roles are learned through particular social processes. However, equal societies may be created by ‘unlearning’ social roles. Consequently, feminists are requested to fight against the influence of the socialization as a factor promoting gender inequality.

Inequalities experienced by men and women are known as gender inequalities. In this paper, the concept refers to the socially and culturally fabricated differences between men and women. By this inconsistency, the interest is in how-as the sociologists put it: “gender inequalities are structurally determined, not natural outcomes.” This means that at the heart of the sociological approach to gender is the conviction that men and women do not just face difference between them, but rather these differences show power imbalances. According to Strangleman and Warren: “the idea of hierarchy is thus the core of [gender inequalities], with its categories of masculine and feminine reflecting hierarchical notions of strength/ domination and weakness/ subordination respectively.”

In this respect, there are three main theories focusing on the process through which females become able to be identified with the feminine model and males with the masculine model. In other words, the main interest of these theories is to highlight the process of gender socialization. They include the cognitive development theory, the social learning theory and the psychoanalytical theory.

First, the cognitive development theory concerns itself with children’s self-recognition of their particular gender. Whereby children may ascribe themselves as boys or girls. In a more developed stage of this theory, the child recognizes that his or her gender is stable over time. In this respect, a male child knows that he will grow up to be a man, and a female child knows that
she will grow up to be a woman. Additionally, boys and girls select their toys and activities appropriate to their gender before they are able to relate this to genital sex differences. This means that the child recognizes that the gender of an individual stays the same despite of the changes in the person’s activities or appearances. Nonetheless, as it is referred to in Garett’s book Gender, Maccoby and Jacklin criticized this theory for dismissing the important role of socialization on gender behavior. In other words, children are not in need for an understanding of gender as a fixed feature for self-realization to be achieved. A case in point is baby boys and baby girls show interest in toys and games, as these choices will have an essential influence on their future behaviors.

Second, the social learning theory accounts for the fact that girls and boys acquire their appropriate gender identity and gender roles in the same way they learn other things in their childhood. Parents are unconsciously the main actors because of the treatment of their female and male children differently. For instance, the parents’ provision of rewards and sanctions for children encourages them to adopt the socially and culturally assumed appropriate gender role. For example, Kimmel Michael traces, in his prominent book the Gendered Society, the socialization process of children. It includes the language used to describe both boys and girls to echo gendered sentiments. For boys, people mostly say: “who knows, some day he may be president,” or, “with that size he’ll grow up to be a football player”, while girls are more likely elicited comments such as: “she’s beautiful; she’ll really knock the boys out when she grows up” or “it won’t be too long before she’s a mother, too.”

Dressing in gender stereotypical clothes and colors represents another feature of the way Kimmel views socialization (boys are dressed in blue; girls in pink). Moreover, parents tend to buy their child's gender stereotypical toys. In this scope, Kimmel said: “the toys children play with are designed to be sold as girls’ toys or boys’ toys. Girls are given dolls and dolls’ houses; boys get trucks and building blocks, and are told that they are “sissies” if they want to play with girls’ toys.” Parents tend, intentionally or not, to reinforce certain appropriate behaviors. For example, boys are told that “boys don’t cling to their mothers” and they are not allowed to cry like babies “big boys don’t cry.’

Third, the psychoanalytical theory on gender is widely criticized for its focus on the importance of physical sex as the main determining characteristics of gender identity
development of children. It is mainly based on the work of Sigmund Freud, who was considered by feminists as being sexist, because of his view about women as being mutilated and must learn to accept their lack of a penis. In other words, Freud’s psychoanalytical theory focuses on children’s observations about their genitals. Consequently, gender identity is fixed before children are aware of their genital differences. In contrast to the Freudian assumptions about children’s gender identity development, children continue to differentiate gender roles through life experiences rather than limiting their development to childhood fantasies. Overall, a criticism advanced by feminists regarding the three main theories about gender development concentrates on the focus of these theories on the development of males. They further developed arguments on the fact that they are dedicated to men and developed by men.

To conclude, the term gender becomes a comprehensible category. Because of many anthropologists and feminists, it is recognized as a social factor of great importance in various fields. It is one of the very important means of inequality that takes place in many social institutions. In the present research the gendered identity is put under investigation taking as case study young female students who benefit from the exchange programs in order to challenge their traditional gender identities.

1.4 Civil Society Organizations and Identity

In social theory, the question of identity has been strongly debated over and over again. This is because identity is a very complex concept, which is consequently hard to define. Yet, if we want to provide a simple definition, Kay Deaux (2001) defines identity as: “sometimes used to refer to a sense of integration of the self, in which different aspects come together in a unified whole.” (p.1) Similarly, Mead & Cooley (2003) tend to stress the same idea when they define identity as being always in interaction with the self and the society. So, the interactions with many political, social, economic aspects of life influence one’s identity. Moreover, due to the rise of new identities within modern societies, Erik Erikson (1963) introduced “identity crisis” which is part of the psychological development of a given identity. However, this paper is not meant to deal with this identity crisis but it rather assesses how identities change since they are always in the process of becoming.

According to Kay Deaux (2001), social identity which is part of identity theory “refers specifically to those aspects of a person that are defined in terms of his or her group
memberships.” (p:1) That is to say, the individual’s social identity is defined in terms of the group to which he or she belongs to and with whom they identify. The self-definition is therefore shared with a group of people. For instance, the interactions with this group of people, which could be seen as an outside world, contribute to the identity construction and reconstruction process. Thus, “identity becomes a "moveable feast": formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us.” (Hall, et al, 1987) This means that there is always a shift in the identity since there is no permanent one. In other words, identity changes depending on the contact taking place with a particular community in a specific time and space. Therefore, an individual can never have a unified and fixed identity from his birth till his death.

As the paper’s main concern is to highlight the relationship between civil society organizations and identity construction, a definition of the concept –civil society- is needed. According to UNESCO, civil society is “the self-organization of society outside of the state and commercial domains, that is a set of organizations or groups constituted more or less formal and that do not belong neither to government sphere nor to the commercial sphere.” In the same line of argument, the European Union views civil society as an entity which “groups together labor unions and employers “associations (the social partners, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), professional associations, charities, basic organizations”, and organizations involving citizens in local and municipal communities, with a specific contribution of churches and religious communities.” From these two definitions, it is easy to realize that civil society is not related to the state and it seeks to involve citizens in the development of their country at a local or and a regional, national level. It aims at liberalizing the political sphere and increasing the civic participation of citizens in the public sphere. It also includes different types of institutions and/ or organizations.

Civil society as a social engagement that aims towards achieving a societal development is considered to play a very crucial role in the Moroccan society. Sania Nishtar in The World Economic Forum (2013) argues that “civil society has a unique role in fostering innovations. It has the ability to experiment, move faster (than government) and act as an agent of change.” In other words, civil society organizations tend to provide Moroccans be they young people or women with a vibrant platform through which they can achieve many developmental aims and
goals either at the individual or community level. This means that their participation in nonprofit organizations allows them to innovate and become an active agent of change.

More than that, Bohdana Dimitrovova (2009) in her article “Reshaping Civil Society in Morocco Boundary Setting, Integration and Consolidation” stresses the fact that “Morocco’s political opening in the 1990s brought to local civil society a new dimension of internationalisation, diversification and professionalism.” This could be clearly detected when dealing with international organizations that work within an international framework. Stated differently, these organizations offer international and diversified opportunities to local communities. NGO organizations are also a good springboard for both young people and women to acquire professionalism through various experiences. So, thanks to this openness and development in this regards, there are between 30,000 and 50,000 civil society organizations.

According to Eva Evers Rosander (1997), NGOs for women are considered to be “as platforms or spaces for the transformation of female identities.” (p:15) Space here should not be understood in terms of geography but rather as a social construct. It is a social space where women are enabled to negotiate their identities within a certain framework. It is also a gendered space which has its own social, economic, and political specificities. Therefore, many transformations in terms of identity might take place especially that this latter is not fixed. Identity is always in the process of becoming as Stuart Hall (1987) emphasizes when dealing with the concept of identity.

Among the many international NGOs implemented in Morocco, this research will take as a case study the international association AIESEC. This latter was originally an acronym for Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales. However, it is no longer used as an acronym but simply as the name of the organization - which is an international non-governmental, non political and nonprofit organization run by students and for students. That is to say, it is the students themselves who run this NGO for the sake or to serve other students (i.e., through providing them with exchanges or internships abroad). It was founded in 1948 in 7 countries in Europe by Jean Choplin (France), BengtSjöstrand (Sweden), and Dr. Albert Kaltenthaler (Germany). It has about 70000 active members and more than 100.000.000 Alumni in more than 126 countries and territories. It represents 2400 universities around the world. This NGO aims at creating positive impact through personal development
and/or shared global experiences. Moreover, it seeks to develop the leadership potential of youth through experimental learning, volunteer experience and professional internships. In other words, it develops young people’s leadership skills either through offering its members—called “AIESECers”—leadership positions, be it within the entity locally or globally or via exchange programs to both members and exchange participants.

AIESEC’s vision is “peace and the fulfillment of humankind’s potential”. Put differently, it attempts to provide a peaceful environment for the global citizens. In addition to that, this organization has six very important values, which are:

- Striving for excellence
- Demonstrating integrity
- Activating leadership
- Acting sustainably
- Living diversity.
- Enjoying participation

It is a global platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential since it has developed more than 1,000,000 young people who have benefited from an AIESEC experience. This global platform that AIESEC provides young people with helps them better their societies and before that themselves. AIESECers are passionate about world issues, leadership development, cultural understanding and experiential learning. Thus, in this paper, the target is to examine how AIESEC and its exchange programs shape the Moroccan female students’ identities? But before that, another question might pop up in this regard, why do youth participate in exchange programs in general? And what are the benefits of exchange programs? The answer could be the following: youth exchange programs are an outstanding experience because of these numerous reasons. The participant becomes an ambassador of the country of origin and the collectivity, he or she also discovers a foreign culture and tend to adapt to a new lifestyle, youth seek to build relationships with other people not only in the host country but also with other young participants coming from all over the world, they—additionally to that—familiarize with the customs and the traditions of other people and cultures, they gain experience in relation to transnational issues, they assume a leadership role due to the lessons learnt from the exchange programs experience, they can also learn a new language, and they finally learn how to become independent
2- Methodological Framework

The present study is a field survey research using the mixed methods approach to generate credible findings via both quantitative and qualitative techniques. In this regard, most of the data collection using quantitative methods is based upon qualitative explanations and all the qualitative data are described numerically. The field survey of the present research is a “one shot survey” in the sense that it is based on a sampling model. A group of exchange participants is selected randomly as a representative sample of the total exchange participants who benefited from this opportunity thanks to AIESEC. This makes it easier to generalize findings back to the population from which the sample was chosen.

As mentioned earlier, the study uses the quantitative research method. It is based on the use of questionnaires. These instruments are important to obtain confirmatory information from each participant compared to qualitative data which are explanatory. It is a tool used to gather data to be converted into numerical form and therefore statistical calculations can be made and conclusions drawn. The main aim is to find answers to the overriding research question, hence, more objectivity is guaranteed about the research findings. Questionnaires are administered online using the Facebook group of AIESEC in Morocco. They include different types of questions that range from structured (limited response format) to unstructured (text response format) questions. Confidentiality is ensured to the respondents because they are informed beforehand about the aim of the study. This means that the information which will be provided by the respondents will be held in confidence except in the general analysis. Qualitative data gathered using questionnaires are presented in this research as tables and graphics accompanied by deep quantified analysis through significant intersections.

The study utilizes a qualitative method as it is significantly related to words and observations, not numbers. For instance, it uses face to face interviews to collect data, as a follow up to the information collected using quantitative methods. The concern here is to further and strengthen the investigation of the responds’ answers. Data collection employs a general interview guide approach to ensure that the same information is gathered from each interviewee. In this regard, it allows the investigation to be enriched by the participants’ experiences, behaviors, opinions related to their participation in AIESEC activities and how these allow them to reconstruct their identities. Confidentiality is ensured to the respondents in the beginning of
each interview. For this purpose, each participant will be mentioned in the text with a fake name to secure the privacy and anonymity purposes.

The present mixed methods study targets AIESECERS and Exchange Participants (EPs) in different cities of Morocco (Fez, Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech.) Data are gathered from a sample of 38 female members of AIESEC to fill in the questionnaires. They are frequently self-administered whereby respondents are given the opportunity to complete the questions themselves, which are either open or closed questions. The questionnaires are administered online using Google docs as a technique to get online data from different cities. After the introduction to the questionnaire, by which we explained to the respondents the purpose of the study and thanked them for their willingness to devote some of their time to answer the questions, the questionnaire includes different questions classified by themes and purpose of the research questions. Apart from the background questions, there are different closed (limited response format) and open ended questions (text response format.) they are designed in English language as it is the main language of the exchange programs. All in all, quantitative data gathered using questionnaires will be presented in this research as tables and graphics accompanied by deep quantified analysis through significant intersections.

Similarly, a group of 20 female interviewees is selected to provide their success stories as part of this NGO. The qualitative research interview guide seeks to provide and describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the participants. The interviews are conducted with females who have different profiles, but all of them are previous exchange program participants. The main aim behind interviewing them is to get the story behind each one’s experience. They are used to pursue in-depth information around their gendered identity, the extent to which their participation in these programs was/wasn’t useful to their personal and professional development. Interviews are conducted using a guide of questions predetermined previously to be asked to all participants. The target behind the use of the general interview guide approach is to ensure that the same information is collected from each interviewee. Moreover, the data include the participants’ attitudes, opinions, behaviors, feelings about their own experiences in another country. During a period of 30 minutes, each interview process provides more focus than deep conversations, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting as much possible of information from the participants. It gives us the
opportunity to ensure that the same information is gathered from each interviewee and to have the opportunity to ask further questions whenever needed. In sum, qualitative data collected using interviews will also provide desirable information to support the analysis of the quantitative data.

In general, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection is of great importance to this research in a sense that both of them complement each others. Qualitative data can facilitate quantitative research by interpreting relationships between the two data types. Quantitative data can facilitate qualitative through locating interviewees, and they can help in generalizing findings to the population of the survey.

**Profiling AIESECERS**

Earlier in this paper, it is assumed that the participation of women in exchange programs is a way to reconstruct their identities in a transnational context. It is further assumed that their participation is triggered by different motivations. The present section tries to explore empirical data to answer the following questions: who becomes an AIESEC exchange program participants? What are the characteristics of the female AIESECERS? Statistics provided here are based on the results of the questionnaires filled in by 38 female higher education students and beneficiaries of at least one of the AIESEC exchange program.

By examining the structures of the exchange program participants by age (see table 1), a relatively high age rate of women aged between 17-25 years is 89.4% is observed. Young women aged between 26-30 are involved in these programs with an estimated 10.5% share.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Fieldwork Results*

Data retrieved from the questionnaires reveal the predominance of the younger females. This means that, based on their age groups, it is apparent that the newly graduate students remain
the most highly represented. This finding is enhanced by the results of the qualitative data, which show similar results. With regard to the marital status; data from the research areas reveal that all our participants are single. The issue of marriage is not important among the participants whose reasons are mostly related to continuing studies and achieving financial independence before going into the wedlock. In what concerns the educational level of our respondents, the data demonstrate different educational attainment levels among the female higher education students in the areas of research. The 47% belongs to the master students, 26% of 3rd year students, followed by 8% for 2nd year, 1st year students as well as to those who study in other institutes. Doctorate students are only represented by 3%.

![Figure 1: Educational Level](image)

**Source:** Fieldwork results

Generally speaking, most respondents demonstrate their willingness to study and at the same time to participate in exchange programs. The purpose is to develop their aspirations and aptitude. No one of the informants considers her educational level as a negative point. Rather, they maintained that it is their unique criteria that allowed them to take part of the overseas programs and to benefit from a transnational experience. As it is demonstrated in figure number 3, the participants are students, either in universities or private schools. Data show that 79% belong to public universities and 21% are studying in various higher private schools.
Data show that many of the female higher education students want to invest their human capital acquired by the educational system and to improve it via the exchange programs. The findings indicate that the higher educational level of the participants is a key factor to their acceptance in such programs. It serves as a decisive determinant of initial move to another country. However, in a competitive context, the females’ personal situation also has a role in the reconstruction of their identities in a transnational context. In the following section, the understanding of the role of AIESEC exchange programs in reshaping women’s identities will be further discussed with a focus on the social, cultural, economic and gender identity.

**Reconstruction of Female AIESECERS Identities**

The present sub-section complements the previous one by delineating the salient features of women’s reconstruction of identity in a context of overseas programs provided by civil society organizations such as AIESEC. In this section, we question whether the informants perceive their identities differently after their time in a host country. The reshaping of identity is broken out by the social, the cultural, the economic and the gender identity of female participants. Quotations are taken from interviews and wrap-around conversations with females involved.

Applying for an exchange program is an important way to improve the females’ way of thinking about their social identity. Indeed, data based on the interviews revealed that many of the participants consider the materialistic covered necessities (education, health, insurance...) by the state are the sources that make people in the North happier. Taking into account this general idea, our respondents show a sentiment of need to go into an exchange program to better their knowledge about this. They viewed the exchange as a chance to get new impulses and to see
other cultures. They also tried to see whether it is possible to lead a good life with all the new technological equipment and facilities.

Students’ exchange programs overseas were for a long time an essential element in developing the participants’ social identity. In the past few years, with the advance of the world, many youth coming from diverse backgrounds benefited from international experiences. So, the rate of students who choose to spend a period of time outside their home country started to rise. The students’ mobility is an opportunity to build and/ change the personality traits. That it is to say that the student becomes more sociable, independent, active, emancipated, to name but a few. This is emphasized in the following statements by some interviewees:

- Meriam, who is 20 years old and a 2nd year university student said: “I have become more independent and strong.”
- Karima, a student preparing her Master degree in cultural studies expressed her viewpoint as follows: “My exchange program experience gave me enough charisma to impose myself even outside AIESEC.”
- Chadiya, a young female preparing a PhD in English Studies maintained: “It gave me a real support in changing my community and surrounding to the best by learning from other culture.”

Another aspect related to the development of the social identity of the female participants is related to the change of their social impression of their host country and its people. For instance, data derived from the interviews show that the international exchange participants complete their programs with a better understanding of the other. For example, Khawla commented on her experience of a voluntary work: “the experience of exchange programs is the most useful tool for long-term social change and mutual understanding between different people.” Her statement emphasizes that the beneficiaries are able to benefit from a lifelong social experience, which help them to get exposed to the values, customs, and ways of doing things. This is achieved not from the speeches of diplomats, but from citizens and volunteers from all over the world. In this respect, they are able to build an international social identity and gain a fuller appreciation of a different culture of their own. In turn, the communities which host the exchange participants are also able to create a new vision of the country of origin of the
participant. This means that both the exchange participant and the hosts are involved in an international exposure that has various effects.

AIESEC exchange participants also have the ability to develop their leadership aspirations. This is maintained by Salma: “AIESEC gives me the opportunity to develop my leadership skills, being confident, and thinking that I could do it.” This in a way shows that participants are increasingly given an opportunity to foster their collaboration with the others on numerous issues. As a consequence, exchanges create generations of young leaders who build international contacts and experience around the globe. This means that the young leaders who benefit from the AIESEC exchange programs are able to address critical topics that lead them to incorporate the international experiences into their everyday life and work.

Similar concerns are expressed by the informants regarding the construction of a cultural identity after the experience of AIESEC exchange programs. For instance, during the exchange period, it is normal that participants generally experience an overturn because most of the times they feel homesick, especially at the beginning of the stay. Sometimes they are overwhelmed by a sense of loneliness. This is aggravated with the cultural differences that may result in cultural shocks. The latter is manifested in various forms.

Experiencing a sentiment of individualism is an omnipresent form of cultural shocks. Firstly, participants show a certain excitement to go on a voyage to a foreign country. This gives them a provocative feeling of happiness, especially because they have expectations of discovering new things, meeting new people, and sharing experiences. Secondly, they start to have disagreement with the host culture. This happens when the participant’s excitement decreases and the exact cultural differences become obvious. In other words, regardless of the openness and the understanding of the cultural differences which the young beneficiaries of the overseas programs demonstrated. In this regard, one may venture to say that the negative aspects related to the cultural choc are not easy to subvert. Thirdly, these participants afterwards start to adapt to the host culture. At this point, they accept that it is an obligation to live a successful stay through getting used to the local customs. Finally, the exchange program participants build their cultural identity, which can be referred to as biculturalism. It is the state where young females realize that their own culture also enables them to adopt a worldwide and an international culture which is based on a different perspective. Ranya, a Master student, said:
“Actually, it was a very good experience to travel abroad and meet people from different parts of the world because this teaches us what is called cultural tolerance and make us accept the others even if they are different in terms of religion and beliefs, etc...” From this quotation, one may conclude that the suitable way to trespass the cultural changes during exchange programs is to get involved in cultural activities in the host country. They can also be comforted through building relationships with the natives via communication in the native language or those at least understand what you are going through.

By observing how other people in the host country lead their life, most participants are affected and show enthusiasm to develop their economic independence. Indeed, they are certain that they will continue their studies in the direction of development and getting access to the labor market, but they are uncertain in what form or where. Even those who don’t think that they will work in development, thinks of the exchange experience as beneficial to orient them to choose better jobs. A vivid example is by Meriam who is a doctorate student: “Absolutely. I am not going to choose a job related to development, but the overseas exchange experience is a good motive and can be useful. I encourage young people to do it. In regards to how you meet people and how you communicate and orient each other”. This highly educated student thinks of the exchange occasion as something of importance for choosing work in particular and for lifelong in general. Moreover, it is interesting to point out how these female participants dream of their professional life and career after benefiting from an exchange program experience. Some comments by the respondents are presented as follows:

• Safae, a third year university student in economics said: “I dream of being a professional leader in my own field of expertise. The experience of the AIESEC exchange program helped me develop my skills of communication, team work, negotiation and it allowed me to have a passionate desire to work. I see myself with the AIESEC spirit in every stage of my life.”

• Ilham, a student of engineering pinpointed: “I see myself in the future after the AIESEC exchange experiences as a well experienced person. I imagine I will be able to be developed as a leader and do my own business as an entrepreneur. So, AIESEC made my leadership get more developed and it provided me with the right tools to do so.”

The choice of the respondents to spend a period of time going on an exchange program to a developed country is a way that impacts their gender identity. Before going any further in this
discussion, it is important to understand the concept of gender. The traditional linguistic
distinction between gender and sex differentiates gender as the linguistic description of words as
feminine, masculine or neuter, from sex, as a designation of biological differences. Gender
denotes women and men depending on social and cultural factors, as social role or identity,
which has been confirmed by many scholars. Humm (1989), for instance, defines gender as “a
culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviors given to the female or to the male.”(p: 84)
In contrast, sex denotes human males and females depending on biological features. In this
respect, in its distinction between sex and gender, Rob (1998) states:

Sex refers to our physiological makeup and those biological differences,
which determine us as female or male: differences of chromosomes,
genitals, hormones. Gender, however, refers to our social make-up and
those culturally constructed differences, which distinguish us as feminine
or masculine: differences of dress, social role, expectations, etc. (p: 112)

In this specific sense, gender becomes a kind of shorthand to reflect its social relations.
These later seek to make apparent and explain the global asymmetry, which appears in male-
female relations in terms of sex roles in power sharing, decision-making, the division of labor,
and return to labor both within the household and in the society. In their attempt to introduce the
theories used in the discussion of gender, Francis et al., (2003) claimed that: “not only does the
system of gender divide the human race into two categories; it privileges the male over the
female. Gender operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society, which
makes the masculine half of the equation positive and feminine negative.” (p:2)

Bearing the difference women suffer from in Morocco based on their gender; many
participants revealed that their experience overseas helped in reconstructing their gender identity.
For instance, quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the beneficiaries come back with a
strengthened gender identity. This is obvious in their self-development and awareness, which in
most cases lead to the enhancement of their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is emphasized
by Maria who showed a strong personality in her comment. She declared: “I’ve never felt any
difference between male and female from where I came I can’t let people judge me based on my
gender and I don’t really care for society’s view. All depends in my own opinion.” This
statement exactly shows the most noticeable change in returned exchange female students.
Moreover, maturity and social self-assurance, fuelled by the necessity to confront challenges outside a familiar support network and comfort zone are developed. For instance, a tremendous sense of accomplishment upon completion encourages students to develop independent opinions, make informed decisions and strive to attain fresh goals outside the frame of their patriarchal and oppressing context. These ideas are stressed through the experience of Kamilia, one of a private school students and a manager of AIESEC branch who said:

Well, being a member in AIESEC gave me the chance to show my capacities because being a manager in the association is a responsibility. Since I am responsible of finding a suitable project for the Eps, the exchange program developed my gender identity and developed in me the skill of convincing people though I am a female. My internship in Tunisia also helped me in the sense that I became more independent and responsible enough to manage my life. Hence, that helps in reshaping my identity as a Moroccan female.

In the same line of argument, other respondents commented on the importance of the overseas exchange programs in reshaping their gender identities by saying that:

- Naima, a 1st year student of biology said: “by realizing that the difference between genders is not based on qualifications or skills, but it’s all about knowing how blessed I am for being a woman and having all those amazing things to bring to the world that men can't do. This made me rethink the way I see gender equity when I came back to morocco.”
- Salma, a Master degree student expressed with enthusiasm: “The exchange program I benefited from thanks to AIESEC helped me prove that in our hypocrite culture we the women can be more powerful and would give more than our environment could imagine.”

As a matter of conclusion, it is possibly to venture and say that gender differences should not matter when it comes to an international experience that has essential potentials for the reconstruction of the female gender identity in a global context of exchange. The foreign experience paves the way for many participants to view themselves positively and to embark on working hard for a promising future.
Conclusion

Through a subsequent analysis, one may conclude that the identities of female higher education students and participants in AIESEC’s exchange programs are influenced by their experiences in a developing country. For instance, the main results show that, to a large degree, the overseas programs do not seem to have automatically changed their beliefs and influenced them to reshape their identities. Nevertheless, a major concern of the participants was that they showed interest in using their experiences abroad in their lives and for long term objectives. Moreover, it is of great importance to mention here that the informants stressed on three main factors for choosing to be an exchange program participant: travel, learn and practice. For many of them, traveling was a source of bettering information, deepening, knowledge, acquiring new experiences, building a leadership character, and changing the old views about females in a patriarchal society, among others. This means that AIESEC exchange programs served both as tourism opportunities in order to experience a new and vibrant parts of the word as tourists, but also a learning means with a hope of being able to change the females’ situation in their countries of origin and do something they would consider crucial for them particularly and for society at large.

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Performing a Victim: Toxic Postsocialist Masculinities

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Abstract

The article analyzes postsocialist toxic masculinities as an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices characterized by excess and banality. Focusing on male politicians, it argues that moderation, restraint and sobriety are foreign to their brand of toxic masculinity. Fraught with fear and anxiety, Lithuanian politicians attempt to resolve their masculine ambiguities by resorting to dramatic performances of resentment, impetuousness, hatred, and denigration of others. The examined Lithuanian politicians’ pronouncements suggest that they constitute themselves as injured victims and perpetuate the obsessive discourse of male victimhood. Constant claims about manliness under siege are a way of fabricating simulacra of a particular toxic masculinity characteristic of postsocialist Lithuania. Using the postcolonial theory on mimicry, excess and banality of power, the author argues that these men’s pursuit of shameless lawlessness best epitomize this type of masculinity.

Keywords: postsocialist Lithuania, toxic masculinity, postcolony, banality of power.

Introduction

In his essay entitled “Are you a Man or a Mouse?” Homi Bhabha writes: “My own masculinity is strangely separating from me, turning into my shadow, the place of my filiation and my fading. My attempt to conceptualize its conditionality becomes a compulsion to question it; my analytic sense that masculinity normalizes and naturalizes difference turns into a kind of neurotic ‘acting out’ of its power and powerlessness” (Bhabha 1995, 58). This quote perfectly captures the dynamic of not only postcolonial but also postsocialist masculinities. Here masculinity is not only its own shadow, a fading sign of power but also a constant reiteration of its normality, mimicry and simulation. It often manifests itself through violent spectacles of hyper-macho posturing, bullying, hatred and impetuousness that can be characterized as toxic.

Toxic masculinities that define “those aspects of hegemonic masculinity that are socially destructive, such as misogyny, homophobia, greed, and violent domination” (Kupers 2005, 716)
have been first analyzed in the field of prison studies. Only recently, with the strengthening of political conservatism in both Europe and North America and the election of Donald Trump “toxic masculinity” became a widely exploited concept. It denotes masculinity that aspires for dominance and control by inferiorizing everyone and everything that stands in its way. This masculinity valorizes violence and aggression as a normal way of social interactions.

Despite the abundance of examples of men engaging in physical and psychological violence in their construction of manhood, the term “toxic masculinity” is still absent from a massively under-researched area of men’s studies in Lithuania. Although some research focused on men marginalized due to their age, class, sexuality, crime, disability and ethnicity (Tereškinas 2011 and 2012; Vaiciuniene, Tereskinas 2015; Tereškinas et al. 2016), no work has examined toxic masculinities of powerful men in politics. By analyzing Lithuanian politicians’ masculinity practices, this article intends to fill the gap.

Before turning attention to toxic masculinity, I will briefly describe the Lithuanian gender regime that could be characterized as one of the most contradictory and paradoxical in Europe. First of all, despite the implementation of a variety of gender equality directives and documents, including the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1999) and the National Programs of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2003–2004, 2005–2009 and 2010–2014), the principle of gender equality is still more a slogan than reality in Lithuania. Since the Lithuanian independence in 1990, gender equality policy has been rather inconsistent, therefore de facto gender equality remains only an aspiration.

A connection between family policy and gender equality is also rather weak, i.e., family policymaking in Lithuania is not based on the paradigm of gender equality. Even though gender equality has been a conceptual element of family policymaking during certain periods, its implementation as well as social attitudes is usually dominated by the patriarchal and paternalist orientations. This is evidenced, among other things, in the prevailing social model of a male breadwinner, in the underdevelopment of pre-school education system, in the lack of flexible forms of employment – all these factors prevent women from participating in the labor market, burden their efforts to balance professional career and family, and at the same time stop men from engaging more fully in family life (Maslauskaitė 2004; Jančaitytė 2006 and 2011; Bučaitė-Vilkė et al. 2012). In other words, sporadic attempts to establish equal opportunities for both
sexes to make use of flexible forms of employment as well as state-provided support and services have often been hampered by the lack of attention to all-pervasive traditional masculinity and femininity models in work-and-family-balancing strategies and by inconsistencies in ensuring equal participation of both sexes in the private and public spheres of life.

Moreover, both gender policies and family-friendly policymaking have been greatly affected by antifeminist attitudes and nostalgia for patriarchal family most vividly demonstrated by the infamous State Family Policy Concept (2008) ratified by the Lithuanian Parliament and subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Lithuania. This Concept did not see gender equality as an important goal, since it postulated biologically determined male-female differences explained away with the “complementarity of sexes” notion (Tereškinas 2012). The framework of traditionalist gender policies in the country influence, to a large degree, practices through which men and women express their masculinities and femininities. It could be argued that this type of ambivalent gender regime has negative consequences for both women and men constrained by the narrow gender roles and cultural expectations.

This gender regime, along with enduring economic, social and political instability, produces a fertile ground for toxic gender practices, particularly among men. Interestingly, not only marginalized men who rework hegemonic masculinity in socially deprived contexts but, first of all, men who have power and authority, for instance, Lithuanian politicians, increasingly exhibit a specific brand of toxic masculinities. They produce the brand of masculinity that often reflects extreme forms of sex-typed behavior by conferring blame for their failures on both powerful lobbying interest groups and vulnerable minority groups such as women, LGBT, ethnic minorities, etc. In a peculiar way, these men in power appropriate the discourse of injury and wound and present themselves as gender victims.

By using the examples of Lithuanian politicians, in this article, I describe gender practices characteristic of postsocialist toxic masculinity. The article begins with the analysis of two politicians and their ways of being powerful males. This analysis uses their public pronouncements in order to grasp the peculiar brand of toxic masculinity in Lithuania. By placing toxic masculinity in the context of postcolonial theory, the second part of this article theorizes it in terms of mimicry, excess and banality.
Men in Power: “Don't you Know that you're Toxic?”

During the last decade, a peculiar male hero emerged in Lithuania: the victimized politician. He might present himself as righteously indignant of the nation’s vices, as bleeding for the sake of the country and mythical traditional family. His wounded image speaks of uncomfortable pressure of painful feeling that dissipates in conspiracy theories and hysterical accusations directed to powerful business interests, lobbying organizations, women, feminists and gays.

One of the best examples of men in power who incessantly express the hysterical sense of victimhood is a Parliament member Petras Gražulis who belongs to the right-wing “Order and Justice” Party. He is a marginal political figure, however, his excesses do not go unnoticed by the Lithuanian media. In public, he flaunts his virility, masculine pride and even physical aggression. He was one of the ardent opponents of the Gay Pride Parade in the spring of 2010 protesting outside the heavily guarded fence. At the end of the parade, when its participants were leaving, he got embroiled in a physical fight with one of the organizers of the parade. He literally rendered his own person into a visual spectacle of embattled but struggling masculinity.

Gražulis is a symptomatic example of toxic Lithuanian masculinity because he often talks of himself as a victim of gender politics and homosexual “propaganda.” In his public pronouncements, he frequently intones gay conspiracy and gay mafia. When his car was caught speeding more than 30 times by the automatic speed radars he said: “[It is] because Gražulis has scared off the parade of gays and pederasts. It is their revenge to him for this… I see the activity of homosexuals here…” (Paknys 2011).

This MP constantly points to traumas that others impose on him, incitements to rescue him and other male victims from the onslaught of global homosexual conspiracy. Exploiting the politics of victimhood, hatred and intolerance and over identifying with toxic masculinity he presents himself as a fighter for the nation and traditional family in the face of the “corrupt” political system. Exploiting fantasies of homosexuals as a threat to the nation and particularly to the traditional family, he engenders the homophobic hysteria that characterizes him as eclectic and colorful clown of the right-wing ideologues. Anxious to distance himself from anything that might be even remotely suggestive of homosexuality or bisexuality, Gražulis is also one of the most revealing and amusing cultural cases of political hatred and intolerance.
Much more important political figure that plays victimhood with self-confidence is Ramūnas Karbauskis, leader of the ruling party “Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union” that currently holds a majority in the Lithuanian Parliament. 47-year old Karbauskis is a millionaire, one of the biggest landowners in Lithuania and successful businessman involved in distribution of farming equipment and fertilizers. From the beginning of his career as a Parliament member, almost daily he would introduce the public to his new initiatives on compulsory military training in schools, national costumes for children under seven, compulsory visits of children to the theater, etc. that his party would allegedly bring to fruition. However, after being ridiculed for these initiatives he was prompt to change his opinions and to pretend, in some cases, that he never said it. His confident macho persona convinced people that he was in control although many of his pronouncements were proven to be false and misleading, especially those related to the important amendments to the Assisted Reproduction Law and Child Protection Law. For all his failed initiatives Karbauskis has repeatedly accused “powerful business interests”, particularly of the alcohol and tobacco industry (all his accusatory ramblings are available at his Facebook page).

One of the most striking blows to Karbauskis’s reputation was a scandal involving the vice-head of his party Greta Kildišienė to whom his company “Agrokoncernas” leased an expensive car and who was his alleged lover. Although the leader of the “Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union” is married and on any possible occasion preaches “family values,” his wife and children have been residing in Spain for more than a decade. In the midst of the scandal Karbauskis stated that the whole story of his vice-head Kildišienė was an attempt to attack the rule of law in Lithuania: “Now it is obvious that it is the first serious attempt at destroy the [ruling] political power elected by people…” In his interviews and speeches he indicated that “some powerful forces” were determined to topple both the Parliament majority and the government: “… we understood that this attack against the Parliament majority and the government would be fierce and relentless with no regard to the offended and members of their families …”. Once he felt that his credibility as a politician was threatened, he retaliated by referring to himself and his accomplices as wrongfully offended victims. Karbausk is shamelessly used manipulations, lies and evasiveness as public measures to correct these “injustices” and reiterate his determination “to implement changes for which people voted in the [Parliament] elections” (Čachovskij 2017). Although most of his words feed only egocentrism,
irresponsibility and victimhood, his confident and testosterone-revved persona is still rewarded by public attention and support.

Many external factors – from businesses and “mysterious forces” to LGBT organizations — appear to be most threatening to the discussed men in power. It can be argued that their hysteria provoked by unnamed “business interests”, powerful gay lobbies, “anti-government forces” is a manifestation of men’s fears of losing control and being feminized. At the same time it yields a certain political profit. The fantasy of being under constant siege by a multitude of external forces is employed to present themselves as victims while victimizing innocent others. Yet these men-victims emerge as “as aggressive, resentful or suspicious people whose hurt and loss is directed at others rather than at themselves” (Hoggett 2006). As this short analysis demonstrates, both ruling and marginal politicians gain the relief and satisfaction from simple resentment, impetuousness, hatred, and denigration of others.

**Banality of Power and Toxic Masculinity in Postsocialism**

What framework can be used to interpret the briefly described examples of powerful men who successfully perform victimhood and toxic masculinity? One of the ways to theorize toxic masculinities is to turn to the issue of power, its vulgarity and banality in the postsocialist space.

Some scholars suggest that postsocialist space can be theorized as postcolonial (Kelertas 2006) in which postcolonial power relations are of the utmost important. The state itself, in this kind of analysis, is thought of not as sovereign subject or a system but as “a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another” (Brown 1995, 174). This understanding of the state as a set of dispersed powers implies that power resides everywhere: “in speech, writing, discourse, representation, and reason; in families, curricula, bodies and the arts” (Brown 1995, 38–40). Gender and masculinity in particular also become an axis of power and a maker of subjects.

The insights of a theorist of postcoloniality Achille Mbembe (1992 and 2001) and his critics (Trouillot 1992) help me examine this problematic of power and suggest some useful comparisons between postcolony and postsocialism. In Mbembe’s view, the postcolony is a specific system of signs and „a particular way of fabricating simulacra or of stereotypes” (Mbembe 1992, 2). It is the simulacral regime *par excellence* in which a specific simulacral
pragmatic forges the relation between the dominant and the dominated (Mbembe 1992, 11–14). Thus, power relations in the postcolony and, in my view, in the postsocialist space, are based on mimicry that serves as one of their most effective strategies and stylistics. The simulacral postsocialist regimes enable both the dominant and dominated simulate their gender, national and class identities in endless ploy of self inflicted injuries, blame and resentment.

Mbembe also speaks of the banality of power in the postcolony. In his view, banality does not mean that power is predictable and it consists of “repeated daily actions and gestures” but, first of all, that it is saturated with the elements of the obscene, vulgar, and the grotesque (Mbembe 1992, 1). Differently than Michail Bakhtin who thought the grotesque and obscene exposed the arbitrary and perishable character of the official authority turning it into a figure of fun (Bakhtin 1984), Mbembe localizes obscenity, grotesque and banality of power in many places, among them, in both the spectacles and prestige of the official power and in the ways it is presented to the subordinated (Mbembe 1992, 4).

On the contrary, Mbembe’s critics think that power is always vulgar and banal whether it expresses itself in the postcolonial, postsocialist or any other space because it is always potentially excessive and exaggerated. In other words, “the imagery of power is excess” and, in Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s words, “Excess, in turn, breeds vulgarity. To be sure, power sometimes attaches a mask onto the vulgarity it generates. If the mask is half successful, power glows, the populace applauds, and vulgarity lies dormant. Yet vulgarity is always there, for power cannot live without its imagery and that imagery begs for exuberance” (Trouillot 1992, 78).

Following Mbembe and Trouillot’s arguments, it is possible to argue that the eccentric and grotesque art of representation, the taste for the theatrical and the “violent pursuit of wrongdoing to the point of shamelessness” (Mbembe 1992, 21) are the defining characteristics of postsocialist performances of toxic masculinity. Constant attempts of the analyzed politicians to resort to the systematic production and application of resentment and victimhood also demonstrate the vulgarity, grotesque and banality of power. As the examples of the Lithuanian politicians attest, their performances of the peculiar brand of toxic masculinity cannot live without exaggeration, excess, resentment, hatred and lies. Moreover, men performing toxic masculinity confirm the exorbitant and exaggerated binary of man and woman “as the exclusive way to understand the gender field” (Butler 2004, 43) and impersonate victims full of hostility.
and frustration. In their attempt to escape fear and insecurity, these male subjects who simulate their identities on the basis of dominance and control search for satisfaction in the acts of revenge, accusation, discursive violence and manipulation.

**Conclusion**

As it was noted at the beginning of the article, Lithuania remains a society in which rigid gender norms influence the ways in which social programs assume and reinforce a family breadwinner role for men and a maternal and caring role for women. Family policy, population policy, labor force, regulation of sexual behavior and childcare provisions are a part of a broader set of power structures which act to perpetuate male power in the country. Moreover, rigid gender norms not only perpetuate mutual zombification of men and women but also affect men in power who perform their masculinities on the basis of invented victimhood, blame and resentment.

The article argues that postsocialist masculine performances are based on mimicry and simulation that expose their banality and obscenity reproduced in political life. In their hyper-macho posturing, imagined victimhood, bullying and lack of empathy for others, marginal and not so marginal political figures perform toxic masculinity that masks their underlying fear and anxiety of not measuring up, of being inadequate and of losing control.

In the tortured rhetoric of the Lithuanian politicians, toxic masculinity becomes devoid of sobriety, continence and moderation. Appealing to the loss of family values, compulsive heterosexuality, the national honor and mysterious lobbying interests that attempt to discredit them, the Lithuanian male politicians expose banality and obscenity of toxic masculinity. It is banal and obscene not only because of a constant dramatization of its heroism and injuries but also because of in ceaseless extolling of the legitimating force of such institutions as the nation, heterosexuality or family.

An array of Lithuanian politicians’ pronouncements suggests that prominent men constitute themselves as injured victims and perpetuate the obsessive discourse of male victimhood. Constant claims about manliness under siege are a way of fabricating simulacra of a particular toxic masculinity characteristic of the postsocialist region. This toxic masculinity is not only predictable but also narcissistic and self-destructive. Its taste for the theatrical and its
violent pursuit of shameless wrongdoing best epitomized by the described Lithuanian politicians remain its main mode of existence.

As a journalist Amanda Marcotte wrote in her article on gun violence and terror in the United States of America, “Toxic masculinity aspires to toughness but is, in fact, an ideology of living in fear: the fear of ever seeming soft, tender, weak, or somehow less than manly. This insecurity is perhaps the most stalwart defining feature of toxic masculinity” (Marcotte 2016). Thus, further research on the export/import of toxic masculinity based on domination, the devaluation of women, aggression, and violence would be particularly relevant for the understanding of gender issues in the context of global markets, increasing economic dispossession, migration and ethnic and cultural conflicts.

References


Deconstructing the Foundational Myths of Patriarchy in Gilman’s Herland

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Abstract

In her novel Herland (1915), Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) creates a utopian fictitious land inhabited and ruled by women. Against the patriarchal exclusionary imaginary, this land of females hosts a group of foreign men to engage them into a direct interrogative encounter challenging the male stereotyped expectations of females as being natural subordinate subjects. Dislocating the male gaze conceiving women as weak and powerless, Gilman reduces patriarchal paradigms to groundless myths easily subverted within the condition of emancipated females. As the paper unveils through a deconstructionist method, Herland corroborates an argument that boldly interrogates patriarchy to demystify its stereotypes of physical and intellectual superiority, and revises the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Discourse, Patriarchy, patriarchal myths, stereotypes

Throughout her novel Herland (1915), Charlotte Perkings Gilman(1860-1935) a enacts systematic deconstruction of patriarchal discourse in order to dismantle its hierarchical categories that hold women inferior. To develop this argument, the present paper will introduce a brief synopsis on the novel, besides some biographical notes illuminating the analysis through pertinent moments in Gilman’s Career. Then, for rigour’s sake, before embarking on a practical deconstructionist analysis of the different relevant levels of patriarchal myths questioned in Gilman’s Herland, I will clarify the concepts of patriarchy, myth and what the critical method of deconstruction, adopted herein, involve. This is to pave the way afterward to a practical deconstructionist analysis of the different myths founding the patriarchal imaginary.

Synoptic notes

In Herland (1915), Gilman creates a utopian fictitious land inhabited and ruled by women who can give birth without sexual intercourse on the basis of “Parthenogenesis”, an imagined
process of asexual reproduction. Throughout the text, *Herland* enacts systematic deconstruction of patriarchal discourse in order to dismantle its hierarchical categories that hold women inferior. Against the patriarchal exclusionary imaginary, this land of females hosts a group of men to bring them into a direct interrogative encounter that utterly challenges male expectations and stereotypes through which females are erroneously thought natural subordinate subjects. Dislocating the “male gaze” and rearranging the essentialist structure of conceiving women as weak and powerless, Gilman reduces patriarchal paradigms to mere totalising myths that are groundless within the condition of free and emancipated females. Within such a deconstructionist feminist framework, *Herland* corroborates an imaginative argument that boldly interrogates patriarchy in order to demystify its stereotypes of physical and intellectual superiority; and revises the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance. However condemnatory to patriarchy, Gilman defends heterosexuality, and solicits women and men to understand one another’s drives and perspectives for the sake of enriching human experience and promoting coexistence. The deadlock caused by their continuous misunderstandings, according to the novel, proves that they enjoy little grounds for viable dialogue. For what lacks in both is an inclusive awareness about the meaning of humanity beyond gender restriction.

**Notes on Charlotte Perkins Gilman**

A feminist activist, sociologist and fiction writer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) was cared for by her aunts after her father had deserted her mother. In her autobiography *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1935), she sheds light on the condition of poverty during her childhood, on her mother’s lack of affection towards her, on her discontinuous schooling, and the impact of her father’s passion for literature on her future writing career. After severe depression, Charlotte divorced from her husband in 1894, sent her daughter later to live with him and moved to California to become a member in various organizations defending women’s rights and social reforms. Between 1900 and 1922 she lived in New York with her second husband, Houghton Gilman, a Wall Street attorney; and then moved back to California after his death in 1934. Having suffered from breast cancer for four years since 1932, Perkins Gilman took her life using chloroform (Knight, Diaries, p.813).
As an activist, Gilman was anti-capitalist militating for change against class hierarchies. Making her living through essays and lectures on social reforms defending women, Gilman became a well-known figure among feminist writers. Accounting for wives’ psychological disorder as being an outcome of oppressive matrimonial conditions, her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, written in 1890, made her outlive her time to take an outstanding place within postmodern literary writing. Exploring the relationship between women’s work in the public sphere and their emancipation, wellbeing and agency, her book *Women and Economics*, published in 1898 and extended in 1903 in *The Home: Its Work and Influence*, earned her international fame. Besides, “One of the greatest accomplishments of her career” was the establishment of her magazine *The Forerunner* which she wrote and edited between 1909 and 1916, seeking through serial publication of her literary works to counter the dominant mass media-created ideological atmosphere. Considering herself a humanist, she criticized Darwin’s focus on the male and his exclusion of the female from the process of evolution (Lane, 1990, p.230). Instead, she believed in the equal capacity of women to contribute to human welfare beyond simply occupying a restricted sexual role gratifying men’s needs.

**Patriarchal myths**

In the case of the present analysis, myth is conceived in the terms adopted by the French critic Roland Barthes as being “naturalized” or “normalized meaning” that backgrounds the historical forces by “a false ‘naturalness’ with which newspaper, art and commonsense constantly dress up a reality which … is undoubtedly determined by history” (Barthes, 1972, P.11). Extending from this sense, patriarchal myths are founded on a system of producing signification, a process of representing the world on an essentialist ground supporting the view that man is the centre for which the world is made. This perspective excludes women’s perceptions and takes them as aberrant from the norm embodied in man’s worldview. Since it is exclusionary, it only survives, not by constituting a final truth, neither by producing an infallible epistemic model, but rather by oppressing and devoicing everything belonging to the female sphere.

**On deconstruction**

Developed by the Algerian-born French philosopher Jacque Derrida, Deconstruction was originally conceived in his works as a critical method used for reading literary texts for the sake
of unveiling their contradictions and lack of coherence, besides revealing their subtle strategies of concealing signification jeopardizing the text’s discursive paradigm (Derrida, 1976;1978). Against pure and absolute static meaning founded on binary oppositions, the method of deconstruction questions the presence of truth and unveils the relativity of values, conveying that these latter cannot achieve a fixed totality since they are always delayed and being in the making. However, crossing the boundaries of literature, Deconstruction has been applied to both verbal and non-verbal discourse in its broad sense to encompass academic and scientific disciplines along with culture and cultural products (Nealon, 1993). In this regard, not only has deconstruction been implemented by Afro-American thinkers such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., but also adopted by feminists like Barbara Johnson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler. Beyond focusing on the discursive dysfunctions of Gilman’s Herland, the present analysis is rather intended to show how this novel itself deconstructs the patriarchal imaginary through demystifying that male representation of women depend more on mythical constructs than on systematic certainties.

The myth of physical superiority

From the start on their arrival to Herland, the three men do not believe that a women’s society can sustain itself without men. Mistakenly, observing the cultivation of the forest land and the implementation of a considerable network, Terry deduces that Herland must have been tended by men. Acting upon a cluster of received stereotypes, Jeff thinks that women are to be protected by men while Terry argues vociferously that women are to be conquered. With more encounters with the inhabitants of Herland, The spiral of stereotypes opens further to take various dimensions. Facing the women, the men find them hard to seduce or even to catch up with; as they men try to catch the women observing them from the treetop, they realise that these latter can outrun them. Later, they find out that they enjoy agile bodies, strong physical prowess and brave conduct. Contesting the male physical superiority, the Herlandians destabilise the essentialist male view that physical strength is essentially male. The women’s remarkable athleticism leads them to rethink the cultural conditioning and restricting of women by patterns of patriarchal normativity. Beaten by the three girls while playing a tossing game, it becomes necessary for Van to reflect and infer that the context of Herland, which is different from the context of his original society, can produce different female physical predispositions. Back home
where the men came from, the weakness of modern women is largely due to the “phallocentric” view that females are to be sheltered, a view aiming to contain and subordinate them not as minds but also as bodies. In such a radical insight, Gilman pushes home a poignant demythifying remark that patriarchal discourse can assume sweeping hegemony on women on the grounds of neutralizing all forms of their potential agency by imposing the male gaze as the normative center that creates everything around it.

Van, Jeff and Terry come to Herland to explore women who do not fall in the scope of their stereotypes. In fact, their expectations based on masculine criteria of femininity are challenged by their encounter with women that “were not in the girl sense, beautiful” (Gilman, 1998, p.16-17). They are “strong”, “well-knit” and “fearless”. They wear practical stitched robes or long tunics that no longer foreground the female body to distinguish it from the males. Although their hair is cut short, Van starts to reassess his judgements on their lack of femininity as erroneous perception. Instead, he begins to question the normative view on femininity, and thus acknowledges that he has utterly mistaken what women are likely to be, rethinking his assumption that “‘Woman’ in the abstract is young, and, we assume, charming” (p.17).

Ironically, when the three men are caught captive by the women, they grow long hair, which affiliates them with the signs of femininity as constructed in the contours of their own masculine discourse. This role reversal is symbolically handled by Gilman in order to interrogate the masculine boundaries as incapable of defining what femininity is. For more dramatic deconstruction, Terry who believes that women are born to be mastered by men, is ironically portrayed as a weak reckless man who is dependent on women due to his narrow-minded imaginary shackling him altogether to lusty desires determining his representation of femininity. However, encountering Alima who is physically strong, intellectually brilliant, morally engaged and strictly uncompromising of her independence, Terry finds himself alienated from his macho certitudes as he becomes unable to prove his superiority within a new cultural context where the male perspective is inexistent. Rejecting Herland as a space of unwomanly “neuters”, Terry expresses a myth of femininity that is itself rejected and neutralised amid a female experience resisting the patriarchal world view.
The myth of male intellectual superiority

Of further challenge to the male visitors, the women of Herland do not conceive the body and the mind as binary opposites or conflicting units functioning separately. On the contrary, each is seen to constitute an inalienable facet of the other. This is clearly visible in their education theory that considers that “the mind is as natural as a thing as the body” (p.89). For both need to gradually develop and grow through appropriate stimulation, nurturing and active exercising. On equal footing, they are considered two means to be used jointly in order to overcome obstacles, and at the same time they constitute an integrated end to satiate and enjoy within pro-social parameters. Through a holistic education predicated on knowing and doing, the mental integrates the physical capacities of the body to produce coherent strong personalities enabled by the principle of complementarity to downplay the limitations of each and recreate them in a way that produces a rich human experience. In the same context of a deconstructive argument, Herland offers a space to reflect on the shortcomings of the male-dominating epistemology that reduces multiplicity on the binary splitting of the human agent. With a tyrant tearing of the mind from the body through a hierarchy that privileges the first over the second, the patriarchal view advocates the superiority of the mind to appropriate reason and consciousness as exclusively male assets, and to mark the body as a female sphere determining women’s action to perform a lower role. Revising this discourse, Gilman valorises both components as interdependent factors in human subjectivity to demonstrate that women can also assume both forms of actions, and to unveil that role distribution stands mainly on the basis of unnatural and historical power relationships masterminded by men’s power interests.

Women in Herland are shown to enjoy a great predisposition for intellectual and scientific activity; for they “had been playing with the arts and sciences-as far as they knew them-for a good many centuries now with inevitable success” (p.61). From physiology, sanitation, physical culture to educational psychology, this female community integrates science within a large framework of the social wellbeing beyond any power aspirations of dominance. Besides, the women of Herland are capable of developing an epistemology based on relativity and open interpretation; for “when a given line of observation seemed to lead to some very dreadful inference they always gave us the benefit of doubt, leaving it open to further knowledge”(p.68).
Unlike the patriarchal mode of knowledge that the three Americans use to make sense of their experience in this “strange” land, the women do not tend to give up to preconceptions and final conclusive certainties. Rather, they tend to question and revise their own reasoning to achieve an open-minded worldview that can even challenge the Cartesian fixities, for in Herland “they had no theory of the essential opposition of good and evil” (p.87). Moreover, even if she is a late Victorian writer, Gilman creates a world of women who, in a post modern way of critical thinking, believes in the changing dynamics of human personality as they “put psychology with history- not with personal life” (p.90). Besides, with self-criticism, Herland endeavours to make more improvements in the quality of their society because they believe in “the critic and the inventor” (p.65) as extensions of female intellectual capacities.

Likewise, keeping women in the private sphere of domestic work as a claim for men’s care of women is emphatically contested in Herland as a pure act of domestication that the modern world enacts in order to subjugate them by constraining their potential. Moreover, Herland views the institution of marriage itself as being a woman-enslaving apparatus that bereaves women of their freedom and symbolically eclipses them by bereaving them of their names. Significantly, Alima rejects dropping off her own name and taking her husband’s as she criticises that “a wife is the woman who belongs to a man”(p.100). Being married according to a modern man’s tradition is seen by Alima as a way of dispossessing wives of their autonomy through a marital institution that defines them in terms of their husbands’ identity. On parallel grounds, besides rethinking the marital institution, Gilman questions the sexual foundations of marriage which give a higher priority to men’s desires than to the wife as a full partner. As Van manages to control his sexuality by overweighing the rational side and the sense of friendship with Ellador, he becomes a master of his sexual drives. This reinforces the novel’s hypothesis that male sexuality is a human instinct to be tamed rather than being a ceaseless tyrant to appease for justifying phallocentric claims and tendencies of promiscuity, polygamy and treating women as sex objects of consumption. Simultaneously, through the character of Van, Gilman concedes that sexuality can perform a significant articulation of affection between men and women even if reproduction is not the ultimate aim. In fact, sexuality is debated in Herland with a revising
stance seeking to reformulate it, redress it and humanise it in order to transform it from a tool of
dominance into an egalitarian bond between two different but equal sexes.

The myth of patriarchal order and providence:

Longing for adventure, Van and his friends fly to Herland. However, they find none
since this land is vacant of all sorts of struggles, which invokes and critically addresses the
exclusive prerogative pretentiously held by men to organise and ensure order for the human
wellbeing. Ironically, in *Herland* women are portrayed capable of enacting an egalitarian social
system with equal wealth distribution. In opposition to the capitalist free enterprise spirit, the
socialist line of Herland promotes solidarity, cooperation and downplays competitive
individualism. In their community, the women make a harmonious society that takes the shape of
a family beyond the authoritarian model of the state. Besides, Herland is void of power struggle,
power seeking and power relationships since the source authority is located within wisdom,
experience and the inhabitants’ predisposition for caring for children’s education.

Symbolically, Gilman suggests that women are capable of showing a more philanthropic
type of organisation that contrasts irreconcilably with the patriarchal instrumental rationalism
which is motivated by utilitarianism. In other words, women’s social model in Herland is shown
capable to constitute a constructive alternative to solve social injustice on the basis of toning
down egoism and self-interest. In such a system, Herland voices a political feminism that
hypothesises for a society wherein every member is responsible to eradicate diseases, crimes and
war beyond an authoritarian male-dominated structure model centring power in the hands of
hegemonic elite. Moreover, Gilman overtly deconstructs man’s rationalism, claiming that its
resulting state’s institutions and economic production cannot do without social ethics to sustain a
dignified human society free from various oppressive practices. Instead, values of sacrifice,
among other things, are shown to constitute a major principle of the women’s ideals to reach a
symbiotic community. As a case in point, even if most of the women desire to have more than
one child, they give up this tendency for the sake of society’s demographic balance. In short, the
myths of women’s inferiority to manage, organise, rule and elaborate a coherent rational society
that could live up to the community’s needs and, at the same time, preserve their humanness is
deconstructed on the non-exclusionary paradigms of *Herland* as an antithetical work of fiction.
In a similar vein forbidding childbearing for women who show anti-social behaviour, this community has no criminals since no room is left for reproducing hereditary criminal character. Besides, the mother is not the only one to educate the child, for other wiser women take charge of ensuring an optimal upbringing. Significantly, a part of motherhood in Herland lies in women’s readiness to entrust their children to other educators, believing this to be part of society’s common interest. Bearing the patriarchal system in mind, it can be said that the socialisation of the individual in Herland is predicated on a different and unique form of subjectivity. Through a wholly dedicated motherhood, the subject can be seen as an extension of collective affective factors that are free from any kind of institutional coercion or power distributing codes. Instead, subjectivity in this utopian feminist world is seen beyond the reductionist categories of phallogocentric patriarchy that rigidly creates intransitive subjects with passive predispositions to perform and reproduce a predetermining male power. Unlike the patriarchal world, Herland produces free agents who can participate within vital norms that are different from the macho parameters. Within such an organically different society, women, through an extreme spirit of altruistic and caring sense of motherhood succeed to generate balanced individuals free from the neurotic repercussions of the psychological frustrations that engender a split personality in the Freudian world from which the three men came. Namely, in the absence of males, subjectivity in Herland is not dependent on a normative, oppressive and violent oedipal complex that holds the mother as an object of patriarchal appropriation and suppresses the child’s desires through a reality principle for the sake of an institution-backed civilisation. Instead, unlike patriarchy, “parthenogenesis” and motherhood can bring about an intersubjective society wherein females are no longer castrated or lacking. They are complete individuals who are psychologically balanced, interconnected and capable to produces a power-free culture that celebrates life as its very focus within humane feminist conditions.

Furthermore, in Herland Gilman strikes an eco-feminist note to celebrate women’s affinity with nature. In sharp contrast to the world of modernity where the men came from, Herland does not suffer the greedy acts of exploitation of natural resources. Instead, a large interest is invested to keep nature wholesome to the extent of venerating it. In many ways, the inhabitants are revealed to entertain an existential type of intercourse with various details of their environment. When the men came into the first encounter with the space of Herland, they find it Eden-like with large trees “trimmed” that stood “like a huge umbrella, with circling seats
beneath” (p.12). With a principle of deep rooted respect, the women in Herland care for “their country as a florist cares for his costliest orchids” (p.15). Also, animals are treated with considerable friendliness. Unlike the unsafe world of the visitors, dogs are not kept muzzled and just an animal squeak of hunger is enough to make it fed. Herland does not live on animal’s meat therefore they do not kill animals for the sake of a profit-making meat industry. Also, out of full consideration for every brute, the women do not take a calf away from its mother’s milk to satisfy their own needs. With such contrasts to the three men’s world, Herland does not deal with nature on the basis of a materialistic utilitarianism motivated by equations of benefits.

Within a wise outlook of balance and continuity, this female community shows high responsibility to nature since they consider it their source of life. Accordingly, one of the most obvious symptoms of their ecological attachment manifests continuously in the magical appellation “mother earth”. Beyond seeing nature as a set of physical forces and natural laws of rivalry and struggle, Herland conceives that forests and animals are causes of women’s continuity that cooperate with them and sustain their existence. Unlike patriarchal dualism, humanising nature is the paradigmatic principle with which Herland inhabitants harmonise with their environment within a world view that no longer conceives of nature as an object of domination, but rather as an ultimately conditional requirement for the birth of human culture and civilisation. Of equal importance, this feminist ecological awareness is of high significance in decentering the myth that holds that men are the most superior of all the species since plants and animals are capable to assume agency in the shaping of human biology and in reinforcing human survival. Therefore, Gilman’s utopia articulates different aspects of eco-feminism that range from an analysis defending women’s privileged predisposition for interconnecting with nature, to a critique of patriarchal epistemology that separates culture from nature, to a deconstruction of the male capitalist “laissez passer laisser faire” that is responsible for environmental deterioration.

In a similar vein, the inhabitants of Herland are highly skilled at violence management. When trying to subdue the men and take them captives, the women no longer have recourse to physical deterrence. Instead, the “vigilance committee”, whose “attitude was not the rigid discipline of soldiers” (p.19), took them to doctors in order to control them by gently driving them into unconsciousness through a sweet-smelling anaesthesia. After they get up, the men find
themselves in a big room enjoying many windows and “a scent of blossoming gardens outside” (p.21) to realise later that there are no jails in this society. Given all the convenient comforts of food and clothing, they are taken afterward to be initiated to the language of Herland and at the same time to teach the women the foreign language of the visitors. Unlike the rigid methodology of modern teaching, the men are taught intuitively on the basis of understanding the learners as whole persons along with the learning difficulties they are likely to encounter. Proceeding in such a way, Herland as a community substitutes punishment as a corrective practice with soft measures of cognitive rehabilitation in which the individual is led to actively construct a positive social behaviour. In addition, unlike the modern institutions that are principled on a discourse of pre-emptive punitive and disciplinary practices, Herland promotes social coexistence through integrative strategies that start basically by equipping its visitors with a feminist dialogic knowledge enabling them to understand their perspective and system of values. Put another way, the men’s disruptive acts are undone by Herland through a feminine corrective that gradually involves them in the social life of their world. Therefore, imaginatively, Gilman interrogates the patriarchal approach that relies on violence, counter-violence and retaliation to eradicate brutality, laying bare that the structure of managing antisocial behaviour is itself no less anti-human.

The patriarchal myths of traditions and religion

In the space of Herland, more value is given to changing contexts in such a way that everything is represented as being part of the immediate moment of changing contexts beyond venerating the past or transforming it into irreversible social traditions. To elaborate, the inhabitants of Herland are aware of the necessity to renew their perception in order to assimilate new experience, respond to changing needs and unshackle the present from irrelevant affiliations to illusory stable social codes. With such a daring outlook, this community of women believes in evolution and relativity. They are conscious that they perceive experience from a certain temporal position likely to shift amid a flexible reality open to new ways of life in different moments. Nothing is to be sacred in Herland since its inhabitants are inclined to behave critically towards the norms, the laws and traditions. Besides, their tendency to analyse and revise the status quo enables them to hinder the development of absolutist institutions, and evade the advocation of the stability of power relationships through petrifying human culture and fixing
discriminate roles. On the reverse, the perception of Herland resists the hegemonic instrumentalisation of tradition and enact contingency as a process of emancipation based on a deep sense of existential equality emanating from the subjects’ right to see the world through their own eyes and not through their predecessors’ perspective. In a creative way, this utopian novel wittily revises tradition and criticizes it as a totalitarian patriarchal myth motivated by perpetuating man’s ascendency over women.

Even more Herland does not adopt an authoritarian religion. Instead, the women have a kind of worshipful attitude to motherhood and nature without subordinating their thinking to a natural or supernatural authority. When Van the sociologist tells Ellador about the different religions of his world, she rejects his religious interpretations seeing that “their common basis being a Dominant Power or Powers, and some Special Behaviour, mostly taboos, to please or placate” (p.93). Capitalising the above religious attributes, Gilman seeks to convey how religious discourse is but a replicating extension of the power-obsessed male regime of thought operating through the sacred and the profane to impose a set of inclusions and exclusions. In other words, the religious discourse is suspiciously portrayed by Ellador as a power apparatus that prescribes unnatural fixed norms in order to empower men for sustaining their dominance. Furthermore, the evolving forms of “the human imagery of the Divine Force up through successive stages of bloodthirsty, sensual, proud, and cruel gods of early times to the conception of a common father with its corollary of a Common Brotherhood” (p.93) invite the critical mind to think genealogically in order to dismantle the religious essentialist truths as mere patriarchal perceptions; and, consequently, to unveil the mythic foundations on which male power aspirations are grounded. Through “an immense Loving Power” (p.98), as being a spiritual principle in the social life of Herland, Ellador thinks that the religious mind of men is rooted in the principle of projecting male violence on God. When van asks her if they have any theory of eternal punishment, she curtly answers back: “We have no punishment in life, you see, so we don’t imagine them after death” (p.95). Seeing that Herland is a crime-free space resulting from motherhood’s educational priorities, the women cannot develop the binary concepts of afterlife damnation or salvation, since they think that men’s decadent deeds producing a decadent reality is what inspires the male imaginary to produce a sordid afterlife image named hell. Daring to question the sacred and the profane underpinning the invention of gender myth and the
naturalisation of male domination, Gilman usurps the patriarchal binary paradigm from a fundamental source of its power legitimacy.

Conclusion

In the Utopia of *Herland*, the stereotypes of women’s frailty and inefficiency are replaced by feminine strength, creativity and agency in a way that entails an overt feminist counter-discourse to the male-centred constructions. Although it is a late Victorian novel, Gilman uses in a sense sharp post-modern insights to deconstruct the myths of male superiority along with its legitimating arsenal of tradition and religion. Satirical in tone, Herland is a utopia that extends its criticism to the social injustice incurred on women to background them within the domestic and unequal institution of marriage, and to deprive them of presence and contribution to the public sphere. A strong advocating voice of women’s autonomy, Herland squares with Gilman’s outspoken views that women can be economically productive and independent, and that capitalism exploits them through unpaid domestic labour as well as through arbitrary male-oriented myths.

However condemnatory to patriarchy of which Terry’s attempt to rape Alima is a violent instance that results in exiling him from Herland, Gilman closes her utopian narrative striking an optimistic note. On the one hand, Jeff remains for good in Herland and Ellador departs with Van in order to rethink and redefine humanity outside the restrictions of each gender’s perspective. On the other hand, through Celcis’s pregnancy from Jeff as a defending act of heterosexuality, Gilman makes an overt call for women and men to understand one another’s drives and perspective for the sake of enriching human experience and promoting coexistence. In the absence of men, the women in Herland think of the three visitors as women since the new category of maleness resists their structure of thinking. The deadlock caused by their continuous misunderstandings is evidence that they share little grounds for viable dialogue. Besides ignoring all about the peculiarities and the priorities of Herland as a culture and as a society, the men’s expectations are baffled by the women’s “parthenogenesis”. On their behalf, these women know nothing about the private heterosexual family nor about male sexuality. When Jeff declares that also “a husband is the man who belongs to a woman” (p.100), it becomes a kind of hope that there is a common ground to start dialogue between the two regimes of thoughts. What lacks in
both is an inclusive awareness about the meaning of humanity and a possibility to know and appreciate one another.

References


The Effect of Gender Differences on the Internal Structure of Creative Self-efficacy Construct

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Abstract

This study examines the internal structure of creative self-efficacy construct using unidimensional Rating Scale model. The main focus is on checking the unidimensionality assumption and the impact on its implementation of the main background characteristic - gender identity. It was found statistically significant differences between boys and girls in the assessment of their own creativity on the factors of creative thinking “originality” and “elaboration”. Thus, was confirmed the known fact about the best women’s ability to develop and improve existing ideas, while men better inherent ability to produce new ideas that differ from existing. This also was manifested in the self-assessment. The Differential Item Functioning analysis revealed items that are evaluated differently in groups of boys and girls. This difference was not relevant to the construct being measured. Removing from the analysis of items which demonstrated DIF by gender has resulted in increasing the percentage of variance explained by the model.

Keywords: creativity, creative self-efficacy, gender, gender differences.

Introduction

A new World Economic Forum report, The Future of Jobs, asked chief human resources and strategy officers from leading global organizations to identify the skill sets the workforce of 2020 will need. Compared side by side to the skills identified as needed in 2015, the shifts aren’t dramatic – except for one skill: creativity. Creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need. Creativity has proved to be a very important competitive advantage of the human mind. People can no longer monopolize logical thinking in such domains as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Robots may help us get to where we want to be faster, but they can’t be as creative as humans (yet). Individuals without creativity will be left behind in a world in which non-creative thought can be automated, but creative solutions to problems are at a premium.
The report also states that the rising role and importance of women in the economy is transforming the composition of the talent pool and extends the skills profiles of the jobs required. Women’s economic power, aspirations perceived as driver of change in the industry. And although now the talents of half the world’s potential workforce are thus often wasted or underutilized due to barriers on the path to women’s successful workforce integration, the Fourth Industrial Revolution now presents an unprecedented opportunity to place women’s equal participation in the workplace at the heart of preparations for the shifts to come. But in order to achieve success, women should have the necessary skills are not worse than men, including creativity.

Modern research of creativity goes back to a famous Guilford’s American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential address (1950). Creativity is generally defined as a stable, continuously distributed trait, separate from intelligence that is the source of novel, original, and appropriate solutions (Brown, 1989; Guilford, 1950). Creativity can be expressed through two state-like dimensions: creative thinking and creative performance. Creative thinking is an internal mental state like expression of creativity in which fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality enables an individual to produce novel, original, and appropriate thoughts (Torrance, 2008). Creative performance, in contrast, is seen as an external social state-like expression of creativity in which an individual’s internal drive, the domain appropriateness of his or her work, and the approval of that domain’s gatekeepers lead to recognition (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Although studies of creativity have been commonplace for decades, but research which would specifically address the internal structure of creativity constructs is still rare (Beghetto, 2013; Mathisen & Bronnick, 2009; Starko, 2013; Yang & Cheng, 2009).

Self-efficacy is a motivational state that is an individual's self-rated capacity to execute certain actions in order to achieve some objective. Self-efficacy “is concerned not with what one has but with belief in what one can do with whatever resources one can muster” (Bandura, 2007). According to the Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, a person with a high level of self-efficacy are more productive in the activities which they are doing that is a result of their belief in the ability to manage situation. A self-efficacy construct exists for every domain of functioning. Creative self-efficacy is a motivational state that is an individual’s self-efficacy for expressing creativity. Obviously, the person who sees himself as a creative personality will try to show and prove this quality in professional activities. To help people better express their creativity, there is a need for a tool to measure creative self-efficacy. Various researchers have attempted to operationalize this construct (Wilson, Guilford, & Christenson, 1953; Torrance, 1966, 1972,
Features of creativity and creative self-efficacy of men and women have long attracted the attention of researchers. However, the evaluation of gender differences in creativity is considered a controversial area of research and the results are sometimes very contradictory. Some studies do not show any differences between men and women (Baer & Kaufman, 2008; Charyton & Snelbecker, 2007), while others point to significant gender differences in the creative expression (Hoff, 2005; Matud, Rodríguez, & Grande, 2007). The study of gender differences with regard to creative expression generally shows gender as a moderating variable that influences creative expression differently depending on the context. Baer (1997) used poetry-writing and story-writing in an experimental study where levels of extrinsic reward and evaluation were manipulated. In the study of 128 eighth-grade students, a motivation-by-gender interaction effect was observed. While little difference was observed depending on whether intrinsic or extrinsic reward was used for boys, a difference of half a standard deviation was observed for girls. Additionally, Oral et al. (2007) reported gender differences in creative expression in the absence of motivational manipulation, though the authors discuss this in the context of other studies that did not find such an effect of gender differences. Schack (1989) failed to find a significant effect of gender differences on creative self-efficacy, and Beghetto (2007) found only a weak relationship. Gong et al. (2009) reported a zero-order correlation between gender differences and creative self-efficacy. Sometimes gender differences in creative self-efficacy manifested in different ways in different cultures. Cheung & Lau (2010) showed that schoolgirls in Hong Kong outperformed boys on many factors of creativity. Ai (1999) investigated the relationship between different aspects of creativity and academic achievements of Spanish students. Flexibility was the dominant factor associated with success for boys while for girls fluency and elaboration are more important factors.

The aim of this work is to study the impact of gender differences on the internal structure of the creative self-efficacy construct and its dimensions.
Analysis

For research was used questionnaire (Abbott, 2010) that measures two aspects of creative self-efficacy: creative thinking self-efficacy (CTSE) and creative performance self-efficacy (CPSE). CTSE was expressed through four latent factors (elaboration, flexibility, fluency, and originality). CPSE was expressed through three latent factors (domain, field, and personality). These seven latent factors are each identified by several manifest indicators, or questions: four questions for each factor.

The survey involved 248 junior students of three different specialties, among them 181 girls and 67 boys. On the scale from 0 to 4 students evaluated the level of expression of qualities referred to in the question: 0 means not at all confident, 4 means highly confident. The questions were formulated so that a higher score indicates a higher level of creative self-efficacy. This made it possible to measure all aspects of the construct “creative self-efficacy” on a common interval scale using Rating Scale Model (Andrich, 1978).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Creative Thinking Self-Efficacy (CTSE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fluency</td>
<td>1. Get a large number of different ideas or responses?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Come up with many possible solutions to a situation?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Arrive at a variety of conclusions given a difficult situation?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Think of many answers to a difficult problem or situation?</td>
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<td>flexibility</td>
<td>5. Come up with different kinds of responses, not just different responses?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Answer problems in different ways, each of which are unique and special?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Think of many types of ideas while considering a problem?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Answer problems in different forms or styles?</td>
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<tr>
<td>elaboration</td>
<td>9. Think of ways to defend a 'crazy' thought, by thinking back on what you already know?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Talk to your friends about wild ideas, and make them sound reasonable?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Tell stories based on dreams you had, even if you need to fill in answers?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Connect day-dreams or new ideas to things you have already learned?</td>
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<tr>
<td>originality</td>
<td>13. Be the first in a group to come up with an original suggestion?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Arrive at a novel solution before other people?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Beat other people in imagining a brand new idea first?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Think of ideas no one else has?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Creative Performance Self-Efficacy (CPSE)</th>
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<tr>
<td>domain</td>
<td>17. Make sense of something you want to learn to do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. Start to learn to do something, even if there are obstacles to doing so?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Teach yourself how to do something new?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Choose do something that is more important within your culture?</td>
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<tr>
<td>field</td>
<td>21. Create a novelty that people will choose, over other novelties available?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22. Find an audience that is well-connected to others in society?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Network with people to convince them that what you made is the best?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24. Convince others that you have made a valuable contribution?</td>
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<tr>
<td>personality</td>
<td>25. Be motivated to come up with new ideas?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>26. Have fun coming up with new ideas, after having learned from others?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27. Wake up feeling like you can come up with new ideas if you want to?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. Sustain wonder about something, even after working with it for years or decades?</td>
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The easiest item which indicates a high level of creative self-efficacy for all respondents was item 17 (-0.81 logits). The most difficult item for girls was item 21 (0.78 logits) of CPSE, which characterizes the environment (field). Item 24 (0.55 logits) from the same category was the most difficult for boys. Mutual placing on interval scale student’s levels of creative self-efficacy and item parameters indicates a deliberate overstatement by students their own creativity. Average levels of creative self-efficacy (0.6 logits for boys and 0.51 logits for girls) did not statistically differ (p>0.05).

It was analyzed how empirical data fit to the model. Almost all items have a satisfactory value of infit and outfit statistics, and among people whose data do not fit to models, boys and girls are equally (by 1%).

The Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis revealed items that are evaluated differently in groups of boys and girls and this difference may not be relevant to the construct being measured. Two items 10 and 11 that characterize aspect “elaboration” of CTSE are statistically significantly (p<0.05) different in favor of girls with a difference of more than 0.5 logits. Items 14, 15 (originality, CTSE) and 21 (field, CPSE) were in favor of boys. Moreover, Differential Group Functioning (DGF) analysis revealed that factors “elaboration” and “originality” of CTSE are evaluated statistically differently by boys and girls. Girls assessed statistically significantly higher their ability to develop, supplement the already existing ideas (elaboration) while boys - the ability to propose new ideas, different from the generally accepted (originality). The factors “flexibility” and “fluency” of CTSE and all the factors of CPSE were assessed by boys and girls at the same level (Fig.1).

Fig.1. The results of DGF analysis.
An important part of the analysis is the study of the construct dimension. The model Rating Scale assumes that construct “creative self-efficacy” has one dimension. To test this, we used Principle Components Analysis of matrix of standardized residuals in the program Winsteps. Analyzing the entire test as a whole, we got that 23.8% of the variance explained by the model, but it is still more than 20% and unidimensionality assumption may be taken (Reckase, 1979). Among the items with opposite loadings were more items of CTSE. Removing from the analysis of items 3 and 15 with loading that differ most from each other has led to increasing the percentage of variance explained by the model only to 24.2%. Low percentage of variance explained by the participants (5.3%) leads to the thought that the cause of poor unidimensionality is not only the existence of two groups items CTSE and CPSE, but some individual features people (for example, gender). Removing from the analysis of items 10, 11, 14 and 15, which characterizing aspects “elaboration” and “originality” of CTSE and which demonstrated DIF by gender, has resulted in increasing the percentage of variance explained by the model to 25.3%. It is obvious that gender differences are not decisive, their absence does not guarantee full compliance with the model, but their study helps to understand the structure of the construct. It loses features of multidimensionality after removal of several items of CTSE.

Conclusions

Conducted analysis proves the possibility of using unidimensional Rating Scale model to measure “creative self-efficacy” latent variable. Non-fulfillment of unidimensionality assumption is more typically for Creative Thinking than for Creative Performance Self-Efficacy. This is due to the differences between factors “elaboration” and “originality” of CTSE which are influenced by many extraneous factors such as gender. In this study was confirmed the known fact about the best women’s ability to develop and improve existing ideas, while men better inherent ability to produce new ideas that differ from existing. It should be expected that as a result of self-evaluation of these natural differences also show up. Therefore, it should avoid items which may contain bias on at least some of the respondents, when developing of measurement tools.
References


Psychological Research into Female Master-Students’ Identity with the Leading “Management” Orientation

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Abstract

Relevance of women’s identity research when they only start career is due to the awareness of their own values and potential for a balanced decision-making both in their family and career. The fulcrum of the research is the idea of unity in social and personal identity and its cognitive construal, underlying the concept of “prospective identity”. The aim is to explore female master-students’ structure of identity (actual and prospective) with leading management orientation.

The methods used in the research involve Career anchors test, Twenty Statements Test; narrative technique «I Am in 10 Years’ Time»; Mann-Whitney U-test. Total sample size comprises 102 women aged 20-27.

The research has shown that a third of the respondents consider management a desired field of self-realization. If we compare them with the girls, who are not motivated by a manager career, their identity is characterized by a wider field of social identities, closer identification with professional roles, while maintaining the importance of family. Primarily, they realize themselves through emotional feminine characteristics; but masculine self-characterization such as commitment, persistence, intelligence etc. have a high specific weight in their descriptions. However, it is stated that prospective identity of the great majority management-oriented women, does not include the concept of "I Am a Manager in the Future." This indicates deficit of women’s career motivation as a result of a conflict in the structure of their actual identity.

Keywords: social, personal and prospective identity, career orientation.
**Introduction**

Relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that for women who target at self-actualization in management, the "start" of their career plays a defining role for future career progressing. The decisions they make at the initial stage of their career concern not only the professional sphere, but also choosing a certain way of life, particularly in terms of finding balance in "family-career" relations. All this makes special demands on women’s identity formation. Unless enough clear-cut, career decisions may result in frustration in personal life and professional sphere in the future.

Analysis of current research shows that identity in the context of female career planning and growth is insufficiently studied. The aim is to explore female master-students’ structure of identity (actual and prospective) with leading management orientation.

**The present research**

The notion of a «career» in psychology is used to evaluate professional life quality, professional self-realization and personal growth in the organizational hierarchy. A person making career is viewed upon as the one targeted at the implementing his/her personal and professional potential.

One of the best explored directions of a professional career in foreign psychology is the research of an individual career and its anchors (career orientations), started by E.Schein (E.Schein, 2008). Career orientations reveal personal targeting towards definite norms and values in career which help him/her realize his/her personal perception of professional activity. They are inner sources of career aims and they also define tends as for personal self-development and self-realization in professional activity. It’s the end of university studying when career orientations are disclosed in all the peculiarities while setting career aims and planning a career.

The choice of career orientations is ideally the result of generalizing, stable, conscious and realistic self-perception and one’s own place in the world.

We understand a female career as a complicated psychological phenomenon influencing many aspects of personal development and connected with an identity transformation. The interest to this phenomenon has grown much recently as women’s attitude to the career depends
on a social-historical order, ethno-socio-cultural background of the society, in which women are the subjects of a career.

The analysis performed by F.A. Semenova in her thesis (Semenova, 2011) proves that a female career has been studied rather fully and in its various aspects. The author marks that such aspects have been studied rather in detail as satisfaction of women with work, models of female career development, the problem of gender discrimination, the impact of socialization on a female career development, barriers on the way to a successful career, carrier peculiarities of self-employed women.

The career of women managers was the object of studies from the point of view of its typology and female management style (Moll, 2012; Bendas, 2009). Very important for understanding the problems connected with planning a female career in management are the results of the research of female emotional tension and stress connected with career making and role conflicts (Greller, Parsons, & Mitchell, 1990), social-psychological peculiarities of women making their careers in traditionally «female» and «male» spheres (Sekaran, 1983).

Identity as a personal determinant of a successful career in management was studied by a Ukrainian researcher I.O. Bondarevska (Bondarevska, 2009). A number of new inner contradictions in the structure of a gender identity of women managers-to-be are revealed in her research. Meanwhile, analyzing a female career, M. Tkalych (Tkalych, 2016) points out the decisive impact of its beginning on the further professional life of a woman and her satisfaction with her life in general. Stable, conscious and realistic self-perception determines the clearness of career aims and their coordination with other aims in the life of girls (their families, children, development). Thus, our research is aimed at studying the identity maturing of the female master-students interested in management career in three aspects of identity: personal, social and prospective.

Theoretical basis of identity research is the unity of social and personal identity (Tajfel, Turner, 1986); the theory of cognitive identity construction (Breakwell, 2010); the concept of “prospective identity” (Cinnirella, 2010). The latest concept is especially significant to consider “self-mobility” in the woman life; let us reveal its essence in details. Russian researcher Olena Belinska described prospective identity summarizing previous research (A.P. Belinska, 2003):
Temporal aspect of identity which is understood as a set of specific characteristics related to the future; Integration of personal and social future identity of the subject and actualization of a "probable myself" in a social context; The result of reflexive processing of a large amount of information: the results of their own activities, the objective possibilities and models of self-actualization that currently exist in society and are demonstrated in the immediate environment;

The functions of prospective identity are determination and regulation of individuals’ behavior.

**Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of the study, the strategy of comparative research was chosen.

The study was organized in two stages:

- The first stage was devoted to evaluation of female master students’ career orientations and establishing the degree to which “management” orientation is revealed. The study involved two identical sub-samples: highly "management" oriented women were the first and the other ones for whom this career alternative is not significant were described in the second.
- The second (main) stage reveals the specificity of the women identity with leading management orientation by comparing the structure of actual and prospective identities of various sub-samples representatives.

The study is based on the following quantitatively and qualitatively empirical methods:

1. «Career Anchors» test of Edgar Schein adapted by V. Chiker, V. Vinokurov;
2. Twenty Statements Test of Manfred Kuhn &Thomas McPartland;
3. Narrative method “I am in 10 Years’ Time”.

To analyze self-characteristics and texts “I Am in 10 Years’ Time”, content analysis was used. The units of analysis were words denoting social identification (ethnic, professional, gender, family, interpersonal) and those meaning personal characteristics (physical, emotional, intellectual etc.). Their frequency distribution was taken into consideration.

Comparison of the two subsamples was carried out using statistical methods: Mann-Whitney U-test. The U-test allowed us to assess the reliability of the differences in the identity structure.
The research involved equal proportions of women future managers (master’s programs: managing schools and management in the agricultural sector) and female master students of non-managerial specialties (master's programs: philology, history, mathematics, geography, chemistry, biology, marketing). Index group was 30 women with polar attitude to careers in management.

Total sample size comprises 102 women aged 20-27. The research was conducted in Mykola Gogol Nizhyn State University and Kyiv University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine.

Results

The research into career orientations showed high significance of professional self-actualization for female master students in general. It was found that such value orientations as "stability", "good service", "autonomy" and "integration of life styles" dominate among female master students.

"Management" orientation in the study sample got the fifth rank out of nine (Table 1)

Table 1. Profile career orientations of female master students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career orientation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«stability»</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«good service»</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«autonomy»</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«integration of life styles»</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«management»</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«entrepreneurship»</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«proficiency»</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«challenges»</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«permanent residence»</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the survey data showed that "management" career orientation according to the degree of its revelation is leading in 36% of female master students. It is moderate in 50% of the surveyed, and not marked – in only 14% of respondents. It was found that targeting at management depends on the specialty. In this vein, top "management" oriented women significantly prevail among female master students who are trained for managers of education.
Thus, over a third of female master students will try to integrate the efforts of others, to take responsibility for the common cause, and will be looking for a manager position in organizations. The features of their identities become the subject of further research.

The results of comparative analysis of actual identity structure. In the content analysis of the respondents’ self-descriptions subdivided into two subsamples there were found such features of identity among top "management” oriented female students:

First, it is found that the frequency balance of social and personal identity in both subsamples is shifted to personal identity. Consequently, female master students are experiencing themselves unique and different from others. The predominance of individualized depictions in all master students is favorable psychological conditions for selecting an individual path of self-actualization. The balance between social and personal determination of women is reflected in the following histogram.

Fig.1. Balance between social and personal identities among female master students with different degree of “management” orientation revelation

Secondly, it is found that the girls who categorize themselves more often through social characteristics are associated with management. They tend to identify themselves through a broader social context (a citizen, a Ukrainian); they mostly define themselves through professional and gender roles rather than family, and less often through interpersonal relations (a friend, a lover). The results characterize management oriented women as less loyal to traditional roles, more sensitive to the demands and recognition of reference groups and their social identity as such which is formed at the intersection of somewhat conflicting professional and family expectations.
Thirdly, regardless of their relationship to management, the personal identity of women represents emotional characteristics that reflect patterns of gender socialization. However, the frequency of emotional self-determination is significantly less emotional; and mental qualities are more frequently identified in the self-descriptions of management-oriented women than in the other group. It is shown in the following histogram 2.

Fig. 2. The structure of personal identity of women with different degrees of “management” orientation

It is established that top management-oriented women often identify themselves through qualities that are traditionally considered masculine (commitment, perseverance, determination) and less frequently through qualities traditionally considered feminine (sensitivity, caring, tenderness). It is shown in the following histogram 3.

Fig. 3. The relationship between social and personal identity of female master students with different levels of “management” orientation
Thus, among women who are management-oriented there are more of those who identify themselves as emotional, sensitive, caring, yet intelligent, purposeful, persistent, so those that tend to androgynous models.

**The results of the prospective identity research.** Drawing on content analysis of the narratives "I am in 10 years," it is found that the majority of surveyed top management-oriented women lack projection of being a manager in their vision of the future. They project themselves as working women at prestigious but not managerial positions (an employee at a foreign company, a PR worker or an entrepreneur).

In others (45%), the image of their being "manager in the future" embodies an attempt to find a balance in the "managerial career and family" and "self-realization and management femininity" based on reflective processing of information available about themselves, reference groups and models of female self-actualization in management.

Possible balance between "family and career" and "self-realization and femininity" is associated in the minds of master students with lower positions in managing hierarchy (head of a department, a school or kindergarten principal) where the role expectations are less controversial. These positions are considered most suitable for self-realization. The balance between social and personal aspects in prospective identity is reflected mainly in categorizing themselves as "a successful woman-mother", "a humane leader."

As for the comparison group, the "Self" projection in the future is linked to family and interpersonal roles alongside with work that corresponds to the traditional female role (teaching, charity, family business), and balance between social and personal is embodied in self-description "a happy wife, mother" and "a beloved wife."

**Conclusions**

4. Women with a top "management" orientation are not well aware of their career values and ways of their implementation. In the most cases, prospective identity is devoid of the determining potential, since it embodies current unresolved contradictions in personal and social identity. Women link climbing the managerial status ladder to the risk of losing family and femininity and inability to be happy, which can be considered an internal barrier to projecting their future in management.
5. The differences revealed in personal identity in comparison groups are associated with significant differences in social identity of women and are consistent with the results of studies conducted earlier (Bondarevskaya I.O., 2009).

6. Drawing on the results of the research, the initial stage of female career needs psychological support and young women should be led to finding personal balance between "career and family" and "self-realization and management femininity" options. Specific tasks may include:

- Help in understanding career values in the overall system of personal values of a woman;
- Enhancing “Self” resources needed for responsible planning;
- Counteracting stereotypes in female career;
- The expansion of information resources needed for decision-making and awareness of different models of self-actualization of women in management.

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Modern Education of Muslim Girls in Tunisia before and During the Colonial Period (1856-1956): Between Opponents and Supporters

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Abstract

Despite having been institutionalized later, for objective and subjective reasons, compared to male education, girls’ education has been for decades an important index for progress of both people and nations. It has shown the extent to which the status of women has advanced. A look at the proportion of girls’ education on three levels in Tunisia shows how it has moved from about 2 percent before the Independence (the beginning of the school year 1955-1956) to 55% during the school year 2015-2016. In higher education (university) they account for about 60 % of total students (about 220.000 out of 370.000 students) during the academic year 2015/2016.

Despite the many reserves on girls' education before and during the colonial period, inside and outside the family environment, specially by religious men who called in the best cases to teach girls how to read and write, and how to manage some domestic duties, Tunisian Muslim girls had a modern education, defying all barriers and obstacles, and reaching important positions in the community. These girls, however, were not able to impose themselves and be emancipated from the yoke of the male power. They participated in public life and in the national movement until the independence of the country from the French colonialism. With the establishment of the national state, the education of girls became an irreversible reality even within the most conservative and remote areas where public schools and institutions of education are not available.

Key words: Traditional education, modern education, Muslim girls, colonial period, debate, women emancipation

Introduction

Education is a legitimate right for all people regardless of social class, ethnicity, gender or differences between regions and zones within the same country. A look at the number of
educated girls in Tunisia reveals that in the primary and secondary stages, girls represent 55% of all pupils and in higher education 60% of university students are girls: 220,000 students out of 370,000 during the academic year 2010/2011.

However, this great achievement, that is the high percentage of female students in the three stages of education, was not a coincidence but rather the fruit of historical developments, sacrifices and intellectual debate and controversy that the Tunisian society had gone through (in different degrees of importance) before the establishment of the French protectorate, and during the colonial period until the early years of independence.

I- Before colonial period

Girls’ education in Tunisia has never been linked to the period of the French protectorate in Tunisia. In fact, it had started decades before, although it meant exclusively Christian girls and to a lesser degree Tunisian Jewish girls.

1) The Widespread of Girls’ Education in the Christian Missionary Schools and the European private Schools

Since the early 19th century, the European Christians had tried to spread education and establish their own civil and religious schools for both boys and girls in all Arab countries where there were European minorities. Therefore, Tunisia was not an exception. In 1840 Father Bourgade started the first school in Tunis, the capital city. Later, more schools were opened in Sousse (1843), Sfax (1852), La Goulette (1855) and Jerba (1879).

Before the 1864 uprising in Tunisia, 287 students of different nationalities were attending those schools: 27 French, 81 Italians, 118 Maltese, 11 Greeks, 02 Austrians and 02 Tunisian Muslims. However, all those pupils were boys. So, what about girls’ education in Tunisia? In 1846, Father Bourgade founded a school for girls in Tunis, the capital, and he chose Mrs Mellah, a Tunisian Jewish teacher, assisted by one of Saint Joseph Sisters, for the management of this School. Every school year 40 to 50 new pupils joined the school. Moreover, Father Bourgade established other schools for girls in La Goulette, Sousse, Bizerte and Sfax.

Generally speaking, before the establishment of the French Protectorate in Tunisia 1881, the total number of religious and private schools in Tunisia was 13 attended by 3163 pupils (1620 boys and 1543 girls). However, among these pupils there were only 10 Muslims (7 boys and 3 girls). This very small number of Muslim pupils resulted from the religious aspect of those
schools and the Tunisians’ fear of Christianism, which was threatening the Tunisian society because of what had already been done in Algeria and other Eastern Arab countries by the Christian Church. That is why, probably, a Tunisian pioneered in opening the first school for Muslim girls 1843 in La Marsa.

At that time, and taking into consideration the country’s means as well as the prevailing ideas about the issue of girls' education, the opening of that school was considered an important achievement. Nevertheless, very little is known about that school and we don’t know what happened to it in the end. But what really matters is that women’s education became a major issue for the Reformists and the Modernists in the Eastern and Western countries of the Arab World.

2) The Reformists’s call for Girls’ Education

a) Ibn Abi Dhiaf’s letter about women’s education

On 13 February 1856, Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Abi Dhiaf, author of “Ithaf Ahl Ezzamen…”, ended his twenty three-point letter, which seemed to be addressed to the General Consul of France in Tunisia, Leon Roches, who had previously sent him questions as part of a series of debates that preceded the proclamation of Haâd El Amen (Fundamental Pact) and the 1861 Constitution.

As a sample, we have chosen for you Question Nub 2:

« Unlike European women’s all Muslim women are uncultivated and illiterate, and it’s well known that being unlearned can lead them to perversity whereas learning protects them from that fate. Besides, women’s education makes them more sociable and their company more enjoyable… ».

However, the Sheikh, taking into consideration the morals of his conservative society, he avoided discussing Islamic law matters, neither did he say what he thought of women’s right to move about freely (and their staying at home all their life ). He also avoided debating the issues of women not being allowed to mix up with men, having to wear the Islamic veil (Hijab) and their right for education. Ibn Abi Dhiaf thought there was no benefit in educating women, apart from some religious and moral teachings or some knowledge relating to cooking, sewing, weaving...etc.

He also believed that educating a woman would negatively affect her role as a mother and wife. Moreover, he thought that the woman’s freedom to move about and mixing up with
men would have disastrous consequences on the moral level: immorality, imitating men, the loss of the notion of man ship, the breaking up of marriages …etc. To sum up, we can say that for Ibn Abi Dhiaf, a woman could only be a housewife.

Many reforms were brought to education in Tunisia in the pre-colonial period thanks to the reformists and the modernists who had pleaded for the need to establish a system of education compatible with the contemporary needs and who also pressed to restructure Zaitouna system of education. These reforms took place during the reign of Ahmed Bey since 1842 and then with Mohamed Sadok Bey in 1870 and 1877 during which the reformist minister Kheireddine Pacha founded the Sadiki School (1875). But, all these reforms did not include any measures relating to girls’ education, knowing that neither education in the elementary Quranic Schools nor in the Great Mosque was accessible to girls. However, we cannot say that the Tunisian Reformists did not plead for girls’ education.

b) Kheireddine’s call for girls’ education

In his book “Akwam Elmaselik…” Kheireddine, officially called for girls’ education following his contemporaries such as Mohamoud Kabadou (1812-1871) Mohamed Bayram V (1840-1889) Salem Bouhajib (1827-1924) Mohamed Snoussi (1851-1900)… But, his short time in office (1873-1877) and the circumstances prevailing at that time prevented Kheireddine from carrying out his reforms. So, would the situation change with the establishment of the French Protectorate in Tunisia in 1881?

II- During the Colonial Period: Muslim Girls’ Education between the French Administration’s Enthusiasm and Tunisian’s Reservation

1) The efforts of the Orientalist, Louis Machuel: Between the obsession to spread education and political use

On 5 May 1883, less than two years after the establishment of the Protectorate, the French Authorities created The Public Education Directorate to manage the educational affairs in the country and the French Orientalist Louis Machuel, coming from Algeria where he had taught Arabic at Ouran School, was chosen to run this new institution. By the time Machuel took office, there were 67 primary schools, out of which 23 were offering education basically in French: 20 Schools were for the Christians (13 for boys and 7 for girls) attended by 2,442 pupils (1,430 boys and 1,012 girls) and the 3 other schools belonged to the Jewish League.
In addition to these schools, there was the traditional religious education available at the Zaitouna Mosque and its branches and there was also the Sadiki School (created in 1875). The main aim of the newly created administration was to provide the colonialists’ children as well as those of the French and European minorities with modern, laic and free education.

The question of educating the “natives” had been seriously raised since the creation of this official administration. Louis Machuel was eager to educate the Tunisians as he believed it was a good means to spread the French language and culture among these people, which would serve France’s goals and projects in Tunisia. Consequently, the budget reserved for this administration was increased tremendously; from 120,000 fcs in 1885 to 530,000 fcs in 1890. As a result, the number of new schools rose to 67 (60 public schools: 43 laic and 17 religious) and 07 private schools (04 laic and 03 religious).

Concerning the number of Muslim pupils attending these schools, it went from 474 pupils in 1885 (6 female pupils) to 1,765 pupils (12 girls) and then it rose to 2,579 (39 girls). Despite the increase in the number of Muslim girls attending school in that period, their number was still very low compared to the number of male pupils and taking into account the total number of girls at school age. So, what are the causes behind this situation?

2) Muslim Girls’ Education: Between approval and rejection

Unlike their attitude towards boys' education, Zaitouna Scholars and, to a certain degree, some Tunisian fathers had many reserves on educating girls in the newly founded French modern schools. The main causes of their reticence were:

- The news about European state schools for girls, where subjects like music, physical education…etc were taught. For them such subjects were against Islamic Law and unsuitable for the Tunisian society of that time, which was very conservative.

- What they heard about women in other Arab countries such as Syria and Lebanon, where women’s education had started decades before Tunisia due to the influence of the Christian Missions. They believed that this experience resulted in women going out unveiled (getting rid of the Hijab).

- The teachers in these new schools were from different European countries, mainly France, and for them, this meant that they had customs and traditions completely different from the ones common in the conservative society of Tunisia.
Most Zaitouna scholars and many conservative fathers in Tunisia claimed that following the model of Western European women in asking for girls’ education on a large scale would be the starting point and a major incentive for Tunisian women to demand rights that had been so far, denied to them. They also believed that, once educated, women in Tunisia would try to imitate European women in their scientific achievements, which would consequently encourage them to ask for equality to men in all fields.

- Moreover, the Tunisians’ reserve on girls’ education was also caused by their fear that women would rebel against Islamic laws and demand equality with men in both rights and duties. So, the reserve was not on education itself but on the type and way of teaching, also on the people who were in charge of education and above all on the disastrous effects that girls’ education might have on the Tunisian society.

However, the situation of women in Tunisia was not different from that lived by women in most Muslim Arab countries.

**So, what were the main characteristics of these societies?**

The influence and authority of the father’s presence in the family gives him a tyrannical power and makes him the one and only decision-maker at home. As a consequence, the wife or daughter did not have the right to oppose his decisions, neither were they allowed to decide on important family matters like education, marriage, divorce…etc. As a result, this situation prevented girls from going to school or continuing their education if ever they managed to end the primary stage successfully.

Man considered girls leaving home to go to school or to work as “immoral behaviour”, which harms his reputation and that of his family. To confirm this Mrs. Zubeida Amira reports the following:

« (…) I was told by Fatma Bint Mohamed Ben Mami, wife of Abdel Kefi that her father had got her out of El Pacha Street School in 1922, just one month before taking the Primary Stage Certificate Exam, although she was one of the best pupils and her success was certain. When I asked about the cause I was told that because the list of the pupils who passed the exam would appear in the local newspapers. Fatma’s father contacted the headmistress of the school and asked her not to publish his daughter’s name in case she succeeded. When
she told him that the matter was within the authorities of the Ministry of Education, he decided to take his daughter out of the school (...)».

At the beginning of the 20th Century, most Tunisians were against teaching girls according to European curricula because they thought that teaching the French language, especially to girls, was part of a colonial project targeting the Arab language and Tunisian nationalism, which was for Sadok Zmerli (one of the founders of Tunisian Youth Movement) «one of women’s secrets».

The fathers’ fear that by coming into contact with European girls of their age, their daughters might go astray and behave against Islamic morality and therefore lose their chance of getting married at an early age. Furthermore, it was much less acceptable that their daughter would travel to France and live there on her own for a long period of time in order to study at university.

Therefore, and because of all the causes mentioned above, many Tunisian families, especially the rich ones, resorted to teaching their daughters at home. They used to employ old and trustworthy teachers for the elementary stage of education. They would help the girls learn the Quran, spelling and writing principles and rules and also the principles of Islamic Law. At an advanced stage, the fathers would get foreign female teachers or they would send their daughters to a religious school run by Christian Sisters. Some used to get a foreign male teacher accompanied by a Tunisian religious teacher. On the other hand, the families that could not afford the expenses of such education would just send their daughters to what was called: “Dar Arifa” (دار عرِيفة) or “Dar Maâlma” (دار مْعَلّمة).

3) “Dar Arifa” or “Dar Maâlma”:

Between the age of 5 and 12, Tunisian girls used to start training to play their role of a housewife; and even the games they used to play and the toys they used to play with aimed at preparing them to do the housework. For instance, they used to play with cooking utensils toys made especially for that purpose or they would make dolls which helped them learn sewing, studding, weaving or raising children. So, the girl’s perspectives were confined to her home. As a girl grew up, marriage would become the major aim of her life and she would start getting ready for it by spending hours every day on preparing her dowry. So, a girl had to work hard in order to be ready and well-trained to play her role of a wife and mother.
For that purpose, special homes were opened to teach girls trades and crafts. The teaching used to take place in houses or shops run by craftswomen and instructors. There were workshops for sewing, designing, studding (with silk, gold or silver threads…) housework and other crafts. These houses were Known as “Dar Arifa” (the Craftswoman’s) or “Dar Maalmaâ ”(the Instructor’s). Sometimes, the girls were also taught Arabic, French or technical drawing to enable them to take theoretical lessons and to read or make technical designs and samples related to their formation. In some Aristocratic families, girls could also be taught to play the piano or the violin by blind musicians or teachers or sometimes foreign teachers brought specially for that purpose.

4) Louise Rene Millet’s initiative and the fall of the wall of fear in 1900

After the long debate on the official level about educating the natives’ children and following the decision to found Franco-Arab schools side by side with the French schools, which were mainly for the French minority’s children, the issue of educating Muslim girls was raised anew. But, once again because of the Tunisians’ reserve on sending their daughters to the French or the d Franco-Arab schools, the official project of girls’ education was hindered until the early 20th Century.

On 1 May 1900, Louise Rene Millet, wife of the French General Governor in Tunisia, and on her own initiative, started the first school for Muslim girls, which was established in a small house in the Medina (Ben Nejma Street) and run by Mrs. Charlotte Eigenschenck, the widow of a French General Residence. The reason behind establishing this school was more political than cultural or pedagogical. In fact, the aim was to familiarize the urban upper class girls with the Western Culture and civilization and make them adopt the western way of life.

By doing so, these girls would end up siding with France, which would help the colonial power to gain control of the Tunisian society. To win the confidence of reserved parents and convince them to send their daughters to school and to explain to them that they did not need to worry about their daughters getting rid of the Islamic veil (Hijab) or becoming totally emancipated, Louise Rene Millet wrote when introducing her school in 1912:

« (...) This school does not aim at emancipating women, or changing in any way the customs of the local people. We don’t struggle against keeping women at home, nor against the hijab (...)». 

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The school started with only 05 pupils, which forced the colonial authorities to press the families of the Tunisian officials working for them to send their daughters to the new school. The girls chosen to attend this school belonged mainly to local. Upper class families who were interested in providing their daughters with good education while at the same time respect the Islamic customs and traditions. The girls who had the chance to attend this school used to come wearing the veil (hijab) and accompanied by their parents.

Furthermore, the headmistress of the school stroke intimate relationships with Tunisian families and took advantage of that to convince them of the need to let their daughters go to school. She also used to visit them regularly and spoke to them in Arabic, which helped her to win their confidence. In fact, she succeeded in doing that since the number of female Muslim pupils rose from 05, when the school opened in 1900, to 18 in 1901, 25 in 1902, 40 in 1903 until it reached 100 pupils in 1905, the year when the Awkaf Association, managed by Bechir Sfar, took over the financing of the school.

For the early generations of female pupils, Louise Rene Millet’s school represented for them a first contact with the outside world and their first chance to discover life through an educational institution as Muslim girls had been for centuries confined to their homes since they were not allowed to be educated.

5) The Widening of the Circle of Girls’ Education after 1900

a) Primary Education

Following the success of Louise Rene Millet’s school, the number of schools for girls kept increasing every year. In 1908 more public schools for girls were opened, not only in Tunis, the capital but also in the inland towns of the country, like Sousse, Nabeul, Kairouan, Slimane, Mahdia, Monastir, Jerba and Beja. Thus, it was as if a kind of positive “cultural marriage” between the “foreign” (French) and the “local” (Tunisian) had taken place and that was what the French Authorities had aimed at when they established the protectorate in Tunisia.

However, despite the official efforts in the field of education, many Tunisian families remained disinclined to send their daughters to those new schools because Arabic and the Quran were not taught there. As a result, in 1908, some rich people and some philanthropists started Quranic Schools for boys. The first one was opened in Tunis and then more schools were opened in all parts of the country.
In 1944, when these schools came under the control of the Directorate of Public Education, Quranic schools for girls were founded and soon became very popular among the conservative Tunisian families, who were encouraged to allow their daughters to go to school by the fact that Arabic and religious subjects were taught there in a better way than in state schools. Consequently, the number of female pupils rose from 249 pupils in 1946 (out of a total number of 984) to 2,402 (compared to 1,327 pupils in the French private schools, attended by the French children and those of the well-off and open-minded Tunisian families). In 1954, there were 4,109 female pupils out of 6,784.

In the public schools for girls, where education culminated in obtaining the Primary Education Certificate, the first group of girls graduated in 1910. In that school year, 5 out of 7 girls passed the exam while 162 boys out of 260 did so. The number reached 92 girls out of 108 and 224 boys out of 3,277 passed the P.E.C. exam in 1939. Since the end of World War II the number of female candidates for the P.E.C. exam increased considerably. As a result, during the decade 1944-1954 the number of girls in public primary schools rose from 7,130 to 30,697.

b) Technical Education

In 1914 the Administration of Public Education opened the Paul Cambon School for girls. It specialised in making clothes; and after World War II it changed to Paul Cambon Technical College, a copy of Emile Loubet Vocational School for boys founded in 1898. Nevertheless, Tunisian Muslim girls were not as interested in vocational education as they were in primary or secondary education. Therefore, until the end of World War II, only 6 girls were studying at the vocational school. The number increased to 12 in 1950, 43 in 1952 to reach 76 in 1954 out of a total number of 1,506 pupils having this type of education.

In 1952, there were 06 Muslim girls in the College of Sousse and 03 in the College of Sfax. Concerning Private Technical Education, and despite the big number of professional training centers in Tunis and its suburbs (Ariana, Carthage, Mannouba...) there were only 02 Muslim girls in 1951 out of 202 and 60 out of 244 in 1954. This disinclination for vocational education among Muslim girls could be explained by the existence of those traditional local schools teaching crafts and trades known as “Dar Arifa” and “Dar Maâtma”, the fact that vocational schools were run by French teachers and headmasters, being located only in the capital and big towns, unavailability of boarding for girls in some schools and also because parents were not keen on sending their daughters to boarding schools.
c) Secondary Education

Secondary Education in Tunisia started on 14 December 1885. But the first secondary school, Jules Ferry S. S. was established on 25 April 1903. It was meant to provide the French families living in Tunisia with secondary education similar to the one offered in France. In 1904, only 2 Muslim girls were attending that school compared to 123 Muslim boys in all secondary schools. In 1914, the school became Lycee Jules Ferry (J. F.High School). The preparatory school for girls was Lycee Armand Fallieres, which was opened on 1 January 1915. However, the number of Muslim female pupils remained small as there were only 10 Muslim girls at High School out of 711 in 1925 and 25 out of 921 in 1939. But the number increased considerably after the Second World War as it reached 1060 in 1954. Consequently, only 50 Muslim girls sat the Baccalaureate Exam in 1954.

Public Secondary Education was located mainly in Tunis, the capital (77%). There were Russia Street High School, Montfleury College, Rades College, Louise Rene Millet College, Carthage High School, Paul Cambon College for girls and (technical education) and Teacher Training School, which was opened on 1 January 1911 but had its first female Muslim pupil only in 1926. In 1954 their number increased to 108. But in the inland parts of the country, secondary education was available only in Sousse, Sfax and Bizerte.

We should also mention that in 1950 Zaitouna Mosque started its secondary education branch for girls in Tunis. Education there used to last 3 years reserved for religious and law studies and some exact science. Those who graduated were recruited as secondary education teachers of Arabic for girls at Zaitouna. A similar branch was established in Sfax. Therefore, in 1952 one hundred female pupils were having secondary education compared to 2535 pupils and in 1956 the number rose to 408 girls and 10,933 boys. One of the first keen supporters of girls’ education since 1947 was Sheikh Mohamed Salah Ennaifar, who was chosen to be in charge of this type of education.

d) Higher Education

Compared to Morocco and Algeria, Tunisia was late in establishing institutions for higher education. At the beginning of the 20th Century there were only post-secondary institutions, that students could join without the Baccalaureate Certificate, such as the High School for Arabic Language and Literature (1911) the Tunisian Law Institute Centre (1922) Tunis School for Fine Arts, the High School of Commerce and the Colonial School of Agriculture (1898) etc. On 1st
October 1945, the Higher Studies Institute of Tunis was founded, but it remained annexed to Paris University until 1961. When it started, this institution included 4 departments: Arabic Language and Literature, History, Geography and Mathematics.

During the academic year 1944-1945, there were only 4 Muslim female students studying at the H.S.I.T, but the number increased to 37 during the year 1954-1955. In the School of Fine Arts, there were 3 female Muslim students in 1951, 09 in 1952, 06 in 1954 and only 03 in 1955. Concerning Tunisian Muslim girls studying at the French universities, there was only one student (in 1928) and her name was Tawhida Beb Cheikh, the first Tunisian woman to graduate as a doctor from Paris University in 1936. She was also the first Tunisian Muslim doctor to practice in the capital as a pediatrician and gynecologist. In the beginning of 1950s their number passed from 15 to 50 students in 1956-1957.

But, despite the increase in the number of Tunisian female students studying at the French universities in the 1950s, their presence remained limited compared to their peers in Tunisia or the French and Jewish female students from Tunisia. This was the result of causes previously mentioned and which related to the situation of women in traditional societies dominated by the father, who was, generally speaking, opposed to girls' education. This issue had been written about and debated by the Tunisian male students in the French universities whether in their publications or in their forums and conferences. Moreover, the attitude adopted by the leaders and members of the Association of North African Muslim Students in France, was in favor of empowering women to have comprehensive education equal to that enjoyed by men.

So, for them the issue of women's education was settled since the early 1930s as they demanded sending women to France to complete their higher studies because they thought that their countries were in urgent need of women in fields like medicine or education.

**Conclusion**

To conclude this study, we can say that the issue of girls 'education in Tunisia had been debated since the mid-1900s and the controversy went on until the early 1950s. However, if for some parties the question was settled since the early 1930s, other parties in the Tunisian society remained reserved because of their fear of the consequences of girls' education or due to their narrow-mindedness.

As a result, parents allowing their daughters to have education slow and gradual and started by establishing educational systems and institutions parallel to the French (colonial) ones
which aimed at changing the identity and authenticity of the Tunisians, of which women were an important constituent and an essential agent to preserve them. However, after the independence there was no reason for those fears anymore and that's why the Independence Government promoted girls' education in the same degree as boys' according to the Educational Reform of 1958.

But, nowadays, and after 60 years of independence, because of the rise in the level of Conservatism and religious Radicalism following the 2011 Revolution, voices are heard calling for separating boys and girls in the educational institutions in the three stages. They also campaigned for establishing a parallel type of education in private institutions and they asked for restoring the Zaitouna system of education, although all these issues were settled decades ago by the Tunisians, especially the elite. So, we think that there is no place for that kind of controversy in our country anymore.

References


