Gender Studies Curriculum at Moroccan Universities: A Compendium of Resources


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GeSt Gender Studies

Technical Editors: Natalija Mažeikienė, Olga Avramenko.

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- Ezzahra A. F. The Arab Uprising: Voicing the Marginalized and Promoting Women’s Status, The Case Study of Moroccan Single Mothers Mohamed V University, Morocco
- Handour M. The Image of Women in Late Victorian Times: the Case of “The Mandrake Venus”, “A White Night” and “The City of Blood”.Sultan Mulay Slimane University, Morocco
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- Reddad S. Shifts and Movement Moments in Morocco. Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdelah University, Morocco
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- Slaoui S., Belghiti K. Participation of Moroccan Women in Politics: Gains and Challenges. Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco

2.3. Gender, Identities and Education


- Ilham Bettach, Hassan Zaid, Gender Identity in Amazigh Textbooks: Teaching Inequality. Mohammed V University, Morocco, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Morocco
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- Farida Mokhtarri GENDER IDENTITY CRISIS IN TAHAR BEN JELLOUN’S THE SACRED NIGHT Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Morocco
- Kebir Sandy WOMEN AND THE RAGE FOR ORDER IN THEPOST-ARAB SPRING ERA Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco

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- Souad Slaoui and Karima Belghiti. (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco). The Role of Gender Studies in Instilling Democracy and Gender Equality: The Case of Cultural Studies Master Students at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University
- Hayat Naciri. (University Sultane Moulay Slimane, Beni Mellal, Morocco). Challenges Faced by Sultan Moulay Slimane University Students: A Gender Perspective
- Mohamed Fadel. (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco). Roles of academia in gender equality: the case of Morocco
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- Nidal Chebbak. (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco). European women in Al-Hajjouji’s ar-Rihla al-Ouroupia 1919
• Nourdine El Khiyati. (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco). Against the Current: A Western Female Writer Celebrating Moroccan Women’s Agency
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• Zakaria Laghmam. (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco). The Sexualized Body of Muslim Women in Hirsi Ali’s Submission
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• Farida Mokhtari. (University Sultane Moulay Slimane, Beni Mellal, Morocco). The Status of Moroccan Women in the new Socio-political Society
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• Lamiae Azzouzi and Jihane Benmassoud. (Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco). Gender and Development: the Case of Moroccan Women in Leadership Positions
1. CONCEPTS OF MA PROGRAMS IN MOROCCO
1.1. SULTANE MOULAY SLIMANE

Concept of MA program
MA in GENDER STUDIES
SULTANE MOULAY SLIMANE, BENI MELLAL

February 2017

DEVELOPERS OF THE CONCEPT:
Dr. Cherki Karkaba, Dr. Hayat Naciri, Dr. Farida Mokhtari, Dr. Saida Hdii

<table>
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<th>The volume of MA program</th>
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<td>Educational level</td>
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<td>Speciality</td>
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<td>Educational and professional program</td>
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<td>Duration</td>
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Rationale

This master programme is designed to offer students holding a Licence diploma in English Studies the possibility to continue their academic career in English at a postgraduate level. It intends to open its scope to interdisciplinarity by accepting Licence students coming from the different “parcours”: Literary Studies, Linguistics and Cultural Studies. It also aims at preparing students for doctoral research.

By focusing on Gender Studies, this Master aims to fill a gap in the general academic offer of the Faculty of Arts and the Humanities in Beni Mellal. This is the first programme (filière) to be devoted entirely to the issue of gender in the history of Sultan Moulay Slimane University. It is in this way that this master contributes also to the diversity of the overall academic offer in the university.

This master programme aims at attaining goals such as the following:

- contribute to the implementation of the LMD system in the Moroccan university, and, more specifically, in the area of arts and the humanities,
- diversify the academic curriculum offered by the department of English studies which should open out on new fields of knowledge, learning and research.

- Offer the opportunity to students to get acquainted with different approaches and theories pertaining to the field of the humanities,

- consolidate the interdisciplinary approach in research in the faculty of arts and humanities as the concern with gender interests a wide range of areas including philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature, linguistics, discourse analysis, governance media and communication, etc ...

- to enhance the students’ awareness and train them to reflect on Gender, an issue which is one of the national and international priority concerns,

- Through the methodological tools and approaches adopted, this master in Gender Studies aims to contribute to developing the students’ critical spirit and objectivity of analysis in research,

- develop Moroccan perspectives in the field of gender studies by focusing research on areas of immediate interest and relevance to the Moroccan context, while implementing a comparative method embracing Anglo Saxon and other world contexts.

**General Outcomes**

After the completion of this MA program, students will be able to:

- Explore different approaches and theories pertaining to the field of the humanities.
- Reflect on Gender, an issue which is one of the national and international priority concerns.
- Acquire critical spirit and objectivity of analysis in research through the methodological tools and approaches adopted.
- Develop Moroccan perspectives in the field of gender studies by focusing research on areas of immediate interest and relevance to the Moroccan context, while implementing a comparative method embracing Anglo Saxon and other world contexts.
- Work for government and non-government organizations that have expressed the urgent need for Moroccan experts in gender studies.

In line with this, students will be able to:

- Develop communication skills.
- Improve academic reading and writing skills
- undertake master and doctoral research.
- Acquire professional development skills

1- Academic Reading and Writing

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
- Read articles and masterpieces in gender studies academically, reflect on what they read and be active and critical readers.
- Complete writing tasks on different topics related to gender respecting the requirements of academic writing.
- Acknowledge sources to avoid plagiarism while respecting the APA style and other norms of writing.

2- Gender and Communication

At the end of this course, students will be able to:
- Discuss prominent theories used in the study of gender and communication.
- Identify the major theorists in gender and communication research.
- Identify the various methods used to study gender communication.
- Describe masculine and feminine speaking styles.
- Recognize the impact of gender on nonverbal communication.

3- Introduction to Feminist Theory

At the end of this course, students will be able to:
- Identify the key concepts in gender studies.
- Contextualize the different feminist theories they will be introduced to within larger historical, social and cultural contexts.
- Use feminist theories in demonstrating arguments.
- Develop reflexive skills.
- Deal with feminist criticism and form critical perspectives.

Career of graduates:

Given the importance of the gender issue in modern societies, the holders of the master in gender studies will be useful in drawing attention to issues of gender equality in various areas of society. Among the sectors that will be interested in recruiting this master’s holders:
- Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development,
- Ministry of Culture,
- Ministry of Education.
- The Civil Society.
Table I: Structure of the MA Programme

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<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSES

Introduction to Research

This course aims at introducing students and prospective researchers to the necessary basic research steps that would enable them to conduct research in their fields of interest. Thus, the course will help students find researchable topics, write sensible review of the literature, formulate research questions and hypotheses, choose an appropriate methodology, analyze data and discuss the findings. It will also introduce students to different types of research.

The course will help students learn how to carry out a research in gender studies. Thus, it will introduce them to some of the basic concepts of empirical research. Moreover, it equally intends to incite them to focus the research process so that they can draw best conclusions and achieve substantial results. The course sets also for purpose the qualification of students to identify appropriate research topics, design research projects (MA paper and Doctorate thesis), and finally conduct a scientific and methodological research. The course will cover the following points: Research Methodolog- An Introduction: Concepts and Definition of Research Choosing a Research Topic

-Purpose/Audience
- Discovering and Using Sources Methods of Data Collection (Reading/Interview/Questionnaire, etc.) - Formulating a problematic - Data Processing and Analysis - Discussion of the Findings Types of Research. The writing Process: - Organizing Information - Outlining- Writing: The paragraph/the chapter/the part/ and the Paper - Writing and Evaluating Arguments - Qualities: Organization/Development/Coherence - Introduction and Conclusion - Process of Revision and Editing Bibliography: - References - Parenthetical Notes - Footnotes and Endnotes – Indexes

Foundations in Gender Studies

The module aims at consolidating students’ knowledge and understanding of gender studies and at qualifying them to design, implement and evaluate professional and societal endeavors, programs etc. that should be based on multi-focal attention to and critique of gendered inequalities and hierarchies in relation to other axes of social and cultural inequality and injustice.
This is an introductory course which is designed to familiarize students with some of the basic concepts and arguments in the broad interdisciplinary field of “gender studies.” The first part of the course will address the notions of sex and gender in an effort to introduce students to the variety of ways in which, throughout the past decades, thinking about these issues has changed.

In the second part of the course we’ll explore several different types of argumentations on the meaning of gender, the woman question and women’s emancipation. We’ll follow a historical path and review liberal/neo-liberal, socialist/Marxist, radical, post-colonial/post-socialist views, and third-wave feminism. We’ll identify the key trends in each set of arguments and try to follow how they got transformed as they traveled to different locations and through time. In the third part of the course we address three popular concepts that students will encounter in the rest of their studies and while writing their MA theses: “patriarchy,” “equal opportunities” and “intersectionality.” By the end of the course students will be able to use these terms in a thoughtful and nuanced way informed by their scholarly critique and history.

Didactic method. The course will be delivered in the form of theoretical seminars and in the form of presentations by students. It will also consist of debates and discussions on the assigned subjects, authors and intellectuals.

Theories of Gender

The scope of this course is broad enough to touch on a wide range of perspectives pertaining to the issue of gender which tends to be somewhat overtheorised to the extent that it becomes difficult to reduce gender to only a few aspects of its broad theoretical scope. The gender concern is important in philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, politics, cultural studies, discourse analysis, linguistics and literature etc ...

Since the gender issue touches on many fields of knowledge and sectors in our modern societies, this course aims to approach the theories of gender through key concepts such as: sex as an idea, social construction, gender as a political idea, cultural mediation as discourse, performativity, the concept of the body etc. The main objective of this course is to introduce students to the key concepts in gender theories and make them aware of the complexity of the issue of gender in theory.

The course is designed to introduce the students to major theories, concepts, and debates of gender studies. The focus will be laid on theory through a selection of texts extracted from different fields of the humanities.
where key concepts in gender theory are used and exploited. The method of approach chosen in this course is both interdisciplinary and comparative. It focuses on each key concept and approaches it from the most important perspective.

**Feminist Theory and Criticism (in French)**

This course will have for main objective to allow the students to acquire knowledge and literary tools of analysis relative to the women’s movements which emerged in interaction in France, in England and in North America in the second half of XXth century.

The attention will be focused on authors whose thought influenced the literary writing of the women and engendered a radical change of their relationship in the feminine at the same time as in the other sex. The stages which were crossed by relationships between the man and the woman: of the original complementarity in the cultural exclusion, until the identity of the sexes which gave the unisex, the evolution was always connected to contextual transformations.

So, the students will be brought to discover the theories of gender not isolated but within the contemporary currents of thoughts as well as the historical and socio-economic context in which they were born. A plural and multidisciplinary study will be proposed in the program so that a global vision is possible.

This theoretical course is multidisciplinary. It adopts didactics based mainly on an approach which favors the in-depth study of the founding texts of the feminist thoughts in various disciplinary fields and over several centuries.

The course will be organized into: lectures and seminars, workshops and in-class discussions based on a great deal of home-assigned reading and writing tasks.

**Feminist Literary Studies**

This course aims to attain the following objectives:

- To enable the students to be familiar with the main ideas, concepts, and concerns of feminist literary theory.
- To offer the students the academic tools to study feminist theories and acquire the skills to discuss these theories, raise questions about them,
and contextualize them within larger historical, social and cultural contexts

- To teach the students how to analyze these theories in conversation as well as in connection to a variety of fictional texts.
- To teach the students the relevant skills allowing them to acquire the ability to synthesize the ideas from the course and present their own analytical arguments in writing.
- This course aims to attain the following objectives:
  - To enable the students to be familiar with the main ideas, concepts, and concerns of feminist literary theory
  - To offer the students the academic tools to study feminist theories and acquire the skills to discuss these theories, raise questions about them, and contextualize them within larger historical, social and cultural contexts.
  - To teach the students how to analyze these theories in conversation as well as in connection to a variety of fictional texts.
  - To teach the students the relevant skills allowing them to acquire the ability to synthesize the ideas from the course and present their own analytical arguments in writing.

**Gender and Leadership**

The module aims at consolidating students’ knowledge and understanding of the interactions between gender and the practical concept of leadership. To this end, the module focuses eclectically on gender in media and politics and offers the students adequate critical and conceptual tools to investigate into those interactions.

This course seeks to make students able to:

- Approach gender as a cultural category of analysis and understand how gender organises identity or destabilises it around the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’;
- Examine a woman-centred spectrum of feminist positions in theory and practice in politics and media; and
- Read how women leaders (women anchors, political party leaders, NGOs activists...) have remapped gender power relations by rethinking identity, history, politics, media and culture.

Didactic Method: Readings at home. Lectures and discussions in class. Students are expected to engage regularly in discussions and presentations. The latter, mainly one presentation at least, constitute the personal work.
Students should also be prepared to produce two term papers of about 1500-2000 words each.

**GENDER AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

Objectives of the course:

The course is designed to develop students' ability to critically think and analyze issues of gender and communication. This will be accomplished by examining theoretical perspectives used to explain gender phenomena, gender socialization, male and female interactions and stereotypes. It examines the influence of gender in our lives by utilizing various tools including films, guest speakers, lectures, in-class exercises and class discussion. It provides an understanding of the basic verbal communication differences between men and women. It provides useful strategies in dealing with mixed gender situations. A high degree of class participation is both expected, and required to maximize student learning through integration and extrapolation of personal experience with in-class guided curriculum. To facilitate discussion, students are expected to have completed all reading and writing assignments.

After finishing this course students should be able to:

- Understand the difference between sex and gender.
- Identify the multiplicity of feminisms.
- Discuss prominent theories used in the study of gender and communication.
- Identify the major theorists in gender and communication research.
- Identify the various methods used to study gender communication.
- Understand how one's gender culture influences verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Describe masculine and feminine speaking styles.
- Recognize the impact of gender on nonverbal communication.
- Know the problems with and the future directions of this area of communication studies.

1. Students shall become familiar with major issues regarding communication and gender through critical analysis and discussion of pertinent readings, writing assignments, guest lecturer presentations, on-campus activities, in-class activities, and service learning experiences.

2. Students will understand the critical and-dynamic roles of age and culture as these concepts interrelate to the development of gender
attitudes and behavior this will be accomplished through service learning experiences, assigned readings, and by integrating personal and classroom experiences.

3. Students will develop and strengthen their ability to critically analyze the influence and role of gender in their lives through increased self-awareness, gender-awareness, and hopefully, age and cultural awareness by successfully completing course requirements.

4. Student participation in the service learning opportunity will combine meaningful community service with in-class learning through a process of guided/structured reflection exercises.

Didactic method: The course will be delivered in the form of theoretical seminars and in the form of presentations by students. It will also consist of debates and discussions on the assigned subjects.

**Gender and Media Studies**

This course intends to consolidate students’ knowledge and understanding of the cultural construction and representation of gender in contemporary media; it equally aims at familiarizing them with the notion of gender and its operation in society. It will also present them an up-to-date assessment of the key issues and debates. Through five areas of media – talk shows, magazines, news, advertising, and contemporary screen, the course intends also to examine how representations of women and men are changing in the twenty-first century.

This course examines various contemporary images of gender in media focusing on the 20th century to the present. Using theories from cultural studies, film and gender studies, and communication studies, we will explore different processes and practices of gender, specifically in terms of media representation of femininity and masculinity. The purpose of the course is to gain insight into the ways in which gender and its intersections with race, ethnicity and class, is enacted, represented and has an impact on cultural formations and communication. In examining cultural myths about gender as well as ongoing debates on gender construction, we will consider how gender is tied in with notions of power, identity, voice, and other defining categories (race, socio-economic status, ethnic group, etc.)

Didactic Method: The course objectives will be met through readings, presentations, discussions, lectures, screenings, research, projects and graded papers.

**The Representation of Women in English Literature**
The course is one-semester patterns course that introduces students to the history, traditions, and forms of literature in which women were portrayed by male and female writers. We will also consider the multiple ways women writers have responded to being silenced throughout history. The module will explore a rich and diverse range of writers and works to identify the recurrent images, themes, and styles of an evolving cannon. Works of prose, drama, non-fiction, and film will be studied.

The course is an introductory study to the representation of women in English Literary texts of female and male writers, and the role women occupy in literature, both as writers and as protagonists. Literary genre may include novels, short stories, and plays. Special attention will be paid to analyzing literary themes that use gender as a lens to explore complex matrices of social power and social position, including race, class, age, ethnicity, marital status, and religion. The aim is to go beyond the classical imageries and to address the modern and contemporary forms to analyze the differences between men’s and women’s roles in literature, including stereotypes and archetypes of women, as a reflection of the historical and social conditions of women. Also to gain broader and deeper understanding of the cultural, social, literary, historical, and personal range of literature written by women over time.

Didactic Method: The course will be delivered in the form of theoretical seminars and in the form of presentations by students. It will also consist of close readings of some texts (plays, novels) in the light of stimulating debates and discussions on the assigned subjects, authors and intellectuals.

**Academic Reading & Writing**

Academic Reading skills aim at improving the way in which students carry out research reading. It directs students towards developing their skills for reading articles and masterpieces in gender studies academically so that they could be more efficient and learn to read for academic purposes. Similarly, it will explore how they can develop critical reading skills, how to interact more effectively with texts and avoid plagiarism. The Academic Writing course is designed to help students develop the academic research and writing skills needed to complete the thesis and other requirements for the MA degree. It will provide students with the basic tools to write on different topics, to organize arguments and respect the APA style and other norms of writing. They will be introduced to different forms of academic writing.

Students will be required to relate readings to their research projects. The students’ skills of writing are linked to what they read. In the academic reading part, students will learn:
• How to select sources
• How to read efficiently using reading strategies (scanning and skimming)
• How texts are structured
• How to make notes of what they read
• How to paraphrase, summarize and synthesize what they read
• How to comment and evaluate what they read
• How to cite what they read
• How to use what they read to support their own writing
• How to compare and differentiate views from the books and articles they read
• How to be consistent using academic writing styles (Focus on The APA style)

The academic writing part will cover:

• Organizing arguments
• Writing and evaluating arguments
• Outlining
• Writing the paragraph, the chapter, the part and the paper
• Abstract, introduction and conclusion
• Revising, editing and proof-reading
• Paraphrasing and quoting
• References (Bibliography and Webiography)

Teachers will give lectures on the theoretical aspects of the course and they will direct some seminars in class. Students will be required to prepare some tasks outside the class.

**Maghrebin Women's Writing**

The course explores Women's writing from the Maghreb and the literary theory of diverse places and historical periods.

Upon successful completion students will be able to:

- Appreciate the role of gender in shaping texts as a product of particular cultures and historical moments, especially unfamiliar ones.
- Consider women's writing as a significant influence in the construction of individual and cultural experiences within specific historical contexts.
- Observe elements of form, grammar, dialect, and various language devices as a means by which texts create meaning.
- Challenge cultural norms and limits of analysis/criticism to create a richer experience of the texts, including multiple interpretations of the text as a complex fabric.

The course examines the Maghrebin Women's Writing from a variety of time periods, backgrounds and genre as a means to discuss the difficulties of achieving a public voice and representing female experiences, the effects of female women's voices and experiences being silenced, and the narrative methods women use to challenge and even subvert social expectations about female identity. By exploring what kind of stories women choose to tell, and what images and themes they have chosen to focus on over time, we will be able to determine how gender can unify women and provide them with a sense of power, while by paying particular attention to such elements of difference as class and culture we will be able to appreciate the word “women” as representatives of multiple experiences and possibilities.

**Gender and the popular culture (in Arabic)**

**Objectives of the course:**

- Make students aware of the status of women in popular culture.
- Reconsider popular culture and its social and cultural dimensions.
- Highlight the importance of popular discourse in education.
- Shed light on women’s /man’s popular creativity, and highlight the aspects of the similarities and difference between the two parties.
- Make students open up more to the manifestations of popular culture and grasp the results of the creativity of ancestors.
- Highlight the most important literary and artistic forms of the popular discourse on the basis of the status of women.
- Reconsider the image of women in the popular literature.
- Make students know the relations between the formal literature and the popular literature.
- Enable students know the heart of the knowledge in the popular literature and the depth of the cultural and artistic and rhetorical heritage.
- Enable students of the mechanisms of the analysis of the speech, the image of women and its symbolism.

The first component:

- The popular speech: definition and characteristics.
- Defining the concept of popular speech
Why speech? and why the popular?
The relation of the formal and the popular: manifestations of difference and the coalition.
The picture of women in popular culture and the literary works that emanate from it.
Definition of popular literary genres (Story, proverb, poetry...)

The second component:

Analysis of popular speech: the image of women as a model
Poetic model: popular songs, melhoun,...
Narrative model: folk tale, proverbs,...

Women's writing

This module intends to consolidate students' knowledge in the domain of women's writing. It principally aims, through a profound analysis of selected female texts, to closely and deeply explore feminism, gender and gender theories and concepts, and also to better understand the implications and significance of the emergence of this type of literature and artistic production. Women's writing equally constitutes a special field of human interactions and reactions, which will be considered in the light of existing theories, concepts and paradigms, which are studied during the first semester.

This course seeks to make students able to: - Approach gender as a cultural category of analysis and understand how gender organises identity or destabilises it around the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’; - Examine a woman-centred spectrum of feminist positions in theory and practice; and - Read how women writers have remapped gender power relations by rethinking identity, history and culture.

Didactic Method: Readings at home and lectures and discussions in class. Students are expected to engage regularly in discussions and presentations. The latter, mainly one presentation at least, constitutes the personal work. Students should also be prepared to produce two term papers of about 1500/2000 words each.

Cultural Representations of Gender

The subject is designed to provide students with an understanding of gender as a social and cultural construct from a transdisciplinary perspective; and to analyze and understand the basic mechanisms behind gender relations.
differentiation. Cultural representations of gender will be studied to enable students to examine the conceptual foundations to gender and cultural representations, and investigate the socially-constructed roles of women and men which are attributed to them on the basis of their sex across cultures and spaces. This course is intended also to acquaint students with the full participation of women, to recognize their contributions to literature, arts and culture across many historical areas. And it offers young people the means to observe the evolution of gender development in the various sectors of society.

This course is devised to deepen students-researchers' knowledge of gender cultural representations and to offer them the adequate critical tools and techniques of approaching and analyzing gender similarities and differences. This course addresses the questions of how "woman" and "the feminine" have been represented in various cultural systems, and how actual women have functioned as creators of literature, art, music, film, and other cultural products. Throughout this course, students will "read" gender across interrelated systems of representation including those of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, age and sex. Theoretical discussions may center around the (presumed) oppositions between absence and presence, silence and speech, representation and self-presentation.

Didactic Method: The course will be delivered in the form of lectures video projections, in addition to a series of seminars and exposés on cultural representations of gender.

Gender Issues in Muslim Societies

The class aims at exploring the dynamics and changes witnessed in contemporary Islamic society and thought with regard to gender. Several issues will be considered such as gender equality, gender and public sphere, Feminist readings of history, body politics, women and agency, the representation of woman in media, etc. The ultimate aim of this class is to raise an academic debate about gender and to deconstruct patriarchal and normative discourse. It also aims at encouraging research in such fields that have not been sufficiently explored by Moroccan researchers.

This course explores questions pertaining to gender and women in Islam. It begins by examining the visual and written representations of women in Muslim societies. This allows the students to self-critically reflect upon their own “knowledge” of Islam and Muslim women, and the historical and political background to this understanding. It will also discuss the different views of women, family, and gender roles in Islam, as well as the identities and lived experiences of Muslim women living in Muslim societies.
The focus will be on different cultural and religious ideas on gender relations and the hijab, Islamic feminism, and how Muslim women negotiate race, class, and gender, with respect to Islamophobia and the political rhetoric of “war on terror” and “clash of civilizations,” significant issues concern the gap between media representation, on one hand, and self-representation, on the other hand, and how Muslim women are making sense of their own lives and identities drawing on different messages and discourses. Selected topics may include: gender socialization; the female body and the socio-political context of reproduction, body image, appearance and of sexuality; similarities and differences between the genders; marriage and the family; work roles, inequalities and the global economy; health issues; violence against and by women; women in religion and politics; and, an historical and contemporary look at global feminism.

**Gender Issues in Language**

The course is designed to simultaneously introduce students to the field of language and gender (as a subfield of sociolinguistics) and to women's studies. It equally intends to make visible the unseen but ever-present force of language in one's life as a gendered person, including how categories of language and communicative habits shape one's beliefs about one's self and others. It also aims at introducing students to a wide range of linguistic analyses of language used by and used about women and men and to examine models of explanation for gender differences.

This course is designed to introduce students to the large body of literature on Language and Gender within Sociolinguistics and within studies of language in social context more generally. Students will investigate how language in use mediates, and is mediated by, social constructions of gender. Particular attention will be paid to the evolution of feminist theory, ideology, hegemony, performativity, and the “borders” of gender identities. Students will read scholarly articles and write critical reflection papers, and complete a final paper on a topic related to language and gender. Therefore, Questions that this course will address include:

- Do men and women speak differently? If so, in what ways?
- What kinds of distinctions in languages are made between men and women (for example, in lexicon/ phonology/ morphology, etc.)?
- What do these differences mean for the lives of men and women in various societies?
- How do societies differ in the role of language in creating gender roles?
• Why do languages and language users make the kinds of distinctions discussed above?
• How is gender related to power, socio-economic class, and race in different societies with regard to language use?

Didactic Method: Readings at home and lectures and discussions in class. Students are expected to engage regularly in discussions and presentations. The latter, mainly one presentation at least, constitutes the personal work.

**Gender & Professional Development**

This course is designed to enable students to improve their abilities to relate their learning to the requirements of professional life and transfer these abilities to future careers and lifelong learning. More particularly, it enhances students’ understanding of the gender differences in learning and professional life. Students can reflect on their personal, academic and career development in order to achieve more of their potential in line with realistic aspirations and, therefore, overcome gender discrimination in different sectors of life. To this end, the course seeks to improve strategies that can contribute to personality change in a positive way to reach equality and improve skills useful in all areas of life.

The course will introduce the students to the ways to reach personal, academic and career development. It will examine different skills that enable them to be exposed to new professional experiences such as volunteering for seminars, giving presentations, attending conferences, consulting colleagues, and getting to know their environment better. The course will cover the following points in consideration with gender differences:

• Introduction to Professional Development and factors for developing professionally: collaboration/collegiality/peer observation
• gender issues in Professional Development
• Identifying Professional Talents in students (leadership skills, Reflective thinking, Team work, Professional communication, among others)
• Giving presentations and learning constructive criticism
• Developing a Professional Resume
• Applying for a job and conducting Interviews
• Professional use of ICT
Teachers will give lectures on the theoretical aspects of the course and they will direct some seminars in class. Students will be required to prepare some tasks outside the class.

**Research Instruments & Statistics**

This module aims at consolidating students’ knowledge of the tools and instruments used in their research. It is primarily fundamental and relevant to those envisaging conducting research projects where qualitative and empirical quantitative studies are cited. The course will also introduce students to an advanced use of statistics such as sampling, comparison of means, the use of t-test and ANOVA. Finally, the use of statistical software will be more elaborated allowing student to make their analysis in a simplest and efficient way.

The course incorporates the following items: - Research design - Data collection instruments : questionnaires, interviews, observations, focus groups. - Data analysis and interpretation - Rationale of descriptive versus inferential statistics. - Comparison of Means - Correlation analysis - Basic inferential tests (t-test, one way ANOVA, etc.) - Reporting the research

The theoretical lecture will be reduced to the minimum. The course is mainly practical. Students are required to practice in class using computers and software appropriate to the tasks given.

**The Research Project**

The whole of semester 4 is devoted to the research project; nonetheless, students can start it at the beginning of the 3rd semester. Moreover, students could be allowed to continue working on their research project during the following year, the third year.

The research project consists in putting into practice the different skills and research methods acquired by the students during the last 3 semesters. Also, students have to display their intellectual and research capacities as well as their mastery of language and methodology. The completion of a research project should enable the student to enrol in a more profound research.

Activities:

- regular organized meetings between supervisor and supervisee, at least once in a month.
organization of study days on the students research fields. Students are expected to write a paper on a topic of their own choice or on a topic elaborated together with their supervisor.

The topic should be relevant to the concerns of the master. Their work includes the following:
- suggestion of a relevant topic, following their acquisitions in this master formation
- researching the topic (learning about the topic through reading or interviewing in case of fieldwork, and specifying the scope of the topic)
- suggesting a proposal
- elaborating a bibliography
- sketching an outline
- submitting the parts of the research project to their supervisor
- correcting and proofreading
- submitting the paper
- defending their paper.

Discussion of the research project in front of a jury consisting of at least 3 members. The assessment of the student's work will focus principally on the following:
- relevance of the topic
- quality of the oral presentation of the student, which is expected to address the following: - justification of the choice of the subject - explanation of the relevance of the topic - methodology followed - difficulties and solutions - bibliography - findings or conclusions - research perspectives - assessment of the quality of the work: - content - analysis - language - methodology, - theory and concepts, - presentation - conclusions - research perspectives - quality and relevance of the students' feedback.
RATIONALE

The aim of the programme is to enable students to acquire critical knowledge of, and engage in, interdisciplinary analysis of the notions of culture and identity in Morocco, which will help them (1) to carry on with further research at the doctoral level and (2) to contribute to cultural debate and development in Morocco. To achieve these objectives the programme allows students to develop useful research skills and methods such as teamwork, data retrieval, collection and analysis, and techniques of presentation and conferencing; it also teaches them how to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and everyday practices by encouraging them to open up their studies onto the actual social world around them.

In the undergraduate Modular Degree Prog. a number of courses related to the field of Cultural Studies have been introduced, namely:

1. Introduction to Culture
2. Cultural Studies
3. Media Studies
4. Postcolonial Literatures
5. Moroccan Youth Culture
6. Occidentalism and Orientalism

The Master Programme in Cultural Studies is meant to build on the knowledge and skills already acquired in the Modular Degree Programme.

The programme consists of interconnected and interdisciplinary Core Courses (Modules majeurs) and General/ Background Courses (Modules complémentaires). To broaden and diversify students' knowledge in a variety of fields, the programme follows a coherent interdisciplinary structure.

Hence, each semester focuses on a particular area of Cultural Studies and prepares for the next one:

Semester 1: Introduction to Cultural Studies
Semester 2: Cross Cultural Encounters
CULTURAL STUDIES is an increasingly influential field of inquiry and research which operates on a wide range of socio-cultural forms and practices, including subculture, fine art, education, literature, mass media, consumer culture, architecture, society and many other aspects of everyday life and modes of cultural policies, and productions. By nature and definition is Cultural Studies interdisciplinary; it draws its theoretical concepts and methodological strategies from linguistics, literary theory, psychology, postcolonial studies, sociology, economies and political sciences.

This programme is designed to introduce students to current cultural theories and give them an insight into contemporary debates in a wide range of social and humanities subjects. Particular focus is placed on an interdisciplinary study of the complex interplay of culture, society, gender, media and politics and the impact of globalization on local cultures and identities.

The programme offers students the opportunity to develop their critical understanding alongside practice in selected areas of Cultural Studies and encourages them to develop their own positions vis-à-vis the critical approaches and theories presented.

But rather than merely attempting to map out theories and issues which occupy the attention of Western Cultural Studies researchers, this programme intends to re-appropriate the field of Cultural Studies through Moroccan perspectives, focusing on research areas which are deemed useful and of immediate interest and relevance to the Moroccan context.

After completion of the gender courses, successful students will acquire the following knowledge and skills:

- Familiarize with major theories and concepts in gender studies (gender and diaspora, gender and religion, gender and development, etc).
- Explore concepts related to race, gender, sexuality, education, media, family and ethnicity in the field of gender studies.
- Develop methodological and theoretical skills to conduct scientific research along with International Scientific Academic norms in Gender studies.
- Integrate theoretical, empirical and methodological knowledge acquired during the studies and demonstrate an ethical
perspective in the promotion of the culture of Gender Equality in different institutions (university, family, etc).

- Acquire and apply skills of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation to all aspects of gender studies.
- Demonstrate solid competence in communication and writing skills to disseminate the learned knowledge through their contributions as academics or as activists.
- Launch or get involved in innovative (political, social, diasporic, religious and economical) service projects, programs and/or organizations making use of principles and methods that underline interdisciplinary collaboration through the use of local, national and international financial, human and structural resources.
- Design and conduct gender based research using different and complementary data collection procedures from both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research with the hope of finding substantial arguments in support of the promotion of gender equality at the cultural, educational, economic, religious, political and social levels.
- Provide a synthetic analysis of the state of the art of local policy-making for the sake of inferring recommendations for developmental policy improvement and sustainable political, religious, economical, cultural and social development and benefitting from international policies.
- Benefit from the expertise of professionals and academics in the field of gender studies.
- Combine the theoretical and practical tools, skills and knowledge acquired in the process of evaluating one's and others’ work at the academic and professional levels

Career Prospects

Interdisciplinarity in Cultural Studies also seeks to provide students with knowledge, skills critical instruments, and experience deemed valuable in today’s employment market, especially in education, media, and the tourism sector. An awareness of issues of representation, media skills, and interdisciplinarity is also important in many other areas, such as business, administration, social policy, development organizations, and documentary film making. The programme allows students to develop important transferable skills such as teamwork, information retrieval and analysis, fieldwork data collection and analysis, and techniques of communication and presentation.
## STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM
### MA in Cultural Studies Courses 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Title of course</th>
<th>Teaching load</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Language, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Morocco</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Theories of Culture</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Women’s Movements in Morocco</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Women and Writing</td>
<td>3hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Initiation to Research</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Gender and Religion</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>Representing Cultural Difference</td>
<td>3hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Studies in Travel Writing</td>
<td>3hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Women in Diaspora</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<td>S2</td>
<td>Postcolonial Literatures</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<td>S2</td>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Morocco Encounters with The Anglo-American World</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 3</td>
<td>The Arab Spring, Media and Political Change</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Moroccan Youth Culture and Urban Space</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<td>S3</td>
<td>Film Theory and Criticism</td>
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<td>S3</td>
<td>Gender and Media Analysis</td>
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<td>S3</td>
<td>Screening Morocco</td>
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<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>2hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>SEMINAR IN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>3hours/week</td>
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**Research leading to thesis writing under the supervision of instructors**

**STAGE ou MEMOIRE**

### Theoretical and practical learning ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MA Cultural Studies</th>
<th>Cours e: Gender and Religion</th>
<th>Course: Women and Diaspora</th>
<th>Course: Gender and Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical learning</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical learning</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Short descriptions of courses

Language, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Morocco

Students will

1. learn about Morocco’s regional cultural and ethnic diversity
2. Reflect on how race and ethnicity are defined and conceptualized
3. learn how to think critically about issues related to race and ethnicity in Moroccan society
4. debate the linguistic issue in Morocco (Arabic, Tamazigh, darija, French)
5. examine the composition and diversity of Moroccan identity and culture as defined in the constitution
6. engage in the debate on national identity
7. explore how language and ethnicity shape individual identity and social experiences

‘Language, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Morocco’ examines the construction of identity and ethnicity in Morocco and how they shape and are shaped by Moroccan culture and as well as how these notions inform national identity. The course also reflects on and debates the constitution’s definition of Morocco as a “A Nation whose unity is based on the fully endorsed diversity of its constituents: Arabic, Amazigh, Hassani, Sub-Saharan, African, Andalusian, Jewish and Mediterranean components.”

Theories of Culture

This course intends to

1. provide a survey of major theories and theoretical schools in social anthropology.
2. examine theoretical and methodological perspectives employed by different researchers
3. elucidate a major themes and debates in social theorizing (such as questions on the nature of culture, the integration of culture and society, identity and alterity; gender, body and health, religion and rituals)
4. introduce students to major anthropological research on Morocco

‘Theories of Culture’ consists of a set of readings in anthropological work on Morocco. Focus s placed on Anglo-American anthropological fieldwork on Moroccan culture and society, namely by of Clifford Geertz, Paul Rabinow, Westermark and Ernest Gellner, Crapanzano, Dale
Eickelman. The course also discusses anthropological works by Moroccan researchers such as Abdellah Hammoudi, Abdkebir Khatibi Hassan Rachik, and their critique of Western anthropology.

**Women’s movements in Morocco**

The course aims at debating and reflecting on:

1. Women and political activism
2. Gender, the State and democracy
3. Women’s role in economic development
4. Gender and the discourse of modernity in Morocco
5. Gender and the labour market
6. Women’s agency and mobilization
7. Women and education

“Women’s movements in Morocco” introduces students to the feminist movement in Morocco through a selection of authors like Fatima Mernissi, Hind Taareji, Leila Lalami, and others. The objective is to approach the subject outside mainstream Eurocentric feminism. The course also deals with gender as a significant factor in propelling social movements, women’s redefinition of the Mudawana, mobilizing women across socio-economic boundaries, women’s resistance to gender-based oppression, and their participation and impact on the Moroccan Spring and political and cultural reforms in Morocco.

**Women and Writing**

The course aims to

1. introduce students to various modes of writing by women
2. develop their skills in reading texts by women
3. reflect on how Arab women literary writers choose to represent themselves and their culture and society
4. discuss female tradition of oral story telling

“Women and writing” course examines both women’s production and consumption of writing as well as specific representations of the figure of the woman writer herself. The selected texts include main Arab women writers such as Hanan al-Shaykh, Nawal El Saadawi, Fatima Menissi, Ghada Samman, Laila Lalami, and Leila Abuzeid allow for a wide range of issues to be explored, including formal innovation, identity formation and the interaction of gender, race and class within the practices of Arab women writings. The focus will be
on giving the student insight into, and understanding of, key cultural and theoretical issues regarding works by women writers.

Initiation to Research

The seminar aims at

1. Introducing students to basics and conventions of doing research in Cultural Studies, techniques and methodologies of field-work (formulating research questions and designing and conducting interviews), data collection and analysis.
2. providing students with the tools and skills required to understand research terminology and assess published research
3. Familiarising students with the MLA style and the use of library and the Internet for research purposes
4. helping them to produce quality argumentative writing and express their point of views and ideas clearly and convincingly.

Initiation to Research intends to achieve two things:

1. teach students research skills, including data collection (interviewing and questionnaires) and analysis and interpretation of the information. Focus is placed on developing the skills and knowledge needed to design and conduct research and develop their projects into written theses.
2. help students to express their ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, respond to complex lines of argument convincingly and articulate their comments clearly and persuasively.

They are required to write short essays to put research competencies and techniques into practice and are are given the opportunity to enhance both their research abilities and oral performance in a variety of activities such as presentations, group discussion, and study-days.

Gender & Religion

This course explores gender-related perspectives in the study of religion in Morocco. The course is divided into three parts:

1. Moroccan Islamic Feminism: Theoretical Mappings
2. The Body and sexuality in Islam
3. Gendering Political Islam
The first component of the course, “Moroccan Islamic Feminism”, examines various gendered approaches to Islam in Morocco: secular/spiritual and Salafi/ Sufi feminism. The second component of the course is a study of the configuration of the body and sexuality in the religious discourse in contemporary Morocco. The third component focuses on the Moroccan State’s deployment of gender to restructure the religious field through the Murshidat and Alimat and on how such a deployment impacts both radical Islam and patriarchal ideologies and norms.

Major topics:

1. Moroccan State’s deployment of gender to restructure the religious field
2. Feminist scholars’ interpretation of the sacred text and spiritual spaces
3. Configuration of 'feminine' and sexuality in religious discourse
4. Feminist Salafism in Sufism
5. Ideologies of gender and sexuality in Islam

The programme outcomes:

1. Acquire the necessary theoretical and methodological skills and knowledge to explore gender and religion
2. Develop the theoretical and methodological tools to undertake research in the field of gender and religion
3. Familiarize students with the debate on gender and religion in Morocco and the Islamic world
4. Develop students’ oral communication and writing skills
5. Enhance in-depth knowledge about feminist approaches in the study of Islam

Representing Cultural Difference

1. Introduces students to current theories in Postcolonial Studies: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Peter Hulme, Sara Mills and others
2. Explores such theories in the analysis of racial and cultural difference in texts and visual arts
3. Provides students with the necessary theories and methodology to detect the circulation of alternative and anti-hegemonic discourses in Western representation of Otherness
4. Develops students’ critical thinking
The course is designed to introduce theories of representing cultural difference from Edward Said’s Orientalism to Homi Bhabha’s Ambivalence and to apply these approaches to the reading of a selection of Western narratives on the Maghreb, Latin America and Asia.

The course approaches in an interdisciplinary way and explore them in the study of a number of issues related to race, empire, geographical and cultural spaces, politics of identity and cultural difference, power, knowledge, and resistance.

**Studies in Travel Writing**

The course
1. stresses interdisciplinarity and raises a variety of issues such as colonialism, race, cultural geography and space.
2. helps students acquire methods of colonial text analysis
3. introduces students to postcolonial strategies of reading
4. develops students’ critical thinking and historical awareness.
5. develops students’ writing skills
6. help students understand the bases of historical, cultural, and political encounters between the colonizer and the colonized countries with more particular focus on Morocco

‘Studies in Travel Writing’ focuses on Anglo-American travel literature on Morocco and cultural representation. It emphasises the interdisciplinary value of travel writing, bringing together the methods of geography, history, anthropology, post-colonial, cultural and gender studies. Through a selection and close reading of a set of travel narratives on Morocco, students will be initiated to issues of race, space, identity, gender, power, knowledge and colonial encounters.

**Women in Diaspora**

This course examines the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of Moroccan women’s immigration to the West and Middle East. Focus is placed on how the experience of migration impacts on the concept of Moroccan womanhood and shifts relations between “homeland” and “host countries”. The course is also interested in exploring how Moroccan women in diaspora try to negotiate their national, cultural and religious identities as well as their sense of belonging and cultural ties to their homelands.

The outcomes of the course are as follows:
1. Familiarize students with major theories and concepts in gendered migration studies
2. Explore the impact of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity in the field of gendered diaspora studies
3. Improve students’ critical thinking skills
4. Develop students’ oral and writing skills
5. Foster students’ intellectual independence

Acquire the skills necessary for critically analyzing the theme of gender and diaspora in film and literature.

Course topics include

1. The issues of the veil will be addressed.
2. Films and novels related to Moroccan gender and diaspora
3. Digital gendered Diasporas
4. Digital misalliance
5. Homeland, nostalgia and gendered memory
6. Identities in diasporas: gender, sexuality, and ethnicity
7. Racism, stereotyping and xenophobia

**Postcolonial Literatures**

Objectives of the module:

1. Provide the students with background knowledge relating to Post-colonial theory and literatures.
2. demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in literature.
3. respond critically to works of literature.
4. to demonstrate knowledge of the influence of literature on intercultural

**Post-colonial Literatures** will introduce students to Post-colonial literature and theory. We will read a number of the most influential theorists of post-colonial studies, as well as a selection of contemporary postcolonial literary texts. We will first explore what the term ‘post-colonial’ means in various historical and geographical contexts, and we will address critical issues such as nation and nationalism, multiculturalism, capitalism and globalisation, race, ethnicity, historiography etc. The readings will be drawn from a range of locations such as Morocco, Algerian, Palestine, India, Nigeria, and the Caribbean.
Major Topics

1. subaltern voices
2. writing Back against Literary Presentations of Africa
3. pan-African Education in Ghana via Ama Ata Aidoo
4. the Diaspora via Peter Abrahams
5. postcolonial deconstruction colonial constructions of knowledge and power
6 anti-colonial struggles against subordination

Research Methodology

1. the aim of this module is to consolidate the students’ competence in research techniques (data collection, argumentation, bibliography).
2. equip students with the necessary skills for organising and writing up their research projects
3. help students design a research proposal and develop research questions

The course offers an overview of the different approaches and challenges involved in academic research. It initiates students in field work using interviews, surveys and experiments, explores methods used in critical analysis of texts (discourses) and focuses on approaches as mythological tools for discourse analysis

Morocco Encounters with the Anglo-American World

The module surveys the historical, commercial, diplomatic and cultural encounters between Morocco and the Anglo-American world. It stresses interdisciplinarity and raises a variety of issues such as colonialism, race, cultural geography and space.

The course is taught in Arabic. It provides a survey of the historical, commercial, diplomatic, political and cultural encounters between Morocco and the Anglo-American world. It studies through interdisciplinary perspectives British and American perceptions and constructions of Morocco in a wide range of discourses in anthropology, literature, historical and diplomatic documents, and popular culture. The course offers ample opportunities to introduce current theories in Postcolonial Studies and explore them in the study of a number of issues related to race, geographical and cultural spaces, politics of identity and cultural difference, power, knowledge, and resistance. Moroccan construction of Otherness is also considered against theories of Occidentalism. Some of the issues the course will deal with are formulated in the list of topics.
THE ARAB SPRING, MEDIA AND POLITICAL CHANGE

This course

1. provides context for understanding the social, economic and political conditions that led to the Arab Spring
2. analyses the role of social media in empowering and mobilizing people to organize demonstrations
3. examines how Arab youth protestors use social media as a means for shaping public opinion and narratives discusses the use of the media by the State to undermine social protests.

‘The Arab Spring, Media and Political Change’ analyzes the production and circulation of the discourse on political change. The course explores the role media, especially facebook and mobile telephony, has played in the Arab uprising. It also pays close attention to how political change in the Arab world is a highly mediated experience the world over, which calls for the development of adequate critical approaches that can best deal with the subject at hand.

Moroccan Youth Culture and Urban Space

Objectives: the course aims to

1. enable students to apply key interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives (anthropological, postcolonial, critical, cultural studies, discourse and power) to the analysis of Moroccan youth cultures
2. equip them with the ability to analyze diverse Moroccan youth cultures and their multiple influences on society and culture
3. examine spatial and gender dynamics in the fashioning of Moroccan youth cultures.
4. help students identify and analyze the impacts of global media and international processes on youth cultures and identities
5. analyse youth’s interaction with urban spaces
6. reflecting on culture & identity in postcolonial urbanity in Morocco.

‘Moroccan Youth Culture & Urban Space‘: The university is a youth space par excellence, and yet we rarely design up courses that are for and about young Moroccans. So this course remedies this lacuna by examining the contribution of youth cultural movements to a changing sociality in Morocco. It examines the nature and forms of youth culture in Morocco’s urban spaces, especially in the big cities like Casablanca, Fez and Marrakech. It aims at exposing to the students some basics of methodology in social research in the context of studying the forms of youth culture such as clothing, music and other youth lifestyles as the interface of global flows and local culture.
The course is organised in terms of (a) close readings of representations about youth in book and video and (b) follow-up discussions and practical work presented by each student. For the students have to give individual presentations in class about field work they are required to do about how Moroccan youths’ self-representation, look at society and dream of their future lives.

Course outline includes:

1. Key concepts, terminologies, theoretical perspectives and methods used to study youth
2. Relationships between economic processes, media representations, urban space and the production of youth cultures
3. Youth and religious identifications
4. Unemployed Youth diploma holders and urban protest
5. Who controls the public space: Youth or State?
6. How Moroccan youths reinforce, challenge, debate, and reinvent social, cultural, and national values
7. Youth’s negotiation of social justice, human rights, and democracy
8. University and students’ political activism
9. Understanding analyzing Media representation of Moroccan youth
10. Veiling or unveiling: religious identification in the urban space
11. Youths and educational reform
12. Gender and sexuality in the public and in cyber space

**Film Theory and Criticism**

Objectives: the course aims to

1. study cinema, an art form which has become a global phenomenon with a far reaching influence on society and culture
2. familiarize students with the major theoretical positions and debates in film theory including deconstruction, existentialism, Marxism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis
3. give students the critical and analytical tools necessary to develop their ability to close read and interpret films
4. develop students’ ability to identify meaningful elements in a film text and produce critical arguments about them.
5. teach students to understand of how cinema works as a medium, art form and practice
6. how cinema signifies: produces and communicates meanings
7. understand the processes involved in film production and circulation
'Film Theory and Criticism’ is designed to offer an introduction to the study of film through a survey of the major theories of reading movies. Critical focus shifts from conventional debates about cinema in terms of whether it is an art or a means of social commentary to contemporary readings which broach cinema as a cultural form. Students will be given opportunities to learn about film through class participation, reading texts and articles, writing a paper, and critiquing films.

Recommended movies include: Frozen River, English Patient, London River, Anna and the King, Zulu etc.

Course outline:

- Film Genres, Language and narratives
- Cinematography & film production.
- Film analysis: themes, worldviews, and propaganda
- Film criticism & interpretation.
- Film theory
- Film and Mass Culture

**Gender and Media Analysis**

Course provides students with concepts, approaches and methodology to be able to do the following:

1. Recognize diversity across audiences, content and producers of media
2. Identify stereotypes of gender and sexual identity in media representation
3. Analyze media discourse in context of cultural and social identities
4. Analyze how reality is socially and discursively constructed by media

'Gender and Media Analysis' examines representations of race, class, gender, and sexual identity in the media (film, television, print journalism, advertising). It looks at the coverage of the private and public lives as well as the configuration of the female body in American, British and Moroccan media. Issues such as masculinity/femininity, beauty, virginity, marriage and motherhood are debated. Media representations are approached as a site for the reinvention and redefinition of gender roles, the body, sexuality, and subjectivity.

Course topics:

1. News: Texts, Institutions,
2. Authorship and spectatorship
3. Images, Representation, Language and Ideology
4. Media, Culture and Society
5. Representation of Femininity in visual discourse
6. Global Media: Global Culture and Cultural Identities
7. Gendred Visual Orientalism
8. Narrating the nation in the Moroccan television
9. Sexuality in soap operas

**Screening Morocco**

1. The course introduces students to Orientalism in Hollywood cinema on Morocco and how Moroccan cinema deconstructs such orientalism.
2. Students will acquire the skills of interpret films to interweave visual and the ideological as a means of explaining how representations of the Orient/Other and Self/Morocco were shaped and received.
3. Have a broad understanding of the issues and the theoretical debates surrounding the subject and filmic representation.

Through a detailed analysis of a selection of Moroccan films and Western films on Morocco, the course reflects on the aesthetic and politics of representing Selfhood and Otherness on the silver screen. Students will have the opportunity to screen and study a wide range of films and television material, including fiction and documentary (*Badis, Door to The Sky, Ali Zawa, Zidou al Gouddam, The Wind and the Lion, Ishtar, Sahara, Casablanca* etc). For their research projects, each student is expected to produce a short film (in documentary form). The Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre to which most of the Master Programme staff are affiliated has the appropriate equipments for such a project.

Course topic: politics of representation

**Research Project**

In this module students start their MA research project under the supervision of an instructor from the Master Programme. In this semester each student will have to choose a research topic, collect data, compile a relevant bibliography and write a detailed proposal and outline.

**Final thesis**

Writing a final thesis
- Initiation into doctoral research
The requirements for this module consist of writing a final thesis (80-100 pages) that is based on the work done in module 6 (semester 3) with the help of a supervisor from the master program. This work should reflect the techniques and skills of research that the student has been able to acquire from previous modules on research methodology, as well as it may equip him/her with competence needed for further doctoral studies. The thesis should be submitted in early May for committee examination, and the same committee can schedule a defence in late May.

**Gender and Development. Research Seminar.**

This seminar tackles human development and gender related issues. Research and themes to be undertaken are embedded within the theories analyses elaborated to sort out problems having to do with development (Human, social, cultural, economic, political, etc.) in relation to Gender studies in Morocco and other Arab countries. This module, taught in the form of a number of seminars, provides students with the methodological and theoretical skills to be able to do the following:

1. Conduct scientific research along with International Scientific Academic norms in Gender and Development domain.
2. Thinking of a topic
3. Data collection and analysis
4. Theories and methodology in Gender and development research
5. Ethical Practices in Gender and Development Research
6. Encourage fieldwork research on the representations of women at the economic, legal, political and cultural levels.

Research areas includes:

1. Gender and Law
2. Gender and Representations (Socio-cultural)
3. Gender and ethnicity
4. Gender and Immigration
5. Gender and Employment
6. Gender and Leadership
7. Gender and Policy Making
8. Gender and Civil Society.
2. METHODOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC MATERIALS ON GENDER STUDIES
2 1. Gender, Identities and Education

Materials of this chapter are published in the conference proceedings “International Conference Gender, Identities and Education” (Beni Mellal, Morocco, Venue: Faculty of Arts and Humanities, May 23-25, 2016).

Moroccan Women Fulbrighters as Agents of Social Change

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The purpose of this paper is to address through an analytical framework some of the forms of the participation of Moroccan women Fulbrighters in inducing social change. Many Moroccan women from different walks of academic and professional life were selected as Fulbright grantees within the well-known Fulbright program with a view to improving their professional profiles and broadening their research horizons in America. Back to Morocco, after completing the period assigned to them, many Moroccan women Fulbrighters, impacted by the cross-cultural education and training they were exposed to, have launched and participated in a plethora of projects and initiatives in an attempt to effect change in their own society in light of what they learnt in America. In the course of my paper, the focus will be put on some of these projects and initiatives and the ways these women have gone through to induce a feasible social change in the Moroccan society.

1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
In an age of a globalized world, the experience of overseas programs and/or exchanges plays an outstanding role in reshaping the identities of the Moroccan female students. On the basis of their gender identity, this segment of society is faced up with various obstacles that impede their full participation in society. Culture, religion, tradition, patriarchy, gender-based discrimination are among the main stumbling blocks leading to their marginalization and exclusion. To better this situation, civil society emerges as a springboard in this field, especially to pave the way for female students in higher education to benefit from new challenging opportunities in an international context. For this reason, the present paper aims to examine how the NGOs exchange programs help the female university students reconstruct their social, economic, cultural, and gender identities within the Moroccan society. To meet this objective, a mixed method approach is used to know about the attitudes and experiences of participants in the exchange programs provided by civil societies associations like AIESEC. The main techniques of data collection are questionnaires and interviews. This paper illustrates that these programs 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.

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The Role of Women in Student Activism in Higher Education in Morocco Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdelah University in Fes as a Case Study

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Higher Education in Morocco has long been characterized by several student movements ever since the 1960’s when the National Student Union (NSU) was organized. The issue of student activism has become more prominent in the university campus of Fes given that Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University was the first established university in the 1970’s after Mohamed the Fifth University in Rabat, which had been established right after the independence of Morocco from France in 1957. Since the 1970’s, student activists have struggled to attain their basic rights in grants, dormitories and access to libraries. Oftentimes, the list of such demands has even been extended to include the advocation of political and social change, which has led to the militarization of university campuses and student dormitories. Significant in such movements was the strong participation and involvement of female students in student activism. The most prominent event was the death of a female activist student after engaging in a long hunger strike. This incident, among others, calls for urgent research in the reasons behind joining activist groups and the role of women in student activism as an area in which a lip service has been paid before by educators and researchers alike, especially in the Moroccan context where reports on student activism are restricted only to some media outlets. In this regard, the current study aims to investigate the profiles of female student activists, the reasons behind their engagement in activism and the potential impacts of this cross-curricular undertaking on their university life. To achieve this purpose, a covert participation observation has been employed to collect data on this sensitive issue. Moreover, a co-researcher has helped in

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investigating the reasons and consequences of female student activism in female dormitories to which access for a male researcher would be impossible. The findings have shown various profiles of female student activists and unexpected reasons and consequences of their participation in the different student movements. The reported data draw a sketchy picture of the role played by women in student activism, thus, supporting some claims proclaimed by feminist criticism. This requires a further research in this area, especially in other tertiary education institutes in different cities of Morocco.
“Girl power” in education: The case of high school students in El Jadida

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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.

1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
Gender Identity in Amazigh Textbooks: Teaching Inequality

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Textbooks have a major socialization role; they define gender roles in students’ minds and play a crucial role in determining the students’ 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 stereotypes 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. 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 return modifies their cognitions (Brannon, L. 2008). In undertaking this study, we want to discover how gender’s social roles are determined by the personality traits depicted in textbooks. This study will be a significant endeavor in promoting gender equality in educational settings in Morocco. It will help Amazigh textbook designers identify the areas of gender inequality and promote gender equity.

1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
Gender and Issues of Classroom Interaction in Higher Education

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Discussion of gender inequality in education is not new. Issues such as gender differences in relation to classroom participation, learning strategies, and differences in relation to some factors like anxiety have always attracted the attention of scholars like Chavez (2000) and Pavlenko et. Al. (2001). Previous studies stressed on the idea that male and female students do not participate equally and in the same way in EFL classes, which might be related to some social and cultural views. In this respect, the aim of this paper is to investigate aspects of classroom dynamics mainly gender differences in Moroccan college EFL classrooms. It aims also at investigating the extent to which gender roles influence classroom interaction of female students and the teachers’ attitudes to such differences. This paper will be based on the results gathered through partial ethnography by a non-participant observer. The observations will be based on four different groups, two groups of a Business Communication class and two groups of an oral communication class, in the second semester at the English department of the faculty of letters-Fes. Observations will focus on aspects related to the nature of classroom participation patterns in relation to gender differences. This paper ends up with implications and recommendations on how to create better class dynamics, encourage class equity between sexes, and creating an inclusive classroom environment.

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The Arab Uprising: Voicing the Marginalized and Promoting Women’s Status, The Case Study of Moroccan Single Mothers

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The paper sheds light on the latest revolutionary events in the Arab world with a particular focus on Moroccan women as these events do have subtle effects on political, economical and most importantly, social aspects that shift worldwide stereotyped views on the Arab populations, especially its youth. Moroccans, particularly women, have remarkably been affected by these changes, namely the reform of the Moroccan constitution in relation to those articles related to women’s rights that Moroccan feminists have long before addressed and demanded to be revised. These movements have unveiled women’s realities that literature would never succeed to uncover or even be noticed even among uneducated women. Morocco is internationally portrayed as a leading example of modernity and democracy in the North African region, particularly when it comes to human rights, especially women’s rights. These have been reformed and forcefully celebrated in Media after the Arab Spring showing the world the flexibility and openness of the Moroccan officials and their accountability to the people’s will, hence, celebrating Morocco’s commitment, though in theory, to the declaration of universal human rights. I would argue if these reforms do really measure up to women’s aspirations concerning legal issues or their representation in decision making positions or even to the unemployed majority and unrepresented population sinking in illiteracy, poverty and unemployment due to social injustice since “illiteracy is a major social and pedagogical concern, for it is very high, particularly among rural people and women. Illiteracy contributes to widening the socio-economic gap between lower and upper class people” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 199). All these issues are dauntlessly tackled in Miseria by Aisha Ech-Channa; an

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account that was launched in 1996 entitled as *Témoignage* which refers to testimony. The latter portrays modern Moroccan women sinking in corruption and crash of morals inaugurating a new trend in the Moroccan literary context, writing and breaking Moroccan taboos from the perspective of a woman activist whose experiences and fieldwork with civil society provide her with real life situations that could be no more veiled given the latest events of the Arab Uprising. Thus, in this paper I would not argue the Moroccan exception cherished worldwide, but rather the in-depth effects these events have on Moroccan women, and women writers as well who dare to write about women real life experiences, namely in Aisha Ech-Channa’s first literary work inspired by the urge to break up with an era of cherishing women’s silence and be the exception themselves.
The intensity of violence perpetrated on women can be regarded as a common denominator that ties together “The Mandrake Venus” (George Egerton), “A White Night” (Charlotte Mew) and “The Red City” (Anna Kingsford). The authors of these stories pertain to the Victorian age, which spanned over the rule of Queen Victoria between 1837 and 1901. They introduce themselves as spokespersons of a community wherein people are fettered by forces greater than themselves. The first story is a demeaning portrayal of prostitution in a society where women are suppressed to the subservient position. They are subjected not only to the reductive ethos of the condescending male discourse, but also to the injunctions laid down by the patriarchal system at large. The anonymous heroine is displayed without name, dignity and honor. She is referred to as the Mandrake Venus, which is concomitantly a source of attraction and repulsion. The second story is about a ‘fallen’ woman displayed on the altar of shame. The agonizing and panoptical gazes of the throng around her are meant to play havoc with her self-esteem and strip her of humanity, but, like ‘the world harlot’, in the first tale, she shows spectacular signs of resistance. The third story is a meticulous delineation of vivisection. The author establishes herself as a high profile animal rights’ activist denouncing the torture inflicted on animals, which resemble, in their helplessness, the disparaged female characters.

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Gender Differences in Academic Achievement in University: The Case of the National School of Agriculture in Meknes, Morocco.\textsuperscript{1}

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Throughout our experience as teachers, we feel intrigued by the observation of changes that have occurred in relation with gender in terms of number and performance. However, this observation needs to be confirmed by studies and scientific results in order to avoid prejudice. This paper investigates the number of girls enrolled in the School of Agriculture compared with the number of boys since the establishment of the school. The study also explores gender differences in their academic achievement. The data used include exam scores of students at the National School of Agriculture in Meknes from 2008 to 2015. The scores will be considered according to the independent variables, namely subjects, the graduating classes and gender. Subjects are classified into three main categories: scientific subjects (mathematics and statistics), technical subjects (agronomy and animal care), and language subjects (English and French). The analysis results showed a noticeable increase in the number of girls compared to boys. Moreover, girls proved to be more likely to perform better than boys in different subjects.

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Gender Representation in the Moroccan EFL Textbook Discourse

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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 BeniMellal (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.

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Status of Women in HE Education in Morocco Realities and Perspectives of Teachers and Students¹
Larouz F., Benmassoud J.

Since independence, Moroccan women have come a long way from emancipation to get vital and fundamental rights, especially in the field of education. Social and political transformations as well as effort made by governments which signed and ratified all international conventions and charters all have contributed to women’s rights and development in the Moroccan society. Today, the growth of women’s schooling in the Moroccan educational landscape from primary to university level is very apparent. Yet, their massive access, their intellectual ability and their representativeness both as students and teachers are not entirely satisfactory. They still encounter prejudices and obstacles that hinder their natural presence in the educational sphere, especially in decision-making positions and other responsibilities within the university. Certainly, access of girls to education and knowledge is in perpetual evolution since the 70s, a fact which drastically has changed the fate of women and contributed to the feminization of the profession of teaching. Therefore, our aim in the present paper is to describe and assess the current situation of women in the Moroccan educational system in order to highlight their evolution and their development, measure the degree of representativeness, and to shed lights on gender equity in the country.

¹ This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
Deconstructing The Foundational Myths of Patriarchy in Gilman’s Herland¹

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In her novel Herland (1915), Charlotte Perkins Gilman 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 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. Within such a feminist framework, Herland corroborates an argument that boldly interrogates patriarchy to demystify its stereotypes of physical and intellectual superiority, and revise the claimed patriarchal prerogatives for perpetuating social order and providence, along with deconstructing traditions and religion as legitimating factors of male dominance. Satirical in tone, Herland also extends its criticism to the social injustice incurred on women by eclipsing them within the domestic and unequal institution of marriage, which deprives them of presence and contribution to the public sphere. In a strong call for women’s autonomy, Herland argues that capitalism exploits them through arbitrary male-oriented myths. 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 restrictions.

¹This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
The portrayal of Women’s Bodies in Moroccan Print Ads

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Advertising is a powerful tool used by media makers to persuade and shape the behavior of consumers. To achieve this aim, they exploit and manipulate women’s bodies to sell not only products, but also ideas. This paper examines the way women appear in advertisements, especially how their bodies are being presented as sex objects. In addition to the objectification of women, the media commits another assault on the dignity of women. This assault is the dismemberment of women, and it has not received the attention it deserves (Kilbourne, 2002). Thus, another goal of this study is to examine the prevalence and implications of the dismemberment of women in our society. Preliminary data analysis of advertisements from six Moroccan magazines shows that male and female portrayals differ in size, posture, touch, look, dress, etc. This enormous discrepancy between male and female models/participants also indicates that women are represented in a much more sexually provocative way. This study hopes to advance feminist scholarship through implications and recommendations for future advertising.

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1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
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.

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Body Politics, Education and the Challenges of Modernity in Morocco

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Moroccan society has witnessed tremendous changes in the last few decades. This transformation is visible in the modernization of the infrastructure, the economy, social relations, communication technologies, etc. However, on the cultural level many conservative practices and beliefs persist. This paper endeavors to analyze the tension between tradition and modernity and how these two converging narratives reveal a tense debate about the future contours of the Moroccan identity. The paper explores the “body” and “education” as two fundamental sites of power, ideology and resistance. The Postmodern framework is used to guide this study and more precisely the Foucauldian theory of power and Knowledge.

The paper relies also on a field study conducted among university students, through questionnaires, interviews and class observation to see whether this category of the society is either shaped by socialization and the dominant ideology or benefits from education to construct a liberal and critical mindset. The material used in this study is essentially works of arts addressing the female body either in Western or Moroccan contexts. The aim is to explore how students relate to such taboo subject and analyze their perception of the female body not only in the realm of art but in the public sphere as well.

The rationale of this paper is to reach a scientific and empirical understanding of the dynamics characterizing the Moroccan society and culture and to contribute in enriching the academic debate about body and identity politics.

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1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
Muslima Theology: The Subversion of Male Interpretive Tradition

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With the turn of the third millennium, Muslim ‘feminist voices’ calling for re-interpretation of the Sacred Texts from a reformist perspective started gaining momentum. This re-interpretive methodology attempts at challenging, on the one hand, the principle of the closure of the gate of interpretation, and on the other hand, at subverting the long anchored male interpretive tradition and at legitimizing women’s authority in both intellect and praxis. At the background of my argument is the benefit of the Arab-Muslim intellectual landscape of Derrida’s and Gadamer’s celebration of the ‘hermeneutics of difference.’ My paper examines two feminist Islamist challengers of male mainstreaming: Amina Wadud and Asma Lemrabet. It examines women’s criticism of the patriarchal-based interpretation of the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition. It argues that the adoption of a holistic plural interpretive tradition helps combat fundamentalism, just as it calls for the promotion of alternative and liberal cultural rhetoric at the university as a site of democracy, emancipation, and critical thinking.

1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
Promoting Gender Equality In Moroccan Educational Institutions And The Issue Of Identity

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The present paper seeks to investigate the extent to which the reproduction of gender inequalities in educational institutions shapes Moroccan students’ identities through the intersection between gender stereotypes in the textbooks, manuals and media and the reproduction of traditional gender roles within family and society as a whole. By so doing, I argue that despite the fact that Moroccan universities have made good initiatives as far as the culture of gender equality is concerned by introducing gender studies course at the university level, the traditional gender roles seem to be still reproduced. I will more particularly explain why a radical change from the pre-schooling, to the schooling and the family institution to the higher education are important in shaping gender identities of Moroccan university students. It will be shown that in order to promote the gender equality culture among students policy makers should choose specialized in gender studies to reform the curriculum in order to deconstruct the stereotypes generated in the media and textbooks.

1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
This paper intends to examine how the contemporary Arab-American poet Mohja Kahf challenges the western and patriarchal interpretations of some Islamic cultural symbols like “Hijab” (the veil). In some poems in the volume 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.

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1 This article was first published in conference proceedings “Gender, Identities and Education. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference “Gender, Identities and Education” (May 23-25, 2016) – Morocco, 2016. – 62p”
2.2. Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying

The materials of this chapter are published in the conference proceedings “International School“Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, March 13-17, 2017)

Gendered Subaltern Voices in Orientalist Discourse

Bekkaoui Kh.
University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, Morocco

This presentation discusses the representation of the *mauresque* (Moorish woman) in the colonial postcard photography and shows the extent to which it is implicated in discourses of racism, imperialism and pornography. It also tries to problematize the configuration of the Oriental woman by foregrounding the gendered subaltern gaze and its subversion of the European photographic eye.

\[1\] This article was first published in school proceedings “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying. Proceedings of the International School “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (March 13-17, 2017). – Ukraine, 2017. – 42 p.”
Curse the Woman Who Travels: Moroccan Women Beyond Borders

Bekkaoui Kh.

University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, Morocco

In her semi-autobiographical novel *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* Moroccan sociologist invokes the idea of the Oriental harem as being organized upon the notion of the *hudud*, “sacred frontiers” which separate not only men and women but also Muslims and Nasara, Christians. The duty of the Muslim is to protect the sacred the frontiers of the harem, and by implication the sacred space of Islam, from being trespassed by women.

Using nineteenth and early twentieth century historical archive, my presentation records Moroccan women’s transgression of the *hudud* and sacred boundaries of Islamic patriarchy by participating in traveling and residing abroad as professional performers, servants, and wives of merchants.

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1 This article was first published in school proceedings “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying. Proceedings of the International School “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (March 13-17, 2017). – Ukraine, 2017. – 42 p.”
Gender- Based Violence in Morocco: Domestic Violence as Case in Point

Naciri H
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Domestic violence is a universally social phenomenon. It plagues profoundly all societies worldwide. Undoubtedly, Morocco is no exception. This phenomenon is becoming more and more a highly striking epidemic; it seriously threatens and dramatically affects the very fabric of Moroccan society. Although considerable research has been devoted to domestic violence rather less attention has been paid to its repercussions and the approaches to eliminate it. In Morocco, violence is overlooked rather than being acknowledged and acted against.

This paper focuses on the gender dimension of domestic violence in Morocco. It questions the inadequate parameters relied on in the existing studies on the subject and underlines their blindness to the complex causes and effects of domestic violence in the country. The paper departs from a conviction that domestic violence is a criminal act that should be questioned and corrected with a view to promoting as well as empowering the status of women in Moroccan society. It approaches this phenomenon from its multi-dimensional perspective in order to underline its social, cultural, legal, as well as economic aspects and implications.

1 This article was first published in school proceedings “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying. Proceedings of the International School “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (March 13-17, 2017). – Ukraine, 2017. – 42 p.”
Shifts and Movement Moments in Morocco ¹

Rddad S.

Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdelah University, Morocco

The presentations traces the evolution of women’s participation in the socio-cultural and political scenes. It explores four major phases: the Protectorate, State Building, Democratization, and the (Post-)Democratic Spring. On the one hand, it explores the ideological tension between the secular liberals and the conservative Islamists. On the other hand, it identifies gender paradigm shifts from Marxist/Leninist class-based rhetoric to gender-based rhetoric, from elitist to grass-root politics, from “the realm of the Divine and the untouchable to the contingent realm of history and human” realm, and from polarization of feminist movements to intersectionality. (Zakia Salime) Besides, it grasps the major feminist ‘movement moments’ of 2000 (Casablanca/Rabat rallies), the 2003 terrorist attacks of Casablanca, and the 2011 (February 20th Movement) leading to the religious/political reforms of the Family Code (2004) and the promulgation of a new constitution (2011).

¹This article was first published in school proceedings “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying. Proceedings of the International School “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (March 13-17, 2017). – Ukraine, 2017. – 42 p.”
This paper addresses contemporary issues in Morocco including veiling, revelling, the dress code, family values, and women in human rights in Morocco. Departing from Edward Said’s notion of ‘traveling theory’ and Arjun Apadurai’s ‘production of locality’, it stresses the specificities of gender and feminist issues in the MENA region and general and Morocco in particular. It argues on the one hand that gender politics is trapped the orthodox conservative conceptions of gender and engagement with the free market of global values. The preservation of the sharia law provisions and subscription to the UN conventions relative to women’s and human rights problematize gender issues in Morocco. Besides, it discusses “Islamist Feminism” and woman outside of the Eurocentric Western binary perspective and outside of the reductive rigid Islamist lens. The paper also shows that the fast socio-economic transformations in Morocco due to colonialism, modernization processes, industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and women’s access to education and the job market were not accompanied by fast transformations at the level of cultural values and gender politics. The latter are so anchored in the collective unconscious of the Moroccans that their pace of transformation is slower than that of the socio-economic structures.

1 This article was first published in school proceedings “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying. Proceedings of the International School “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (March 13-17, 2017). – Ukraine, 2017. – 42 p.”
Participation of Moroccan Women in Politics: Gains and Challenges

Slaoui S., Belghiti K.
Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco

The main question this presentation seeks to address is: How Moroccan women’s civil society activism succeeds in providing women issues as channel through which laws could be changed and through which struggle against Institutional, social and marital violence could be carried out? We show this through the historical evolution of women from the post-colonial state feminism to the state of democratization ideology (2007-2011) and also in the post Arab era. Throughout all these phases, Moroccan women have demonstrated skillful leadership by focusing on major resources (women continuous activism) and training leadership (they serve their community by engaging grassroot activities) and governance as basic achievements. These women activists are aware that they need to count with the state without letting the state control their activities. Through the New Family code, Moroccan women have succeeded in promoting women’s issues. There are many challenges that are still facing Moroccan women, we can cite the following: These women worked and are still working for more effective and freer way of participation of women in building and spreading democracy and the culture of human rights. Other challenges can be explained in terms of the applicability of the family law (e.g. male judges are rigid, a need to involve female women in the change of the family law). A further challenge can be expressed in terms of the problem of the quota through which women have initiated their journey to equality. After the Arab spring, achieving gender equality and a fair participation of women in politics have become the main concerns of feminist movements. Using different means and taking different actions, feminist movements have been able to put the pressure on the government to amend the

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1 This article was first published in school proceedings “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying. Proceedings of the International School “Gender Studies: Teaching, Learning and Studying” (March 13-17, 2017). – Ukraine, 2017. – 42 p.”
constitution in 2011, to increase the number of seats reserved for women increase the political participation of women and even impose changes to criminal laws. Although these achievements cannot go unnoticed, the political and socio-cultural challenges, still faced by feminist movements, are serious obstacles not paving the way for genuine gender equality and women’s participation in politics.
2.3. Gender, Identities and Education

The materials of this chapter are published in the book “Gender, Identities and Education” // Edited by V. Deliyan, A. Tereškinas, K. Bekkaoui, S. Reddad, H. Naciri. – Publisher: Sultan Moulay Slimane University, 2018. – 200 pp.

Gender Identity in Amazigh Textbooks: Teaching Inequality

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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 2003, 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 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.

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 emotionly 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, 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.

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 Frequency of occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Level 6 Frequency of occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>0</td>
<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>
<td>2</td>
<td>29,00%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18,00%</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>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
<td>5</td>
<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>

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 1.2 Percentages of Male 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 of occurrence</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</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.
<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>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>

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:
<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>Feminine Traits</td>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotionally Expressive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38,00%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impetuous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panicky</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100,00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

“\textit{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.}”

\textbf{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:

“\textit{...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:

“\textit{...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


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

Lamiae Azzouzi

Moulay Ismail University, Morocco

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 undergraduate and post-graduate studies in different foreign universities around the globe. The experience of embracing other cultures, mentalities, 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 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 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 lack 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 trraza ‘a woman who practices the art of embroidery’, lm3alma 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 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 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 upon 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

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<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1</td>
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<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>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
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</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**

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<th></th>
<th>Low class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Upper class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner’s Moral support</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
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<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>1 %</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, decent, 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

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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.

Fig 1: Distribution of modality to genders in the textbooks

The overall

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<th>Probabilities</th>
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<th>Gate 1</th>
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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obligation &amp; Prohibition</th>
<th>Outlook</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Windo</th>
<th>Gate 1</th>
<th>Tick et1</th>
<th>Tick et2</th>
<th>Gate 2</th>
<th>Insights</th>
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</table>

Table 2: Frequency of the obligation modals
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.

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](image)

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.
<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>Gate 1</th>
<th>Tick et1</th>
<th>Tick et2</th>
<th>Gate 2</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Total s</th>
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Table 3: Frequency of modals expressing different functions
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:

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 showing the distribution and percentage of the 4 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
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<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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 4: Gender representation in occupational and household roles

The table shows that the textbooks indeed try to distribute equally the occupational and household roles to both sexes. However, some occupations and activities which are often associated with intellect, high esteem and social power are more frequently assigned to males. Astonishing enough as a fact of clear sexism is the distribution of doctor roles to different genders. In fact, male doctors outnumber female doctors by more than the half. While male doctors are described as active, examining people and producing prescriptions, female doctors are only heard as titles, piece of information about secondary characters or illustration. Mrs. Itry as a main character is also a doctor (Window, SB, p.49). The learner hears about her profession in the beginning of the book and from her fellow doctors at the hospital, but she is never seen at work. Rather, she is present in the dialogues as a wife, mother or a fellow female friend. Furthermore, there are more males as scientists and specialists than females, 24 to 8 correspondingly. The implication is that the male young learners rather than female have more opportunities to identify with socially high-ranked occupations such as doctors scientists and specialists. On the contrary, female sphere of life is confined to service-oriented functions such as housewife, seeking knowledge such as reporter and care giving such as nurse. Whether working or not, the woman’s principal role is in the home. When extended outside the house, 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.

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**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


“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>
<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).

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 number of T-units ratio</td>
<td>mean number of clauses per T-unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

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:

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);
\( t(101) = -4.29, p = 0.000 \). The t value is negative indicating that group 2 mean (girls’ mean) is larger than group 1 mean (boys’ mean).

**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>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free T-units</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error free T-unit ratio</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words per T-unit</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clauses per</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-unit</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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


Arab-American Women Write Back: Poetry as Resistance in Mohja Kahf’s E-mails from Scheherazade

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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, Mohja Kahf 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

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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, Mohja Kahf 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 Mohja Kahf’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
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
situations 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, theses 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), BengtSjøstrand (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 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. 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.

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.
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

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 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.

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 word, 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


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

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2. The present paper is based on the 1998 edition of *Herland* published by Dover publications
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.

**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 interrogative encounter that utterly challenges male stereotyped expectations through which females are erroneously thought to be natural subordinate subjects. Dislocating the “male gaze”¹ 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

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¹ 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.
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 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 Jacques 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 athletism 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”\(^1\) 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 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

\(^1\) Coined by Lacan (1977), phallocentrism is the male-privileging centering on the phallus to produce meaning for signifying human experience.
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.

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

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1. 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
2. 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.
3. 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
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.¹ 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

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

¹ 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)
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

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1. In *The Second Sex* (2009) Simone de Beauvoir addresses the same patriarchal myth of order making mention of 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)
2. 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.
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, 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

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1 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).
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.\(^1\) In sharp contrast to the world of modernity where the men came from, Herland 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

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\(^1\) 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 protective to natural environment than men. Ecofeminism also conceives that women are exploited by the patriarchal society in the same way as natural resources.
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 decentring 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 laissez 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

1. 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.
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

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.\(^1\) 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

\(^1\) 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.
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 ascendancy 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 suspiciously portrayed by Ellador as a power apparatus that prescribes unnatural fixed norms in order to empower men for sustaining their dominance.  

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

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1- 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).
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 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.¹

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

¹ In her *Women and Economics* (1898), Gilman defends the thesis that women can be financially autonomous and competitive to men in public life.
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.¹ 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 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:


¹- 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).


2.4. Gender Studies: Learning, Research and Practice

AIDA ALAMI: POLITICS OF A FEMALE ACTIVIST

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In Morocco, journalism is usually conceived as a male profession and practice. Only recently have women started publishing in newspapers. In 2004 the number of female journalists was 468 while the figure of their male counterparts reached 1314, that is to say 26,2%.\(^2\) Six years later, in 2010, the figure remained almost the same: 26,47%.\(^3\) Concerning Moroccan journalism in English it is a very unusual phenomenon.\(^4\) The interesting exception is Aida Alami, the most outstanding Moroccan woman journalist in English.

Aida Alami is a Moroccan journalist writing on Moroccan and North African politics and human rights. She was born and raised in Marrakech and the age of 18 she moved to New York City where she got her BA in Media Studies from Hunter College and a Masters in Journalism from Columbia University in 2009.

Currently living in New York, Alami has contributed articles to outstanding newspapers, including The New York Times, Foreign Policy, the Financial Times, and USA Today. Her articles have also appeared in famous TV websites such as CNN and Al Jazeera. In addition, she has given interviews to many TV news channels such as France 24 and Al Jazeera English, Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, which have given her ideas great exposure.\(^5\)

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\(^4\) Mention can be made to Chaima Lahsini who in 2017 was chosen by the BBC channel as of the world 100 inspirational women. She is a regular contributor to the online news website Morocco World News.

\(^5\) Some of her articles are translated into Arabic and posted on Moroccan electronic news sites such as Maghress.com
1. The Arab Spring and the Making of Female Journalist

In an interview on a YouTube video entitled “How to Become a Journalist in Mainstream Media,” Alami explains that it has always been her dream to be a journalist and that it was the Tunisian Arab Spring which first inspired her to start a career in journalism. At the beginning of the Revolution, Alami flew to Tunisia to cover the events because she felt that she “was writing about something that mattered.”¹

Then she moved to write about the Arab Spring in Egypt, Algeria, Syria; and Morocco. Her knowledge of Arabic, French, and English enhanced her journalistic profile immensely. Still, Morocco remains a dominant topic in her journalistic writings.

Writing on the Arab Spring in an article entitled “Arab Art as an Early Indicator of Revolution,” Alami quotes Tunisian artist Faten Chouba Skhiri as saying that “The revolution is not over yet. The real fear is that the revolution fails. We are in a transitional period and we are still digesting extremely intense changes. There is a very strong need for structures to encourage artists. We don’t even have an art museum to see the evolution of our art.”²

In her writing on the Arab Spring, Alami is frustrated that political reforms in Morocco are slow and superficial, which explains the continuation of the hirak, uprisings. She says, “A year later and with a new government in office, Morocco still faces huge economic and social challenges. There are frequent cases of self-immolation such as the one that set off the revolution in Tunisia.”³

Alami repeatedly refers to the Moroccan regime’s consolidation of itself in the post Arab Spring. She quotes Zineb Belmkaddem, 32, a Moroccan human rights activist and a member of the February 20 Movement, as saying,

¹ YouTube. (2018). How to Become a Journalist in Mainstream Media. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68FBuq3zUk&t
In my opinion, the Moroccan regime has become a lot more powerful in the past five years, flexible in its PR machine in portraying itself as progressing towards implementing democratic changes.\(^1\)

Alami is disillusioned about reforms in Morocco and continuously refers to the State repressive politics against pro-democracy voices. She quotes a source as saying, “The truth is that activists are still being silenced and human rights associations are repressed and see their activities banned.”\(^2\)

In the *Middle East Eye (MEE)*, an online news portal, Alami discusses the Moroccan State’s crackdown on journalists for promoting independent journalism by teaching citizen journalists how to use Story Maker\(^3\) to publishes news stories. Five journalists are accused of “violating national security” while two other are accused of receiving foreign funds to damage the image of Morocco.\(^4\)

Alami’s point of view is expressed through Abdeslam Maghraoui, North Africa expert and Professor of Political Science at Duke University, who considers that the trial of the journalist “is yet another reference point in the long and continuing slide toward clear-cut authoritarian rule, with no adjectives to qualify it.” For Maghraoui “Democracy advocates in Morocco will have to stop fooling themselves about the possibility of democratic reforms from above. It is not going to happen.”


\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Story Maker is a smartphone app that produces and publishes news stories.

2. Al Hoceima: Al Hirak Shaabi

Alami sees the Hoceima’s uprising as a continuation of the Moroccan Spring protests\(^1\) because it developed from protests against the death of the fishmonger, Mouhcine Fikri, into a movement that demanded social and political reform not only for the region of Al Hoceima but for the entire of Morocco that she qualifies as al-Hirak al-Shaabi.

When questioned by a journalist about the fact that the king admonished the governments for not going fast enough to develop the Riff regions, she answered that “the power is very centralized” and that “the government responses to him.” She adds that “the way the system is implemented now does not work for citizens and for these protesters.\(^2\)

3. Gender Dimension of the Hirak Shaabi

Alami is very much interested in the gender dimension of the hirak. She highlights the role of women in the uprising. She interviewed Salima Ziani, a young singer from the Rif, who left her studies to join the uprising with her singing and creating militant slogans.

I always sang about social justice, about victims of oppression, but we were deeply saddened that the son of our land was killed in that manner. [...] I also came up with slogans and expressed myself as a citizen. People started to know me quickly because of the strength of my voice. I wanted to show that women also were involved.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) YouTube. (2018). "Europe is an enabler" of Morocco's repressive policies. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=22&v=WDOiBHiF4Pw.

Salima Ziani also relates the harrowing story of her arrest by the secret police and detention in Casablanca for two months. Of this experience she says: “I discovered many things in prison. It was one of the best experiences and one of the hardest at the same time.” Her father telephoned her and said to her “You are a hero.”

Singing in prison saved her from madness. “During those two months,” Salima says, “I would sometimes sing alone.” She also used to “sing for the other prisoners.”

**Conclusion**

Aida Alami is a daring diasporic gendered voice who ventures into politically tabooed topics. She emerged as a prominent female journalist during the Arab Spring, with a clear agenda of giving agency to the voiceless. Her articles show that diaspora can be easily involved in conflicts from the other end of the world through electronic means¹, and her use of English language in the most well-known newspapers grants the voiceless a global audience.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE FEMININE BODY:
FROM RHETORICS TO THE IMAGINARY IN ARAB CULTURE

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My aim in this paper is to reconsider the nature of the Arabic cultural representations about the Arabic woman from two perspectives: her body beauty and the available anthropological, phenomenological and semiotic contributions concerning personal and social phenomena.

- The Feminine body model developed by the Arabic culture is an aesthetic model which is imaginary and subject to the unconscious collective representations and its symbolic structures.

- This aesthetic model is imaginary because it inspired from discursive and poetic rhetorics and the body related figurative lexicon that enhances the construct of femininity within normative cultural boundaries.

THE BODY AND IMAGINATION

It is quite impossible to treat the body itself as well as beauty(aesthetics) independently from its features. The body, through its sensuality and physical existential nature, forms a relational means with existence and a tangible aspect of what is referred to as “spirit or “soul in the Arabic culture where a strong relation between women and the male imaginary is born out of the very sense of the Sacred and its symbolic manifestations.

In his book entitled “al hayawan”(animals), ELJAHED reports that the woman with a fairy form(slim) was labeled as “sa’alat” for her lightness. Two interpretations are to drawn from ELJAHED’s words:

First: the prevalent aesthetic model of the body until the Abbasids was the extravagantly plump woman “El bahkana” (literally meaning: the woman who stands on four and returns on eight) as used by the antiquity poet Tarafa ibnu Elaabd. Another poet, Kaab Ibnu Zoheir, describe such a woman as “booty from the back, fairy form from the front”

Second: there was a dominant imaginary, from antiquity, about the fairy woman (Jenni woman) with supernatural beauty who forces marriage on her desired man. Such kind of marriage deeds have become the subject of controversy for many religious scholars (see CHABLI’s book “AKAAM EL MORJAN FI AHKAAMI EL JAAN”)

Such a mixture between beauty and fascination (fitna) stands behind this dominant imagination considered, in a way or another, as responsible for the production/generation of two fictional symbolic images about women, which express the libidinal illusions of the Arabs. These two images are The Jinni woman “Essa’alat” and Hor El ‘Ayn (paradise maidens).

Hor El ‘AYN are the paradise maidens promised by God-Allah to his faithful worshipers-believers in the afterlife. They are called so and perceived from the perspective of their extreme physical beauty, the beauty of their shape, appearance and eye. It should be stressed here that the beauty of the eyes expresses metonymically the beauty of the face and, thus, the beauty of the body.

The focus on these paradise maidens as being of white skin reveals unconsciously particular preferences and therefore phantasies which have formed and founded the very basics of the feminine body beauty in the Arabo-Islamic culture. ESSOULAMI EL QORTOBI (p 72) says: “though a paradise maiden puts on 70 dresses/gowns ,still the marrow her bones can be seen through her flesh,bones and dress as wine is seen through the bottle transparent glass”. Ibnu Abi Hajla Tlemcani in his “diwan ssababa” reports that Aicha ,one the prophet’s wives said: “whiteness is an important prerequisite of beauty” (p56).

The mysticists’ representation:
Ibnu ‘arabi, in many of mystic poetry attributes divine qualities to his beloved identified with the divine self in a metaphorical way. Such identification establishes a harmonious bond between the visible and the invisible the spiritual and the physical thanks to an active imagination materializing the soul/spirit and spiritualizing the body. Accordingly, the female turns into a spiritual body positioned between God (Allah) and Man, acquiring thus an existential precedence over man.

**The Arabs’ view of Beauty:**

The Arabs’ conception of beauty is not void of amazement which makes the beauty of the body as part of a phantastic imaginary bridging, thus, the between beauty and love which generates rhetoric and imagination. SALAH EDDINE EL MOUNJID reports in his book (Woman’s beauty in the Arabs’ eyes) a very significant event: “A religious pious hermit, Abu Hazem, while carrying out the pilgrimage rituals in Mecca, saw a beautiful woman touring around the Kaaba. He was aesthetically enchanted by her image and expressed that to his companions saying: come and pray Allah not to punish with fire the beautiful image. While earnestly imploring Allah, his companions said: Amen” .Such an aesthetic enchantment translates the importance of beauty of the body in the Islamic conception and the legitimacy of visual pleasure.

The conclusion to be drawn from these points is the general nature of the imaginary concerning the feminine body as it has been represented in the Arabic cultural discourse through poetry, narratives and other forms of discourses.

**The Feminine Beauty and the Body Rhetorics:**

Consider the following text by an old woman servicing the king of kindah Amrou Ibn Hajart , the grandfather of the pre-Islamic famous poet Amro el Qais, as a messenger whose mission was to examine the daughter of Aouf ibn Mahlam Echaybani as a future wife. She reported:

“I saw a front as a crystal mirror, beautified with long hair in plaits as a horse tail. When she combs her hair, it looks like vine grapes watered by heavy rains. Her eyebrows, as painted with a crayon drawing or blackened
with a piece of coal, look like those of a wild calf. Between them, a sharp nose as the shining blade...her cheeks are as the blossoming jasmine. Her teeth are a chain of pearls and her breath as wine and honey. Her breasts look like apples...apart from that my lord, the other parts are far better than any prose or poetry have done”

This descriptive discourse works systematically, creating a certain correspondence between the given body and the referential natural model in its aesthetic and symbolic power. The enunciator of this discourse which is displaced in a time different from the time of direct observation of the feminine body is, in fact, describing her own body and memory; that is, her own feminine competence to strip the other’s body linguistically in the presence of the discourse receiver.

Two points are to be made from this visual sensual description:

1- It predicates the body on an apriori model of beauty given that the rhetorical construction of such beauty requires a specific formulation of the discourse. The body image is transformed into a codified mental image (representation) to use Sartre’s concept that the mental image belongs to the imaginary, and is ready to manifest linguistically and create pleasure.

2- However, this meticulous description is not apparently enough to let us know about the taste of the woman’s skin, bones and sweat. The old woman, doing the description, identifies with/ slips into the king’s skin, feelings and desires. She perceives the body of the future bride with the king’s eyes while the king/male turns into a Voyeur through the woman’s eyes.

Generally, this descriptive discourse emphasizes on the one hand that the aesthetic rhetorical model is deeply rooted since antiquity and that the concept of beauty refers to the visual aspect of the body given that sensual beauty is crafted rhetorically. The old woman’s silence about the sexual organs of the described bride relates to the limits imposed by the moral constraints or what Foucault calls” constraints on sex”, and projects on what the poetic and discursive memory has accumulated.
It is evident that the Islamic texts emphasize persistently on beauty. Religion positions the body within the domain of the sacred, and the Mohamedian faith focalizes the conditions of marriage on the hymen, beauty, and the fair woman reproductivity. Such conditions fit the aesthetic representation and enhances the typical aspect of the imaginary about the feminine body constructed rhetorically to the extent that its real ontological equivalent seems inexistent. The caliphate **Abdel Malek ibnu Marwan** sought advice from a wise man about the typical beautiful woman. The man replied:

“o my Lord, prince of believers! Take the one with soft feet with no bulging ankles. Her calves shall be full and her knees not bony. Her thighs neither slim nor fat, with round butts, big arms with soft palms, standing breasts(fausse maigre), rosy cheeks, dark eyes with fine eyebrows, fine sharp nose, white teeth, dark hair, flat belly”

The caliph asked: where can such a woman be found?

The man replied: the pure Arab or the pure Persian”

This image of the body beauty is created as something possible to be imagined and represented, to be particularized and generalized. Given that the very component of the imaginary, its necessity as an aesthetic body emanates from its being autonomous from reality and transcendent of the realistic model. It should be highlighted that the different aesthetic models of the body (the plump body in antiquity and the fairy and slim body in the Islamic era) express unconsciously the libidinal states of the Arabic society. The intertwinement of pleasure and desire with the aesthetic model is emphatically clear and gives vent to an anticipated sexual contact on the level of the imaginary.

How does the relationship between desire and the aesthetic model of the feminine body develop?

First, the desire of appropriation/possession which secludes the body from its ontological and social dimension transforms the body into a myth/ transcendental mythological being( Merleau-ponty (1964:223). This seclusion generates an
imaginary body because the separation between the psychological and the physical dismantles the ontological/ existential unity of the being.

Second, despite that the existence of the human being is rooted in the physical body, his presence is realized through the interaction between his different components and their related significance. In this way, the typical aesthetic body turns into an object of pleasure. Given that, in phenomenological terms, the body’s raison d’être is for the other, the feminine body becomes an object of masculine desire.

Generally, it is noteworthy that the aesthetic model, though it belongs to the sacred and imaginary, possesses its own specific historicity. For instance, in the pre-Islamic era, the Arabs preferred the plump woman and compared her to a six-legged animal while in the Abbasside era, the preference went to the slim fairy woman.

In parallel to the discursive obsession by the feminine body and the transformation of this body into the imaginary, Arabs developed a whole feminine body lexicon which can be considered as an extension of their original passionate interest in animals especially horses and camels (See El hassri (the flowers of literature), also Ethaalibi (science of language)) such lexical interest sprang from the taxonomies and classifications which impregnated and steered the cultural imaginary in the Arabic cultural field.

Certainly, the feminine body imaginary was considered a source of visual and discursive pleasure which elevated the body and made of it a cultural body subject to the evolving aesthetic beliefs.
EUROPEAN WOMEN IN EARLY MOROCCAN TRAVEL NARRATIVES

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Abstract:
Traveling from Morocco to Europe during the 17th century formed a political, cultural, religious and linguistic challenge to Moroccan travelers, who were mainly ambassadors. They left travel narratives which documented their journeys, encounters and impressions of the European cities they visited. They provided detailed descriptions of what they witnessed and experienced. This topic is relevant due to the importance history plays in building connections between the past, the present and the future. Travel narratives are part of the Moroccan heritage that needs to be documented and preserved. The primary sources chosen for this study are rich in terms of information and the raw material they provide for research and analysis. They document the encounter between Moroccan travelers and European women in different settings which generated different views and perceptions. In this article, I will work mainly on two narratives written by two Moroccan travelers to Europe, al-Hajari (1609-1611) and al-Ghassani (1690-1691). I will discuss the different heterogeneous representations which they provided about the women and the different roles they played in their society which was unprecedented to them. I will also deal with the religious side of their narratives which was based on concepts of Haram and hurma. Their presence challenged their conservative perceptions that they did not know how to act in mixed settings, as they were unable to understand the relative freedom of movement which women enjoyed during that period.

**Keywords:** European women, Moroccan travelers, narratives, representation, encounters.

One of the most intriguing issues that caught the attention of Moroccan travelers to Europe is the status of women in European societies. Both Ahmed Ibn Qassim al-Hajari (who was sent to France and Holland by Muley Zidan in 1609-1611) and Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani (who was sent to Spain by Muley Ismail in 1690-1691) had different experiences with women from different European countries from various social backgrounds which allowed them to form their own views about them. They provided various representations of European women that ranged from women from royal families, women from prestigious families, ordinary women, nuns, singers, nurses, workers... These meetings with the women challenged the travelers’ perceptions of women. They regarded them as a temptation and a challenge that they had to face in each gathering.

The women were eager to engage in discussions with their visitors like what happened with al-Hajari in Paris when he was invited to dine at a judge’s house. There were women among his hosts who seized the opportunity of having a Muslim on the table and started asking him several questions about his religion and drawing comparisons between Islam and Christianity. The women expressed a good intellect in his narrative and a readiness for dialogue for which he was ready; especially that he was well versed in both the language and the Bible. Whenever he disagreed with them, he did not bring them evidences from the Quran only but from the Bible as well. The women tried to prove him the falsity of his religion but his solid arguments from both holy books were convincing that they confessed to him: “We encountered many men of your religion with whom we talked much but none of them had the ability to come up with the answers you gave.”¹ (Al-Hajari: 1995, p. 66) Among the issues they discussed are: fasting in Islam and Christianity, the banning of alcohol and pork, and polygamy.

Al-Ghassani witnessed the various roles women played in providing for their families through their work outside the house. They worked along with men in

¹ Translation is mine.
some of the biggest markets in Madrid to which they came from all the nearby villages to sell their products. According to al-Ghassani:

Most of what it is eaten in Madrid comes from the villages nearby by women who come riding their animals. Some of them take bread to specific houses according to how much these houses ordered as the *nasara/Christians* do not bake bread at home.¹ (Al-Ghassani: 2002, p. 88)

European women were able to take their household work into a higher level by meeting the needs of the European market. European families depended heavily on those big markets for every day needs of food and crafts, and the women were there to work and get paid for it. They also worked as managers, cooks, cashiers, waitresses at restaurants and hotels to help their husbands and fathers manage their businesses. European women were given a chance to work and be productive beyond the borders of the house. The Moroccan traveler, who usually believed that the best place for a woman is her house, was able to notice this shift in gender roles concerning the European society.

Al-Ghassani was fascinated by the nuns he encountered when he visited a convent in Linares, Spain. It was something which he was not accustomed to and it intrigued his curiosity. Though he was against the system of women becoming nuns and abandoning their earthly world and believed that the woman’s entrance into a convent is basically like her death as she will have nothing left in the world and she will be completely secluded. However, he was eager to know more about them, what brought them there, and what made them take that life changing decision.

The travelers were usually confused about how to behave in the presence of European women whose status was different from that of Moroccan women. They enjoyed a degree of liberty that was new and confusing which entailed other things that were not tolerated in the Moroccan culture or the Islamic teachings. According to Nabil Matar: “Muslim visitors viewed the meeting with women among their

¹ Translation is mine.
European hosts as a difficult challenge.” (Matar: 2009, p. 106) It was a challenge which entailed a fear of temptation by the unveiled European beauty which resulted in a discomfort in mixed gatherings.

Al-Hajari had contradicting feelings towards European women which was a mixture of admiration and reserve. He respected them but he also saw them as a temptation from which he must protect himself and his entourage. According to Abdessalam Himer:

If the Europeans see the Moroccan man as a fanatic who imposes the veil on the woman who does not even get to know before he marries her, then ambassador Afouqai finds the freedom of the European woman which is reflected in her exposed beauty, and the mixing and talking to the men is but an evidence of their immorality and corruption. In Afougai’s view, the European woman is temptation itself.² (Himer: 1990, p. 138)

In their descriptions of women, the travelers have often regarded them as temptation that they must not submit to. In order to protect themselves, they resorted to their religion and to Allah to keep these “satanic creatures” away from them and to strengthen their faith. Al-Hajari recounted different occasions in which he preached his companions in order to preserve themselves and not to let go to their emotions and desires. He said special duaas (prayers) in order to control his desires and his companions’: “[…] due to exposed women, Satan started to whisper to us a lot but we were patient.”³ (Al-Hajari: 1995, p. 69) He had a constant fear that they might weaken and fall into temptation in the “lands of the Christians” where women exposed their beauty freely and mixed with men and engaged in conversations with them with no barriers.

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¹ Al-Hajari
² Translation is mine.
³ Translation is mine.
Al-Ghassani had the chance to visit different cities which enabled him to meet and interact with different Spanish women. His general view of European women is that they are of extreme beauty but he never went beyond this physical description. “Extremely beautiful” is one of the most common expressions with which he described most of the Spanish women he encountered.

When dealing with European women, Moroccan travelers’ interactions were based on the teachings of Islam that call for tolerance and dialogue, but they were also aware of the concept of haraam religiously forbidden in their behaviors and conducts that they had to set limits. As guests to Christian European hosts, Moroccan travelers respected the hurma/sanctity of the place and the people they lived with; as Muslims, it was their duty to protect it and never dare to cross it in any way. As Matar said: “They did not mention the women’s names because, as their hosts, they considered them as hurma.” (Matar: 2009, p. 106) They were careful in writing about the women because in the Islamic societies, women’s personal affairs and information are not to be displayed in public; out of their respect to the hurma of the Christian European female hosts, they avoided mentioning their names. They were usually referred to by their positions in society, whether wives or daughters; or by their occupations as nuns, nurses, singers or workers.

To conclude, al-Hajjari and al-Ghassani are two of the earliest Moroccan travelers who left narratives of their journeys to Europe. The presence of women was evident in both accounts as they provide various representations and perceptions about women who were also given a voice to present themselves and their ideas. As much as the position of the women came to them as surprise, it was also a challenge to them as religious men. During their journeys, they were afraid of temptation by the European beauty so they considered it a jihad/struggle against the self and a test to their faith.

References:


THE MOROCCAN ISLAMIST DISCOURSE ON WOMEN’S REFORMS: AMBIVALENCE AND RIGIDITY¹
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Abstract:
Throughout the whole world, women have been relegated to the margin. In the Muslim world this marginalization has been legitimized under the name of Islam. In Morocco, women’s rights organizations’ endeavors to reforms women’s issues have been met with the Islamists fervent resistance. This academic article discusses the difference between the two Islamist groups’ ideologies in approaching women’s issues: the political party the PJD and the justice and spirituality group. The PJD’s political co-optation accounts for its ambivalent discourse which lost its essence while the Justice and Spirituality’s rigidity and devotion to their theoretical framework eclipsed the need to suggest realistic reforms that can be compatible with the current conditions.

The importance given to the issue of women and gender in Islamist groups in the Middle East has been tremendously increasing not only after the Arab Spring but even before. Morocco is a country in which the Islamists have been vocal and have made their way into international media and academic research interests. Indeed, the most important players of the Islamist ideology in Morocco are: al-Adl wa al-Ihsan group (the Justice and spirituality group) and the Justice and Development party, the PJD. Although they both advocate the rule of shari’a law, they have chosen different paths towards the realization of this end. While al-Adl

opposes the regime and the monarchy, the PJD works from within the official political framework of the country.

Concerning women’s issues, the two groups’ ideologies used to converge especially when they led the 2000 Casablanca march against the PNIFD, the National Plan for the Integration of Women in Development which suggested some reforms like: raising marriage age to eighteen instead of fifteen, abolishing the matrimonial tutor (wali), suppressing polygamy, sharing goods in case of divorce, etc. However, ideologies started to diverge with the PJD’s coming to power in 2011. Therefore, this article argues that while al-Adl’s ideology vis-à-vis women’s issues and reforms has always been oppositional, clear-cut and explicit, the PJD’s ideology has become ambivalent and not well-delineated. Al-Adl abides by its theoretical framework, al-Minhaj an-Nabawi (the prophetic method), whereas, the PJD is swaying between the parties’ Islamist ideology and its political participation that are hard to reconcile without controversy and contradictions.

The Arab Spring has allowed for the emergence of a plurality of silent/silenced voices. The PJD, for instance, made its way to power after it won 30% of parliamentary seats in the 2011 elections. It is known for holding oppositional stance vis-à-vis women’s rights. Their coming to power has ignited the discontent of the secularists and women’s rights organizations fearing to hinder their progress.¹ This fear is caused by the PJD’s claim that women’s reforms are secular and hence incompatible with Islamic teachings. For instance, in reference to CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) that Morocco ratified in 1993, Bassima Hakkaoui, the only minister in the PJD’s government, expressed her discontent and concern about the incompatibility between international treaties and Islamic laws especially concerning issues like inheritance, a bone of contention between the secularists and

the Islamists.\textsuperscript{1} It is worth-mentioning that Hakkaoui’s ministry encompasses women’s issues.

Besides international treaties, the PJD could not unleash its grudge against the PNIFD which it considered “threatening” to the Islamic identity. The National Plan was “threatening” for the Islamists as it called for a radical change in favor of women and for an approach on “gender” that conservatives cannot easily absorb. Ironically enough, the PJD accepted the 2004 reformed \textit{Mudawwana} (the family code) initiated by the king as Commander of the Faithful, the title which gives him religious authority. The \textit{Mudawwana} does not differ so much from the reforms of the PNIFD as it raised the age of marriage to eighteen, restricted the role of the matrimonial tutor, restricted polygamy, etc. The PJD, after having been a fervent opponent of the PNIFD’s reforms, “praised the effort of adapting the reform to the precepts of the Islamic Law”.\textsuperscript{2} Therefore, the PJD’s political co-potentiation does not allow for the contestation of laws coming from above.

The ORCF, which is the PJD’s Organization of the Renewal of Feminine Consciousness, further proves the discrepancy between the party’s agenda and its political actions. Women affiliated to the PJD hold a traditionalist vision like affirming that women should stay home if the husband is financially well-off and the priority of women is their family. Also, they advocate some of the most outraging and sensitive issues like the right to polygamy, the right to the guardianship of the father and women’s marriage starting from the age of fifteen.\textsuperscript{3}

In fact, since the PJD’s coming to power, their actions speak of a lot of contradictions. It is true that it is a way of survival in the political field to hold a moderate tone vis-à-vis reforms that were once attacked under the name of Islam. This moderate tone guarantees the PJD, and other Islamists who have chosen the


same path, access to politics/power and simultaneously the loss of their ideology. It is this ideological incoherence which accounts for the ambivalent position of the group. Hence, this weakens the party’s discourse. It does neither fully adhere to the very principles and ideology of the group nor to the demands of the regime. This state of ambivalence and “inbetweeness” becomes manifest when Abdelilah Benkiran, the former head of state, displays his anti-women’s rights agenda by stressing that women need to go back to their houses and live up to “the status that God gave to them”. Benkiran resorted to this offense at the time when the government failed “to solve the country’s economic problems”\(^1\). This offense is released at the time when the party works according to the 2011 constitutions which further stresses equality between the sexes. Thus, political co-optation has a heavy cost: being inside the political scene but losing the very essence of the party’s principles.

Despite the monolithic way whereby Islamist groups are seen, *al-Adl wa al-Ihsan*’s orientations and motivations differ to a great extent from the PJD’s. *Al-Adl*’s clear-cut ideology is attributed to the group’s adherence to the *Minhaj* which, for them, provides “exhaustive” answers. Sheikh Yassine, the spiritual guide and the founder of the group, explains *Minhaj* as “adhering to the word of God in the Quran and to the *Sunnah* (the prophetic tradition) at the psychological, moral, spiritual social, political and economic levels”\(^2\). All in all, it is all about the return to the past when Islam was triumphant. “The exhaustive nature” of the *Minhaj* is extended to women. Yassine wrote a book entitled *Tanwir al-Muminate* (Enlightening the Believing woman) in which he holds a “double criticism” on the lamentable situation of women. The first criticism is launched against the monarchy which based on a hereditary system and which is, according to Yassine, the source of injustice. The second criticism is against secularism and secular concepts like “feminism”.

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\(^1\) Sadiqi, op.cit, p. 22


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Nadia Yassine, an ardent activist in al-Adl, herself stood still against any change proposed by the regime. As she is the most vocal figure in the group, she translates this “double criticism” in her own way. While resisting against the PNID, Nadia Yassine says: “this is not a counter-march; this is the march of women against any foreign infiltration to our cultural particularity. We can blame many things on the Mudawana but there must be a dialogue and a national consensus to modify it”.¹ For her as for the whole group, this reform is a kind of apostasy since the plan does not refer to Islam and the Sharia. In an interview with a German magazine, Der Spiegel, she questions the validity of women’s right to divorce when they cannot provide for herself. Therefore, for her, the real problems to address are: poverty and unemployment.

In addition to Nadia Yassine’s activism, Adlist women represent the ideology of the group through the women’s section. Like Nadia Yassine, they try to defend women’s rights on religious grounds. For instance, on their website www.mouminate.com which is referred to as Akhawat al-Akhira (literally, women of the hereafter), they re-write the history of female heroism both during the prophetic era and afterwards. This website is a platform of criticizing the adynamic jurisprudence which stresses the inferiority of women. They invoke examples of sahabiyyat² who were dynamic outside home. As a case in point, Sharaf Hamidi, an adherent to the group, wrote an article about Rafida Bintu Saad, the first doctor in Islam who participated in the battle of Khyber and treated Muslim patients and the wounded. This article is written with the intention to subvert the image of Muslim women as passive. However, their adherence to Minhaj does not allow them to be more audacious in their writings. All they do is rewrite history, which is indeed important, but which they cannot exceed.

The group’s disability to propose practical reforms to women’s issues is eclipsed by their “myth” of returning to the glorious past which does not take into

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² Sahabiyyat refers to women companions of the prophetic era.
account the cultural, sociological and religious dimensions. Their past is far-reaching. This is one of the pitfalls of the group’s rigid adherence to their theoretical framework. Regardless of their different paths, all the Islamists cling to the idea of returning to the past. In *Beyond the veil*, Fatima Mernissi explains the return as follows:

The need for Muslims to claim so vehemently that they are traditional and that their women are miraculously escape social change and the erosion of time, has to be understood in terms of their need to for self-representation and must be classified as psychological need to maintain a minimal sense of identity in a confusing and shifting reality.¹

Mernissi indeed comments on the Islamist demands as a way of resorting to the past to redeem the “gloomy” present they live in. Actually, the Islamist ideology, like all the ideologies, is full of loopholes. When they accept political co-optation, their ideology becomes ambivalent due to the attempt to reconcile with secular regimes. Also, when they remain rigid in front of the exercise of their agenda, they miss being part and parcel of the changes that occur despite their will.

**References:**


ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PORTRAYAL OF GENDER ROLES IN MOROCCAN BILLBOARDS

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Abstract

As a thriving means of communication, the billboard has become an indisputably accessible advertising tool displaying different products as well as social themes. Among these are gender roles; images of men and women in billboards have been considerably stereotyped. The aim of this paper is to examine people’s reactions to the portrayal of gender in Moroccan billboards. A questionnaire has been distributed. Statistical analysis is used for calculating the frequencies of the different variables and analyzing the results.

Keywords: gender roles, billboards, attitudes, stereotyping, products

Introduction

Advertisers penetrate in everyday life to stimulate desire and promote interest in products by communicating existing social ideas and issues. One of the main themes that have been granted considerable attention is gender roles, an issue that has always been a fertile subject and part of a large body of research such as Fiske, 1990; Jhally, 1995; Browne, 1998; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2006; Chisholm, 2014, among others. Images of men and women in advertising have been significantly gender-typed portraying stereotypical images of independent, active, assertive, work oriented men, and dependent, passive, domestic women, which is in the interest of the economic system (Fiske, 1990; Chisholm, 2014). This

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stereotypical view of gender roles is perpetuated through advertising (Dale, 2004; Harker, Harker and Svenson, 2005).

As a means of advertising, the billboard is a visual form of communication that has power in reinforcing gender roles stereotyping. In fact, the present work is a follow-up to a previous study about the portrayal of gender roles in pictures of billboards (Hdii & Kerouad, 2014). In fact, 54 billboards advertising different products were content analyzed to depict how roles are attributed to men and women in the billboards. The study showed the movement towards technology and the participation of both sexes in marketing this technology through the medium of billboards. The research demonstrated a diversity in gender roles when advertising a product, which showed that women are no longer restricted to certain products but have more varied and different roles. In other words, the billboards displayed women, though not in the same frequency as men, in professional roles other than those related to the home and beauty to which they were restricted in the past. This might be due to the progress women have made at entering professions and filling positions once held almost exclusively by men (Hdii & Kerouad, 2014). To complete this study, opinions about billboards portraying gender are needed. Hence, the present article aims at examining how people perceive the portrayal of gender in Moroccan billboards in relation to the products advertised.

**Methodology**

This study seeks to explore people’s opinions about the portrayal of gender in billboards. Hence, a questionnaire was completed by a sample of 120 respondents. 48% are men and 52% are women ranging between 18 and 55 years old. The questions are about billboards that show men and women performing a diversity of tasks related to different domains such as technology, household, and professionalism. The questions are mainly of the Lickert Scale type and are grouped into two parts. The first part is concerned with gender image and attraction while the second part deals with gender roles in relation to products and services.

**Results and discussion**
Concerning questions related to gender image and attraction, results show that the portrayal of women annoys 20% of respondents against just 2.3% who dislike the portrayal of men. On the other hand, 27% prefer billboards showing women while only 5% like billboards showing men. This might seem contradictory. However, it can imply that people are, generally, not satisfied with the portrayal of women in billboards, which can be related to how people perceive women in their culture. Indeed, because of their cultural background, people seem to be indifferent to men's portrayal but concerned with women's portrayal in pictures. At the same time, they prefer to see women more than men. This can explain the focus of advertisers on women’s beauty and attraction to gain the consumer’s attention while taking into consideration the product advertised.

In this respect, although results indicate that advertising products of technology is attributed to both sexes, other products remain specific to each sex. Respondents generally prefer what concerns the kitchen in particular to be advertised by women with some differences in proportions. Additionally, the attachment of women to domestic tasks (64%) in billboards cannot be denied. The same tendency is noted for the attachment of men to technical tasks (58%). These results confirm that even if there is a slight evolution in the attitudes concerning some questions, these attitudes remain traditional and sexist concerning others. Accordingly, one argues that some changes occur in society and, therefore, some efforts should be made to erase or at least to decrease some stereotyping opinions.

Regarding the questions about using women as sex objects, just a few respondents (10%) think that the woman is not used as a sex object. Those who say that the woman is often used as sex objects are the most dominant (37.5%). Men are much more likely to declare that women are used as sex objects. Ironically, men who prefer to see women on billboards represent 68%. Indeed, feminine characteristics and physical attraction push advertisers to choose women more than men for advertising. These results are congruent with the ones about advertising products of beauty. Actually, respondents attribute beauty products, such as perfumes, to the sex concerned with the product. 58% believe that women should
advertise women’s perfumes and men should advertise men’s perfumes (54%). Nevertheless, the problem is not ‘who’ is to advertise ‘what’, but how to advertise it in order to attract more attention.

Paradoxically, most respondents think that the majority of the products should be advertised by the two sexes. Some of these products are a sofa (76%), a cell phone (84%), a computer (78%), insurance (70%), a medical product (84%), a travel agency (76%), a car (78%), and a house (88%). This might reflect the tendency of our society towards the involvement of both sexes in the family management, and show that the products in question no longer concern exclusively one sex. The car for example was, just a few years ago, a product reserved to men but has become an object that interests the two sexes.

**Conclusion**

Although the literature has shown gender stereotypes, it can be concluded from the above results that the image of gender in advertising these days communicate, to some extent, a tendency towards equality and interchangeability in the roles performed by men and women. Overall, Moroccan billboards reflect a diversity in gender roles and hence a slight decrease in the stereotypical depictions of gender. This, as Zotos & Tsichla (2014) contend, is congruent with a modern society that prescribes multiple gender roles.

In fact, in modern times, there have been tremendous changes about equality between the sexes, higher female participation in education and the workforce, more women in leadership roles, more stay-at-home fathers, and changes that have blurred the traditional gender divide (Petruvu, 2004). Because of these changes, women are no longer restricted to their role as homemakers and child nurturers. In the same way, men are more and more portrayed as much as women in advertising different products such as those related to beauty and the home.

Regarding the reactions to gender role in billboards, it appears from the findings that people are more concerned about the portrayal of women than they are about men. Generally, the respondents tend not to be offended by billboards that portray women in traditional roles or in a stereotypical way, although they
have noticed that many billboards portray women as sex objects, homemakers, and beautiful more than men. This implies that in spite of the changes in attitudes toward appropriate roles and activities for men and women, people might overall continue to feel somewhat more comfortable with gender-traditional, rather than nontraditional advertisements (Morrison and Shaffer, 2003).

It is worth noting that, despite the fact that men and women perform the same jobs in society nowadays, the present study shows that men still dominate the tasks related to professionalism in advertising. This raises the question whether advertising reflects certain stereotypical ideas about gender or reinforces them across generations. Answering this question in a few lines would not be fair enough because the question needs more research and study. Moreover, one of the limitations of the present work is that there is lack of studies about billboards, which would have been useful in comparing and showing evolution. Therefore, further research is needed to discover the impact of billboards on reducing or perpetuating gender roles stereotypes.

References:


THE DISCOURSE OF THE BODY IN POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM: THE BODY AS DISCURSIVE SPACE IN M.ATWOOD’S THE HANDMAID’S TALE

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Abstract:

Being part of a research project devoted to the problematic of the body as discourse in postcolonial feminism, this paper aims to focus on the body as a key concept in feminist writing, and the way in which this concept is closely connected with the notion of space which occupies an important place in postcolonial theory. The appropriation of the female body in «phallogocentric» societies is often equated with the colonisation of other territories. But, the treatment of the body as a concept poses the problematic question related to the connection involving the bodily physical world of reality and the wider space of language and its universe of signs and symbols.

As a postmodern writer, Margaret Atwood indulges in an ambivalent play with the body and space as essential concepts in feminism and postcolonialism. This paper will attempt to demonstrate how the body in Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale is to be approached as a discursive space of freedom that challenges the rigid precepts of Absolute Authority. As the place of fluid expression, the body in Atwood’s writing stands as an unconquerable territory, stretching beyond patriarchal and colonial control.

The pleasurable playfulness of writing through the body as a discursive space of freedom fertilises the land of fiction, engendering textual jouissance, while allowing the author to mark a certain distance in dealing with issues such as feminism and postcolonialism.

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CHILDREN’S LITERATURE AND POST-FREUDIAN GENDER REFLECTIONS: THE CASE OF ALICE’S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how Children’s literature is implicitly or explicitly informed by reflections on gender issues. As a case study, through his famous nineteenth fictitious female character Alice, Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) engages into gender politics bearing intersections with post-Freudian insights questioning the essentialist representations of femininity as a rejection of patriarchal hegemony.

Keywords: Body without organs; Chora; essentialism/anti-essentialism; Post-Freudian; Symbolic

Introduction:

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how Children’s literature is implicitly or explicitly informed by reflections on gender issues. As a case study, through his famous nineteenth fictitious female character Alice, Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) engages into gender politics bearing intersections with post-Freudian insights questioning the essentialist representations of femininity as a rejection of patriarchal hegemony. Invoking post-Freudian figures ranging from Krestiva and Deleuze to Lacan, we will explore how Carroll’s narrative experiments with logic to explore its limits and to unveil how fixed gender truth

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assumptions restrict the potential of human thinking which could be otherwise within other conditions different from the human world.

1-Synopsis of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland:

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and its sequel, Through the looking glass (1871) were written by English author Lewis Carroll. Alice, a mid-Victorian era child protagonist, falls into a rabbit hole to encounter a fantastic world teeming with living beings parodying human behaviour. In her wonderland adventures, Alice will later cross into a different world through a mirror to continue her explorations on human logic and its unexplored bounds in different conditions.

2-Alice, the pre-natal, the social and gender:

As a little girl falling into the symbolic rabbit-burrow to come back to what seems to be a pre-natal stage, Alice finds it difficult to fit into the socially constructed pattern of femininity because she embraces an indeterminate body free from gender signification. In a sense, she aspires to the foetal stage or the “Chora” which is, in Kristeva’s terms, not captured yet by social language and meaning (Krestiva, Révolution du language poétique 22-23). She is heading for that space as a pre-symbolic and pre-linguistic realm of mobility related to the womb where the foetus cannot harbor any gender essence yet, such as man or woman, since these latter can refer “only to a structure observed in socio-historical context” (Krestiva, “Women’s time” 199).

Undifferentiated and manifesting unformed organs as it is, such a fluid body is called the “Body without Organs” in post-Freudian Deleuze and Guattari, which is an open field of intensity neutralizing the social process of meaning production from which the construction of fixed identity rises (Deleuze, Thousand Plateaus 149-166). Likewise, seen through a Lacanian perspective, Alice, espouses the pre-linguistic stage in which no type of coherent identity is yet possible (Lacan, 20). Therefore, disrupting the social and symbolic means of signifying experience, Alice refuses to internalize a coherent self-image, and thus becomes schizophrenic in the positive sense that she disrupts the gendering normative codes. She becomes
an apolitical and a culturally unconstructed girl who has no essentialist gender identity orientation yet (Deleuze, Thousand 305). In fact, this is a “schizophrenic” girl whom Lewis Carroll admires in his fantastic literary work and whom Deleuze celebrates in his Logic of sense as an “anti-oedipal” figure of a little girl whose body is unruly to the phallic norms predicated on the voice of social patriarchy (Deleuze, Logic of Sense 22-26). Unlike Freud’s girl, the girl protagonist of Lewis Carroll is not castrated or lacking in completeness. She is not inferior or categorized within a hierarchy that fetters her desires by a primordial lack called “the penis envy” by Freud.

In a free play with the collective repertoire of received values, Alice destabilizes the norms of identity, “deterritorializes” the boundaries of subjectivity and inaugurates her “pure becoming with its capacity to elude the present” and embrace “the paradox of infinite identity” so as to engage in “the reversals which constitute Alice’s adventures: the reversal of becoming larger and becoming smaller” (Logic of sense 2–3).

3-Disruption of gender meaning as politics of resistance

With political implications, Alice develops an active perspective against the totalitarian masculinism which seeks incessantly to conquer, oppress and mark her as its other, an “other” considered subversive and necessary to essentialize, know and control through irreversible essentialist signification. Offered different sexual roles, she does not accept any of them. She rejects the restrictive role of maternity and refuses the hegemonic female role of the queen along with the role of a lesbian offered by a Duchess. Diverging from normative meta-narratives of subjectivity, Alice celebrates mobility and discontinuous “deterritorialized” identity. In this regard, as she challenges the signifying process working by binary oppositions, selective combinations and hierarchizations, Alice strikes an allegorical note on how “schizophrenic” resistance can downplay the power-oriented interpretations that create hegemonic narratives on the grounds of perpetuating subjective positions.
Seen through anti-essentialist a post-Freudian perspective, Alice has no desire to dwell in one determinant and uniform gender identity. She flees the freezing apparatus of signification which imposes its own sense of identity. In this way, she tends towards becoming different since she breaks free from the essentialist self-categorization drawing on phallic power and linear perception. Besides her obsession with an anti-essentialist cyclical conception of time, she rejects to assimilate a reptile phallic identity when she was accused of being a serpent when her neck becomes elongated. Approaching Alice’s interminable mutations, it becomes relevant to see that her potential of gender mobility grows on the basis of developing active revolutionary desires enacted by processes to fixity. Significantly, in her journey of “becoming” Marian exploits these processes as critical mechanisms to unveil that identity is mobile and likely to inflect into different meanings and unlimited possibilities uncontrollable by the socio-cultural prescriptions.

4-Allegory of Undoing Patriarchal Body Politics:

Under Alice’s prism, she is taking her destination to a fluid realm recalcitrant to the prohibitive grand narratives that subjugate society through prescribing a definite gender representation of the body:

The question is fundamentally that of the body—the body they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms. This body is stolen first from the girl: Stop behaving like that, you're not a little girl anymore; you're not a tomboy, etc. The girl's becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her… (Thousand 276).

As a consequence, “overcoding” the body alienates it in a matter of power politics. Seeking to ensure patriarchal ascendency, as echoed by Alice, the dominant socializing narrative emerges primarily through opposing man to woman for creating a hierarchy of privileged masculinity and underprivileged femininity. Similarly, it can be inferred from Adventures of Alice in Wonderland that the feminine perspective is silenced for an essentialist history to start, relegating women into the position of victims. Therefore, restricting the body’s potentials of
“becoming” more than it is assigned and producing a socio-culturally overwhelmed body is the first step in the pedagogy of gender normativity. The only way to resist this oppressive discourse is to rewrite the history of the body, going back to Alice’s meaning-free and pre-natal fluid body.

**Conclusion:**

Having recourse to a chaotic fluid worldview that comes before any possible hierarchization, Alice adopts a process of signifying the self and the world beyond the restrictions of patriarchal normativity. As she goes through an unstructured body field of free intensities allowing for “becoming”, she embraces a process of recovering a perspective systematically silenced and prohibited by the male for generating the norms. Namely, Alice desires to become a girl whose femininity does not emanate from the prohibitive norms of oedipal castration. Rather, she is fighting her way to reach a femininity not based on lack, on Freudian penis-envy, but on appropriating that woman’s voice suppressed within the structures of social values.

**References:**

GENDER DISPARITY IS NATURAL IN THE NATURAL WAY OF THINGS¹
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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to provide an insightful reading to The Natural Way of Things, a very powerful parable of modern times by the Australian feminist author Charlotte Wood.

The story revolves around 10 young women who find themselves removed from society and detained prisoners in an outback camp in Australia. The property is surrounded by an electric fence to cut off any possibility of escape. Confronted to cope with the bleak and primitive place they have ended up in, they are forced to hard labour under insufferable conditions. Physically and mentally degraded, the women are frightened and completely confused. In such terrifying setting, one may wonder, but, what crime has brought them there from the city? Can this be imagined in today’s world? This disturbing novel may recall some other works of other writers, notably Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale, or William Golding’s Lord of the Flies. In the same line as her predecessors, Wood is denouncing an institutionalised misogyny, and portraying a society in which women’s rights are stripped away by an authoritarian and patriarchal government.

The present paper undertakes the examination of the writer’s perception of gender disparity, and the strategies she deploys in denouncing the troubling issues of gender, the abuse of power, and the misogynistic attitudes that still persist in our modern society.

Keywords: misogyny, disparity, sex, scandal, power, indignation, natural.

Introduction

My interest in studying Charlotte Wood’s novel was reinforced by her echoes and influences of the work, and themes of Margaret Atwood on gender and feminism.

Undoubtedly, *The Natural Way of Things* is a feminist dystopian fiction brilliantly tailored together with incredible confronting true stories. Influenced by *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and in a chillingly dark setting, Charlotte Wood has managed to transport the reader into a state of being of a terrifying experience of 10 young women living under an oppressive and sexist regime in a prison camp in outback Australia. The fable is distinguished by the unsparing ferocity of its moral vision, its psychological acuity and the contained, steely power of its prose. Consequently, the narrative is thought-provoking, ferocious, tough, direct and disturbing; yet, overwhelming with coherence, dreamlike and unexpected beauty.

We have often encountered heroines put through awful and merciless ordeals in different kinds of literature, but in Wood’s novel, the female characters are facing bigger trials, they are implicated in outrageous issues, more political, and more physically demanding. They are doomed to endure and fight for survival in a men’s world. As the *Guardian* writes, “Contemporary feminism may have found its masterpiece of horror.”

Reality versus Fiction

Set up in a dusty desolate ‘no man’s land’, the novel is, on the other hand, partly inspired by “The Hay Institution for Girls”. A remote location where a true story took place 50 years ago about a group of girls from Parramatta Girls Home that was reserved for the 10 worst offenders in the state in the 1960s and 70s. In a radio documentary, Wood heard about those women who had been locked up as teenagers, drugged, put in a train and transported to some hellhole in Hay. Inhumanly treated, they were forced to march, look at the floor, never talk to each other, and endure rape and other violence. The degradation of these women is
defying all sorts of human injustice. They are not seen as victims, or equally responsible, but rather vilified, denigrated, and even hated.

Deeply influenced by the events, Charlotte Wood imagined a similar setting for her story. Ten young women, all of them in their twenties, involved in sex scandals are taken to a hostile, primitive place, without their clothes or possessions; they wake up wearing rough uniforms, attached and locked by a leash. Their head shaved, they are terrified, drugged, with no memory of how they were captured or how they have come to be there together. They are guarded behind electric fences by two brutal men, Boncer and Teddy, and a young woman, Nancy, who is supposed to be their "nurse". Any attempt to act or speak is prohibited by the guards. The men’s mission in the novel is to teach the young women what they are, not who they are. When Verla, one of the characters, confused, asked one of the odious guards, Boncer, early in the narrative:

\[
\text{She hears her own thick voice deep inside her ears when she says:}
\]

\[
'I\text{ need to know where I am.' The man stands there, tall and narrow, hand still on the doorknob, surprised. He says, almost in sympathy, 'Oh, sweetie. You need to know what you are.' (p. 18)}
\]

Not only prisoners but, they are there to be re-educated in some way, their individuality is rubbed from them as retribution for having been victims of the behavioural social, cultural codes that reinforce male privilege. Hence, the women pass from disbelief and anger, through resignation, to a sort of acceptance and attempt to make the best of their situation. Obviously, there are shades of Margaret Atwood’s \textit{The handmaid’s tale} here and also, some hints of William Golding’s \textit{Lord of the flies}, but not derivatively. Juxtaposing fiction and reality, the novel is a true depiction of the sex scandals, and a denunciation of the power holders over time, men in occurrence. Literally and metaphorically humiliated, the women are treated like criminals. When Verla, asked to get in touch with her parents, she received harsh response.
‘I need to speak to my parents.’ She does not say parent. He is annoyed now.

‘For fuck’s sake, Princess. Do you see any phones? Computers? Phone towers outside?’ Disbelief rises in her. ‘No,’ she says. She means I refuse. At last she is enraged, shoots to her feet to roar—for it is, finally, intolerable, this stupid, stupid game, performance, this bullshit—but the man steps nimbly around the table and in an instant plants his big black boot in her stomach so hard she is slammed back against the wall. (p. 25)

Strangers to each other, the girls have no idea where they are. The only thing they have in common is some painful episodes in their past that involved them each individually in a sexual transgression of some sort with powerful men, either politicians, religious, or talented TV show personalities, but for which these men are let off while the women are excoriated. Yolanda the strongest of all was gang-raped by a football team and Verla the other fighter had an affair with a political figure, for two examples. We—like they—are left wondering why they are there. Their crime is they have dared complain about the way they have been treated. Now that they have become “pariahs”-persona non grata-they are systematically degraded, their situation is simply a descent into wildness. Clearly, Wood’s aim is to explore how power, the media and the judiciary fight back when they are attacked. It’s all about men’s fear and hatred of women. It seems the writer is justifiably furious about how men and women interact in today’s society, and how women are treated and the whole question of power. Each male person can feel uncomfortable in reading this novel, though he is not responsible; because of the feeling of a stunning anger and a rage coming out from the part of the author. "I had no idea how much anger I had," Wood says in an interview”. Definitely, Wood is intercepting the backwardness of oppressive institutions, perilous social mores, and other stagnations of progress that contract the scope of any possible change.

Amidst these awful displays of institutionalised misogyny as mentioned before, the author is plainly offering a metaphor for our own everyday world. In her daring parable, Wood is dealing with troubling issues in Australia and
elsewhere. Currently, we find daily intimate photos of girls and young women on the Internet. Girls are ‘slut-shamed’; the raped victims are accused of bringing the violence on themselves, because the corrosive system turns these women’s bodies against them. Now, it appears that females are being the target of misogynistic behaviour, some are threatened sexually in public places and, at the outer limit; some are murdered in the name of honour as what has happened in the last decades in several different countries around the world; as a case in point, the Pakistani social media star Qandeel Baloch who was killed by her brother for dishonouring her family. Or the case of the Moroccan teen Amina Filali who committed suicide after being forced to marry her rapist.

**Constructed Logic**

These cases and many others remind us that the female sexuality and the bullying attempt to control it were and still remain dangerously prevailing among all cultures. The girls in the novel were blamed for something that was done to them, because of the weird, sick mentality and the psychology of a culture that says, 'you’ve been assaulted so let's lock you up, you deserve it’. More than physical, it’s a psychological punishment as the author puts it: *The man Boncer cast an aggrieved look at them, is if they were to blame for the stick in his hand...* (p. 28)

Hence, this has become a natural constructed logic in almost all cultures.

With such stunning prose, Wood captivates and sweeps the reader along to a state of elevation and entrance by her narrative. On the other hand, we feel an intense degree of suffering, and a deep undercurrent of rage and anger beneath the lines, which invokes a real sense of powerlessness and useless ways of escape pervading over every word on every page of the book. As the writer Ashley Hay puts it in her review: “This is a stunning exploration of ambiguities – of power, of morality, of judgment”... *It will not leave you easily; it took my breath away.’* Indeed, the novel is a provoking exploration into the human behaviour, with the misogyny that lies back beneath the misleading egalitarian image, and the power of ideologies that dominates the individuals, which is in fact, customary in all
cultures. Thus, in a vivid and delicate description, Wood’s depicts to us the nightmare situation of the women put at the mercy of brutal men. Her position is set as one of the most thoughtful, provocative and fearless truth-tellers. As a matter of fact, The Hay Institution for Girls was real-life 50 years ago, yet, in today’s civilised world, shockingly as it may seem, it is still entirely possible to see attitudes and ideologies that make the collective mind-sets accept things as true and right in the normal of ways. That’s how people deal and justify the odd things that happen around us, from invading other countries to killing innocent peoples to bombarding foreign towns. All aiming the same target of maintaining power and sustaining hegemonic and exclusive male agency.

**Conclusion**

Wood’s triumph and the reason why *The Natural Way of Things* is so disturbing and terrifying lay in terms of ideas. No matter how advanced and civilised our world is, we actually still have a long way to go. Our contemporary society is still denigrating women and making them feel shameful and guilty; despite they are victims, because they are living in a system that represses them. The blame is put on them when they are raped and they are forced to try to deny what was done to them when it comes to light. Through her story, Wood seeks to expose the violence and hatred that lie beneath the surface of our society. She illustrates the ways misogyny perpetuates itself, its historical depth and persistence, are still oscillating between power and patriarchy. By so doing, the novel explores an unfair toxic culture, and offers a reminder of the rootedness of the codes and structures that ensure the subjugation of women, the subservient role that society has ascribed to them, and the degree to which they are enslaved in the system, as its title would put it, the natural way of things.

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   a. 22 juin 2016

WOMEN’S REPRESENTATIONS IN THE MOROCCAN CULTURE¹

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Introduction
This article analyzes gender perceptions in the Moroccan culture. It addresses how “women” and the “feminine” have been represented in various cultural systems. The paper demonstrates that while gender equality in Morocco is improving, with women’s growing social, economic, and political participation, deeply rooted inequalities are still persistent. It manifests those paradoxical social norms which have nurtured and reinforced negative perceptions and devaluation of the working, single and divorced women within the Moroccan society.

Private/Public Sphere Dichotomy
Moroccan society is characterized by sexual segregation. One consequence of such segregation is the division of the society into male and female spaces. Assigning women’s lives to be related to the private sphere predominantly occupied with the duties of the home, men are pertained to the public sphere to earn a living and represent their families. In this vein, Sadiqi (1997) found out in accordance with Moroccan society, that the public social space defines the social norms. The public is associated with power and the domestic is associated with powerless persons.

Those beliefs contrast woman’s autonomy and gender equality, particularly in the marginalized and rural areas. A huge number of men, be they literate or illiterate, believe in the division of roles, assuming that males are capable of fulfilling specific social and economic tasks that females cannot handle in the same

perfect way. In other words, women are deemed excellent in matters that take place within the household including domestic chores, nurturing and taking care of members of their families. That is, women do not have the capabilities that help them indulge in social, economic and political activities.

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. This ensures their capacity for resistance, their self-renewal and their striving against factors that can block women. In other words, At the present time though women are highly educated and intellectual, and they participate actively in the social, economic, and political development of society, their emancipation is always confronted by the persistence of the traditional beliefs and thoughts.

Women and Employment

Rural Areas

Female labor in the rural world is characterized by its gratuity. Although rural women contribute with nearly two-thirds of female labor at the national level, their labor remains unrecognized and unpaid. Nearly 80 per cent of active rural women fall within the loosely denied category of 'family help'. This unpaid labor is added to and not taken from the domestic workload that imposes a severe time burden on rural women. To emphasize, most rural women live in bare-bone villages with no electricity or running water; provisions in both (usually not categorized as economic activities) take up an average of two hours a day (CERED, 2011).

Private sector

A continuing characteristic of women in paid employment is the insecure nature of their jobs. At times of recession in particular they are the first to be fired, and they suffer more from unemployment than men. This indicates the fragility of women's place in the economic fabric of the country. Their lack of training and skills increases the vulnerability of their position in the labor market and reinforces the precariousness of their socio-economic status. A research on patterns of unemployment in Morocco confirms that economic recession in the country affects women more intensely and more often than men (CERED, 2007).
While unemployment hits both men and women, particularly in the urban areas, women are more likely to lose their jobs than men. In 2013, unemployment reached 32 per cent for the former social group against 16 per cent for the latter. Also, the average rate of prolonged unemployment is substantially higher for women (63.2 per cent) than men (58.4 per cent). (CERED, 2011). The prolonged unemployment often results in women's acceptance of low-paid jobs (domestic and other services) and a greater insertion in the informal sector with a variety of small-scale home-based activities. However, although a lot of progress has been made in the last few decades with greater female employment in professional careers, the majority of women are still “situated in the least protected, most unstable, and worst-paid occupations of the global economy” (Maier, 2010).

**Women and Singlehood**

In Morocco, as a conservative society, the female character at the risk of rejection and social stigma is required to fulfill a number of expectations. Women represent in patriarchal societies the subject of sexual desire, motherhood and virtue. When they fail to fulfill these anticipated attributes, society retaliates mercilessly. Thus, when women remain unmarried in an advanced age, they are outcast from the mainstream society. The regular use of words like spinster or Bayra are constant reminders that these women were not up to society’s expectations that require women to be physically attractive, compliant with the norms of marriage and most importantly kept under control.

Singleness for women beyond the age considered conventional for marriage is regarded as a misnomer in Morocco. Such women are pitied and blamed for their status. Often the blame is based on assumed personal character defect of the women. In other words, their singlehood is biasedly represented as a sign of rejection, refusal, lack of appreciation, ugliness, boredom, misery, etc. Single women will continue to be stigmatized, pressurized to conform to the normative adult status of marriage and motherhood, confront identity dilemma, fear of permanent childlessness and loneliness if the extant patriarchal structures, customs and marriage and family ideology remain unchanged.
Nevertheless, the difference in the appraisal of unmarried men and unmarried women reveals a biased attitude towards women. Some ascribe it mainly to the biological factor, arguing that women who reach the menopause age are no longer able to procreate, which accounts for the emphasis on differentiation. Yet, this categorization evolves to new forms of discrimination and social stigma that cause unmarried women a great deal of psychological distress. Ironically, there is no equivalent term for men who reached an advanced age without being married. The use of the term spinster or “bayra” only for women perpetuates the idea that women’s value resides solely in their physical appeal and their desirability by men.

Viewing the phenomenon from a different perspective, we can notice that blaming single women while acclaiming bachelors is a sign of social hypocrisy. Whereas men are free to become bachelors, women do not enjoy the same freedom and privilege. It is unjust to observe women in daily struggle with the fear of spinsterhood and men in control of the fear of bachelorhood.

**Women and Divorce**

According to 2011 statistics, the Family Justice Services reported that 1 out of 6 marriages ends in divorce in Morocco. In a society where virginity is glorified, divorced women often have a hard time finding new relationships. Tracing this phenomenon back a few years ago in Morocco, women had no say whatsoever when it came to divorce. A great living example can be found in Leila Abouzeid’s novella, The Year of the Elephant, which shares a journey of a Moroccan woman during the transitional period between colonialism and the independence of Morocco.

Zahra, the protagonist, was the subject of divorce, the novella opens: “I come back to my hometown, feeling shattered and helpless. He had simply sat down and said, ‘Your papers will be sent to you along with whatever the law provides.’ My papers? How worthless a woman is if she can be returned with a receipt like some store bought object! How utterly worthless!” (Abouzeid, 1989)

The stereotype against divorced women is perpetuated through gossip and the marginalization of this category from a set of mainstream social activities. The stereotype is maintained by both men and women in different ways and is
characterized by both fantasy and fear. For men, a divorced woman represents sexual opportunity and a vehicle through which they can express fantasies of their own virility. For other women, on the other hand, a divorced woman is a source of fear due to the temptation that they present to husbands and probably also a reminder of what might befall them if they too should one day become a divorced woman.

However, as for divorced men, they are not condemned for being divorced or even questioned about the reasons behind divorce. For them all the social statuses are the same: being bachelors, married, or divorced it is always the same powerful status.

**Conclusion**

Accordingly, this assumption as regards women’s inferiority springs from those Moroccan cultural beliefs and norms that trivialize their role within the Moroccan society. Women are divested of their human right because men have inclination to fear their position in the patriarchal society to be shacked. Even though women have endeavored to revolt and change their status within society and get higher position at the political, economic and educational level, they are still obliged to lag behind.

**References:**

GIRLS’ EDUCATION IN MOROCCO¹
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Abstract.

Women’s growth and development are inevitably bound up with access to education. However, in Morocco, the current status of women’s education is disappointing. In fact, the World Bank statistics reveal that girls’ school enrollment is not satisfactory due to social and cultural attitudes and practices, deeply rooted in the Moroccan power dynamics. In the past decades, Moroccan girls’ education has received much attention from international institutions, which failed to address the issues, its causes, repercussions, and recommendations to eradicate the problem. The present article is an attempt to provide a comprehensible account of the present-day situation of women’s access to education, to outline the main obstacles that make that access difficult if not impossible and to suggest some recommendations that the Moroccan policy makers should carefully examine to overcome all the barriers. This article provides an exciting opportunity to advance the causes and effects of this scourge that delays the development of women, the family and the society as a whole.

Key words: barriers, enrollment, girls’ education, policy makers, recommendations.

Introduction

No doubt, education is a right to all children, boys and girls, regardless of their gender, status, region, and/ or ethnic origin. Education plays a fundamental role in the progress of society in general and individuals in particular.

Nevertheless, many countries do not provide children with education, a hindrance to the development process that allows learners to meet the complex challenges of a changing world at social, political cultural, and economic levels. In this connection, Kane claims,

*many countries still do not provide primary education for all children. Numerous students repeat grades, thereby occupying scarce places; many of those lucky enough to enroll in primary school drop out before completing it; and the level of achievement students attain is often low.* (Kane, 1997,3)

These problems (intense absenteeism, dropout and illiteracy) affect girls more than boys because of a complex mixture of socio-economic, and cultural barriers to school achievement.

Even if enrollment ratios have increased considerably during the last decades and the Moroccan government has made huge efforts on such issues as free education, compulsory education till the age of 15 and free furniture in primary schools to bridge the gender gap and to make education access available to girls all over Morocco, females are still lagging behind their male counterparts.

Girls’ education faces various prevailing obstacles that are deeply rooted in the Moroccan conservative cultural norms, patriarchal patterns, the distance between school and homes, underage marriages and poverty. This paper addresses this multifaceted issue in which various factors and barriers interact with each other to hinder investment in female education due to the negative societal attitude towards women’s emancipation in general and education in particular especially in rural areas, the focus of this research paper.

**The Present Moroccan Situation**

According to the UNESCO, although Morocco has enjoyed an impressive increase in the literacy rates during the last decades, it still lags behind many countries with similar economic ranking with 56 percent literates of the Moroccan population. The figures become appalling when gender disparity in education is taken into account. The Education for All (EFA) program (2015) asserts that
“Gender parity in matters of literacy is far from achieved; females are the most disadvantaged group with illiteracy rates exceeding males’ rates by more than 50%”, and about two-thirds of Moroccan women are illiterate.

The statistics are very startling and mark the huge gender gap between males and females especially in rural areas. Eba Nguema (2015) notes that there is a vast gap between the number of girls who have never been to school in rural and urban areas. According to EFA program (2015), “the number of illiterate females remains much higher than illiterate males in the last 5 years [2009- 2010- 2011- 2012-2013] in rural areas.” Given lack of investment in girls’ education, the resulting high percent of women’s illiteracy will necessarily have a negative impact on their economic growth as well as social and political participation.

In recent years, thanks to the new reforms (EFA program (2015)) introduced to the educational system, some progress in the ratio of illiteracy has improved, yet this progress is insufficient due the prevalent traditional values which favor boys over girls, besides poverty and underage marriage in rural areas, flagrant issues that the ministry of education should show more commitment to solve them.

Poverty

The disadvantaged socioeconomic situation of a family can negatively affect the schooling of the girl. When the parents cannot support the family and, therefore, cannot provide the expenses of schooling (the school uniform, books, copy books), the girls are, consequently, deprived from education; the parents’ energy is spent on providing the basic needs of their children: food and shelter. In Morocco, the ministry of education provides the students with the necessary furniture in elementary levels, yet poor families do not allow their children, especially girls to attend their classes, due to the parents’ view of their daughters’ life, parents’ educational level and attitude towards education, family size, father’s occupation, among other factors. These interwoven socio-economic circumstances are likely to affect the process of educational decision making for girls. Actually, the parents are the ones to shape and forge the personality and the future of their children.
Usually, when the mother works, the elder girl shoulders the responsibility of the family. Thus, the girl cannot have enough time to do both the household chores and schooling. Following Gupta, the problem worsens when the family size is big,

*Large family size implies increased responsibilities for household chores for the girls, more time spent on cooking meals, washing clothes and other works. It also implies that the maximum amount of time in a day is spent at home, dedicated to household chores. The possibility of pursuing other interests is minimal.* (Gupta, 2015,48).

Moreover, girls may become sources of income when they work as maids to help in supporting the family. El Massioui & Mengad (2016) explain this point by arguing that “between 60,000 and 80,000 girls between the ages of eight and 15 are employed as maids in Morocco”. These girls are afflicted by physical and psychological hardships, which endanger their growth, development, and health.

Consequently, a considerable amount of attention should be paid to the household economics in rural areas to remove girls from the net of ignorance. In this vein, Sutton and Levinson (2001,89) state, “Ultimately, getting more girls into school is critical for reducing poverty.”

**Distance to School**

In mountainous and remote areas, schools are most of the time kilometers away from villages and towns and the journey from home to school can be tiresome, dangerous and arduous especially when the temperature is freezing in winter or stifling in summer. That is why for many rural families, the parents prefer to keep their daughters at home to protect them from the hazards of the long journey. Another obstacle facing rural girls is the poor infrastructure and the bad conditions of the roads. Taking into consideration the socioeconomic situation of most families in these areas, transportation and accommodation cannot be afforded by these families.

Usually in rural areas, parents presume that the distance to school is an insuperable obstacle for girls while for boys it is not even given attention. It is
widely believed, indeed, that girls are vulnerable creatures who should be protected and kept safe at home.

**Early Marriage**

Early marriage is another serious obstacle to the investment of girls in education. Many girls, indeed, drop out from school around the age of 15/16 to get married, which eliminates the possibility of secondary education. Even if underage marriage is illegal, it remains a reality that the Moroccan authorities should eradicate. Alaoui (2016) admitted that about 83% of married rural young girls are minors. These young girls have to shoulder the burden of a family (it can be an extended one) which is incongruous with their age. Without an appropriate education, most of these girls get divorced at an early age and they may join the parental home with a baby, another victim of that early marriage. Early marriage and early motherhood are the natural outcomes of dropping school in a society which holds traditional values in high regard. Therefore, there is a serious question that we can legitimately ask: what future is waiting for those girls and their offspring?

**Traditional values**

As a patriarchal society, Moroccan women are often downgraded to a subordinate position after men. The ideology of patriarchy embraces the superiority of males and the inferiority of females; these patriarchal gender relations are handed over from one generation to another thanks to the socialization process that preserves the unbalanced power relations inside the household. The deeply ingrained belief that the main role of the woman is her devotion to her husband and family is often intertwined with women’s high illiteracy rates. In fact, the patriarchal household presumably contributes to the reluctance of many rural parents to send their daughters to school.

Due to the patriarchal values prevalent in the Moroccan society, which perceive man as being the main financial provider of the family and the one responsible for his parents at old age and unmarried sisters, parents invest more in the education of boys at the expense of girls. In other words, the traditional gender
roles conferred on girls are a crucial hurdle that the whole society should overcome. The boy is given priority not only in education but in many other fields since he is supposed to be the future breadwinner. Thus, the man’s income is deemed necessary; whereas, that of the woman is viewed as supplementary or even a bonus. Another reason behind that investment is the hostile school environment which integrates boys and excludes girls. In view of this gender discriminatory conditions, unlike boys who can defend themselves, girls should be ‘protected’ and ‘preserved’ by their fathers and/or brothers.

**Quality of education**

The unsatisfactory quality of education does not meet the learners’ needs. Most Moroccan schools are bereft of the necessary resources, of qualified teachers and of appropriate learning material. Therefore, the school-related requirements should be very motivating and encouraging so that the students can challenge any attempts to keep them at home. Therefore, poor performing students are likely to abandon school at an early age since the education system does not attempt to offer students any extracurricular activities that can stimulate their interest and/or in-depth training for teachers to boost the quality of the teaching-learning process. A similar assumption is made by Ismaili (2016) who showed that only 30% percent of students completed their studies in 2014-2015. Even if this appalling number includes both genders, it is quasi-sure that the number of girls who give up studies is much larger. Hence, there is an urgent need for an education that can make a real difference in the life of young learners.

**Recommendations**

Rural areas face manifold social and economic issues. Poor infrastructure, poverty, lack of a healthy school environment and distant schools are challenges that many parents confront on a daily basis, which impact their decision-making practices. These multi-dimensional barriers magnify the problem of enrollment, school dropping, and severe absenteeism motivated by remote living areas. Children, in general, and girls, in particular, are the first victims of the web of illiteracy and ignorance.
There are, in fact, four fundamental issues that the Moroccan stakeholders should strive to create an inclusive education not only to bridge the gap between boys and girls but also to erase the social scourge of illiteracy:

1) Making education accessible to remove the poor school environment through:
   - providing transportation and lodging when the school is miles away from home.
   - building more boarding schools.
   - making the school environment safe so that the parents could send their girls to school.
   - School should be within a reasonable distance whenever possible.

2) The social marginalisation of women due to traditional values adopted by most Moroccan families.
   - The disparity between boys and girls should be discarded; therefore, the policy makers should raise the public awareness about the importance of education for girls and for their personal and economic growth. Media can play a pivotal role in convincing conservative families of the importance of educating their girls. Indeed, a close coordination between all the stakeholders (media, the government, NGOs, educational institutions, families, etc.) should take place.
   - There is an urgent need to convince families of the value of education for their daughters’ life and to provide “incentives to offset the opportunity costs of girls' labour” Economic Development Institute (EDI, 1996, 4).

3) Underage marriages.
   - Families should be convinced not to marry their girls before 18, the legal age of marriage. Otherwise, there will be more victims (the girls and their children).

4) The quality of education
   - A gender-sensitive approach to the curricula should be developed. The manuals and textbooks should be reviewed so as to propagate gender equity between boys and girls.
In addition to the recommendations stated above,

Efforts became successful not simply because of good ideas but also because they were accompanied by the selection of good personnel, by frequent training and retraining of staff, and by continued review and monitoring during implementation principles that apply to all dynamic processes. (EDI, 1996, 5)

Conclusion

Girls’ education has weighty benefits not only on women but also on the well being of the family and the society as well. It is key to solving some serious social phenomena: (to name few) child mortality decreases, family health ameliorates, and population growth declines. Needless to mention, it also improves the children educational achievement. It is also advantageous to the future generations since mothers are the most influential members of the family. In fact, involving women in education should be a primordial concern of the government, NGOs, women’s movements, media and the civil society. Applicable educational policies and programs should include multifarious levels of the Moroccan society; it should be a national priority to debate at a large scale. Educational policies should provide special attention to low-income families, rural areas and, more importantly, the quality of education should be enhanced to meet the needs of the pupils. Besides, the need to increase girls’ education enrollment and to decrease their school dropout are urgent requisites.

References:


Introduction

Psychology as a science has prompted a huge debate in the West, particularly in the age of anxiety and loss of the Western subject amid traumas and crises. The therapist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is considered the pioneer in this field and comes with a study entitled ‘psychoanalysis’ as a way to understand the modern man. Here comes the ‘unconscious’ as the main important element in human life. The unconscious links sexuality with subjectivity and annihilates human’s agency and power over his/her psyche. The subject’s sense of being, political and social affiliations are all governed by the subconscious. In this context, he argues that the unconscious is a “reservoir of feelings” which are rejected by the conscious mind because they are socially unaccepted; this repression of memories and thought from childhood converts into anxiety and even neurosis if not sent away to the surface and expressed to society. However, there are many questions that need an answer: do men and women have different unconscious state of being? Why are women the problem in mainstream psychoanalysis? Can we attain gender equality through psychoanalysis? Does psychology rely on clinical research or it is just an extension of social structures and systems? Why is psychology male-oriented? To what extent can we rely on psychoanalysis to understand gender relations?

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2 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis/
1- Reconsidering The Androcentric Psychology:

Freud’s research and studies are gendered, focusing on man and woman’s identity in the realm of psychoanalysis. They are both born with no sexual differentiation because they are ruled by the instinctual life away from the social ordering. Thus, a ‘sexed identity’ is not a pre-given and natural fact rather it is a psychological formation. Freud was among the first to consider that gender is not an inborn quality, but it is constructed and that biology is not man’s destiny. Freud’s great debate on gender revolves around the Oedipus complex in which the boys compete with their fathers for mother’s affection, recalling the myth of Oedipus. The boys desire to kill the father; however, they change their mind when they grow up and start differentiating. They find out that the father equals power and virility that boys might risk losing if they keep their attachment to the mother; consequently, they abandon their heterosexuality and identify with the virile man, repressing their desire and need for the mother. In this vein, Freud has raised the issue of “Femininity Riddle”. As a therapist whose patients were mostly women during the Victorian era, he tries to understand the puzzle of femininity and woman’s bisexuality. He even claims in one of his lectures that women are the “problem” and wishes if they are ‘more masculine than feminine’. For Freud, the woman is castrated and lacks the phallic power, and so this lack grows with her and keeps her attached to the masculine virility. Thus, she envies the man whose story is continuous since he can replace his love for the mother later, but her love is interrupted because she should switch to the virile man who establishes the super-ego and the masculine desire that she can’t fulfill if she keeps her cords with the mother.¹

It is these claims and psychoanalytic studies that caused the emergence of many feminist psychologists who come to reconsider the second position of the woman and the different forms of annihilation. The Oedipus complex theory has been accused of being phallocentric, androcentric, and sexist in the sense that is developed by male scientists. For the feminist Evelyn Keller, it is only a masculine
discourse created to reinforce power and control. She divided science into two parts “the knower and the known” which are in an ongoing asymmetrical position; science is always masculine and subject of power relations. Women have been rejected and excluded from the field of psychology through institutional strategies.¹

Simone de Beauvoir has even insisted on her ‘distrust’ of psychoanalysis and psychology in general, devoting a whole book for the subject of sex and women entitled “The Second Sex”. She claims that there is a female Libido with its specificities and particularities. For Beauvoir, Freud does not take into account the social origins of masculine power, and so he based a whole study on the social Othering of women. Also, the idea of envy is not out of the psychological superior position of men but due to the given social power. In this line of thought, she coined the term ‘sexual monism’ to refer to the essentialist studies.²

Nancy Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin go further in attacking Freud’s theory on femininity, explaining that boys identify with their fathers not because of masculine perfect model, but because men control all social institutions and constitution. As a consequence, the rearing and all the other ‘unimportant’ works are left to the denigrated woman.³

Thus, feminist critiques continue to reconsider these phallocentric and systematic devaluations of women, trying to talk on their behalf, and defending their rights and equal position and value. Yet, are all women the same? Do they have the same experience and situations? What about the African and Asian woman? Can they speak? Can they appropriate psychoanalysis and defend their identity and subject hood? Is the mainstream feminism sufficient to gain their special rights?

2-Feminist Psychology Through Postcolonial Eyes:

² https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis/
The postcolonial world is called “the third world.” It is what is left after dividing the world into two parts; capitalism and socialism. However, the third world does not surrender; it retrieves back its power via third world knowledge. A history from below begins to flourish giving birth to a subaltern knowledge distinct from the one of the West.\(^1\) Postcolonialism has to be linked to feminism. The postcolonial woman is not any female subject that mainstream feminism defends rather she is a double colonized woman and a victim of both phallocentric system and colonialism. Thus, she has a special context that she must defend herself. The colonized woman has been unarticulated throughout the whole imperial period; she is the subject of Western gaze and denial as well. The third world feminists reject the idea of a “first world feminism” that pretends to speak for the subaltern and oppressed women. Western feminism sees that third world women are suffering and it is their duty to rescue them, ignoring the distinct and particular needs of those women. Here, subaltern feminist scholars claim that it is time for white women to listen to the subaltern women.\(^2\) So, can the subaltern speak?

Gayatri Spivak, as one of the pioneers in postcolonial feminism, comes to appropriate psychological and essentialist discourses to analyze the situation of the third world woman. She contests any generalization about third world women. For her, the third world woman cannot be represented and any attempt to speak on her behalf will only aggravate her situation. It is so since there is no fixity of definition and these women’s space is always on the move. More aggravating, women for Spivak cannot speak not because they are vulnerable but due to the deprivation from a position of enunciation. As a result, she sees that instead of representing subaltern women, intellectuals have to problematize the representational systems that have dumped them down.\(^3\)

What might be interesting when talking about postcolonial feminist theories is their refusal of a total essentialism and reductionism. There are feminisms rather

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\(^3\) Ibid.
than a homogeneous feminism that is always Western and dominating. Thus, difference is celebrated instead of assimilation and alienation.

3. Writing as a Sign of Resistance to Mainstream Psychology: Najat El Hachmi’s The Last Patriarch as a Case Study

The writer imagines and selects from the fragments of his/her state of being, of his/her past and his/her memories. It is only in writing that the subject feels his existence and total control of his life. This is the case with postcolonial female writers who prove to be conscious agents with a reiterated voice throughout the world. Thus, demystifying the different psychological systematic ways of woman’s subjugation and dumping down. Indeed, these writers vindicate woman’s power and independence with no sort of lack, loss or attachment to the virile model; she is her own model with her own voice, appropriating western tools to serve her process of self rehabilitation. If the world denies her identity and belonging, writing comes to empower and include the excluded.¹

This is the case in the novel under analysis entitled The Last Patriarch by a third world female writer ‘Najat El Hachmi’. The story is told from the point of view of a female narrator, Mimoun’s daughter. The act of narrating a patriarch’s story alters the preconceptions about women and their lack of agency. The daughter is a conscious character who comes to challenge the rooted system, controlling even the narrative. She states “I was born on cue, although some say I came too early, timing that destroyed the family and provoked one of those upsets that pursues you throughout life. The truth is that I don’t know whether I was right to be born, I still think perhaps I shouldn’t have been born that way, like that, on a whim of mine.” (127)² So, it is the daughter’s birth that comes to stage, and she is questioning her arrival to the world and its timing. The daughter’s birth implies a change and a revolution that might alter the proceedings of Mimoun’s life; she is not any obedient girl who keeps attachment to the father.

The daughter goes saying that: “I was born with a duty to be affectionate, with a prickly mother who’d been tamed from the start of her marriage and a father I rarely saw; with that inheritance I had to meet my obligation to be affectionate.” (128)¹ Here, this statement challenges the psychological attributes to women; they are always depicted as sensitive, affectionate, and emotional. However, the daughter is self-conscious and turns upside down all conventions, calling affection a ‘duty’ that girls are supposed to have to be tamed and to satisfy society’s expectations. The father is the long awaited son, Mimoun. Yet, what is implemented from the beginning is the opposite of the Freudian claims since nothing has changed or shook for this birth (3)². So, there is something wrong with this birth within a patriarchal society that privileges men more than women, and the title reinforces the collapse of the ‘patriarch’ in this story; the novel is entitled ‘The Last Patriarch’ the fact that attracts us and allures us to discover this magical spell that puts an end to this dominating system.

At the beginning, Mimoun’s abusive and authoritative character is always justified and excused (16)³; it is only the slap he had received from his father that turned him this way ‘the slap theory’. Yet, the latter is symbolical since it marks a transition of androcentric system from father to son. Nevertheless, the slap of the father will be returned by Mimoun the idea that causes ‘a collapse’ because there is a natural order internalized in the psyche and explained by Freud in which the son breaks with the mother and identifies with the father ‘the ultimate power’. Yet, Mimoun has ruined patriarchy and diverged from the rules contributing, unconsciously, to the collapse of the rules (36)⁴. This disobedience will be more aggravated when Mimoun quits Morocco towards Catalonia and enjoys new sexual experiences while the tamed wife is confined at home. Here comes the fall of patriarchy, particularly after the family has joined him there. The daughter learns

¹ Ibid., p. 128.
² Ibid., p. 3.
³ Ibid., p. 16.
⁴ Ibid., p. 36.
the language and rebels against her past and culture. Mimoun’s patriarchy has been weakened and becomes vulnerable towards his daughter’s revolution and courage. Indeed, Mimoun is the last patriarch because he is no more relevant for the coming generation. Indeed, Najat El Hachmi as a Moroccan writer has been able to analyze the psyche of the patriarch following his life from the day of birth to foreground the particular context and its implications within the industry of patriarchy. Also, she gives the power of destruction to a teenage girl to dethrone the empire of superiority and hegemony.

Conclusion

Hence, Freudian theory and later on Lacanian studies have been revisited and reconsidered by the postcolonial feminist critiques who solved the riddle of femininity and demystified the western tropes and preconceptions about the third world woman. Writing becomes the weapon against discourses of hegemony and dominance, celebrating difference and diversity also subverting and reversing power relations away from racism and denigration. It is high time we brought back to the surface the taken for granted concepts of women as a limestone in whatsoever world at a large scale. However, talking about humanity paves the way to another debate concerning gender. We cannot deny that women are more victimized throughout history, but this should not make us blind about the trauma of man as well since a human story excludes none. Truly, women write through the eyes of the same gender because of their continuous subjugation and de-historicizing. The woman finds in her writing an opportunity for self-definition and existential confirmation till she falls into subjectivity and the marginalization of the other half. So, gender equality should always be the aim.

References:


**Further readings:**


MUSLIM WOMEN AND DIASPORA: BETWEEN ORIENTALISM AND ISLAMISM

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Abstract

The issue of the migration of Arab Muslim women to the West is an integral part of the issue of Arab migration in its general form, despite its disparity in the causes, numbers and implications it may generate, as compared to men's migration. Migratory Muslim women have chosen different routes in their search for a better place for living, for studying or simply following their husbands and families. The political turmoil in the Middle East following the Tunisian revolution in 2011 and the subsequent anarchy and bloodshed in many countries of the region led to a large-scale exodus of millions of Muslim women, men, and children to Europe, Canada and America. These geopolitical upheavals forced the host countries to reconsider their migration and refugee policies and act proactively against any potential socio-economic or political pressures by focusing on how to watch, contain and control Muslim new-comers. The question of identity in the new locationalities for migratory Muslim women is very central to the debate of migration and diaspora. The present paper tends to argue that being caught between orientalism and Islamism, these women try to resist by negotiating their identity through setting a third space. Here, it is of paramount importance to probe the implications of various determinants such as race, class, religion and sexuality to understand the intricacies of Muslim women in diaspora. It is in fact relevant to address the following questions: What challenges do Muslim women face in their

host societies with regard to their identities? How do Muslim women represent themselves in their new locationalities? How do they negotiate multiple identities in their new ‘homes’? And what transformations undertake their sense of identity, belonging and cultural allegiances?

**Keywords:** Migration, Muslim women, the West, routes, orientalism, Islamism, third space, diaspora, Middle East, geopolitical, identity, allegiance, religion.

Migrant Muslim women in Europe and the United States according to several studies are still considered as the most marginalized Others, especially after the 9/11 attacks in New York, USA. Muslim veiled women continue to be stigmatized, discriminated, and ostracized in public settings due to their religious identity and dress code, which is their most visible marker of difference. Theresa Renee White and Jennifer Maria Hernandez confirm that “Muslim women are often seen through cultural and religious frameworks, oftentimes portrayed as figures of oppression, victimhood and despair.” This narrow representation of women has been particularly rampant in the United States where the Muslim population is growing at a high rate and making up the second largest religious group. The discrimination against Muslim women in America can sometimes take violent forms as Khalid Iqbal of the national Council on American Islamic Relations in Washington, D. C states:

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the hijab has also become associated with the notion of terrorism in the eyes of some angry Americans. We have had to suggest that women don’t go out at night, that they stay in safe public places and have a cell phone ready to call for help.

Within this context of cultural misunderstanding and misinterpretation of identity markers, cultural and identity symbols such as the hijab become highly contested sites. While “the West looks at the scarf as a sign that Muslim women are oppressed, […] Muslim women see it as a sign of dignity that shows respect for their religion and elicits respect from men.” Diasporic Muslim women who wear the veil in America or elsewhere consider it as an integral part of their cultural
identity, but for the majority of Americans it is a symbol of anti-modernity and oppression in Islam. The veil for Muslim women is, therefore, a means for the articulation and assertion of their religious, ethnic and cultural identity as well as a means to combat and subvert Western hegemony. In her discussion of veiling and unveiling, Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi contends that to counter and subvert the forces of Western imperial campaigns, the act of veiling has become a political act which symbolizes resistance, defiance and solidarity. Likewise, the act of unveiling is an expression of women’s political agency in re-determining Islam for themselves without the dictates of male Islamic fundamentalists.

Many feminist scholars believe that the stereotyping of diasporic Muslim women in the West finds its origins in the nineteenth century Orientalist discourse, which depicts Muslim women in terms of transgressive sexuality and sensuality, seductiveness, lasciviousness and irrationality. The tropes that Oriental/Muslim women “express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, above all they are willing and submissive,” as Edward Said points out, are still shaping the mindset through which Muslim women are perceived in the West today. Despite all the historical changes, the recurring images of Orientalism “remain remarkably consistent, and its power is perhaps greater than the past. Thanks to the penetration and expansion of mass media, the stereotyped knowledge of Orientalism can gain global recognition and instant diffusion.” The consistent representation of Arab/Muslim women in Hollywood films as silent, oppressed maidens explains how media can reinforce racial stereotypes and prejudices. What such essentialist representations ignore is the fact that diasporic Muslim women’s identity is more complex than the way it is simplistically represented. In other words, diasporic women’s identity is not static or singular but fluid and dynamic. In her book Aversion and Desire: Negotiating Muslim Female Identity in the Diaspora, Shahnaz Khan problematizes the notion of Muslim identity in diasporic context, arguing that Muslim women’s “understanding and experiences of their religion are not uniform and coded, as perceived by Westerners and projected by Islamic fundamentalists, but are rather malleable, fluid, manifold, and even contradictory.”
The cultural reality of Muslim women in diaspora and the multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion they are subjected to within the secularizing contexts of their host societies push some of them to strategically remove the veil and adopt new cultural practices to conform to the mainstream culture. This adoption of the Western way of dressing and adaptation to the Western cultural context reflects the dynamics of acculturation and the effects of interaction between Muslim women and their host society. The process of acculturation, according to Philip A. Harland, can involve the “selection, adoption and adaptation of a variety of cultural traits including language, dress, religion, funerary practices, and other cultural conventions, beliefs and values of a particular cultural group.” Acculturation and cultural conversion of most Muslim women, however, does not resolve all the problems as they continue to be viewed and stereotyped as non-Western women by mainstream Western society. Likewise, the acculturation and transformation of these women makes them targets for Islamists and their rigid understanding and interpretation of religious texts. Under this situation, diasporic Muslim women seem to be pulled in different directions by Orientalism and Islamism. Muslim women in diaspora, therefore, occupy what Homi Bhabha calls the third space of liminality. They are trying to negotiate different identities at a time, attesting, thus, to the multiplicity of their allegiances and hybridized identity. As Shabaz Khan points out in this respect, “these women are attempting to constitute a third space in which they receive recognition as Muslim at the same time they are contesting the regulatory pressures of Orientalist stereotypes and fundamentalist-influenced mythology of the umma.” This suggests that diasporic Muslim women are consciously and actively critical of both Islamic and dominant Western cultural influences. They continuously inscribe their agency by rejecting sexist, racist and religious discourses while opening up a liminal third space which suggests that identity is always in the process of formation and becoming; never complete, or authentic. In Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies, Stuart Hall posits that “the subject previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes
contradictory or unresolved, identities.” Looked at in the light of this statement by Hall, diasporic women’s identity is impacted by the physical and cultural environment they inhabit. Therefore, the notion of fixed identity promoted by religious, nationalist and anti-colonialist discourses in many Arab and Muslim countries is highly destabilized by the experiences of diasporic Muslim women in Western countries.

References:


Abstract

The present paper seeks to investigate the issue of sex education in Morocco, which is still a controversial and a vacuum concept in the Moroccan society.

In this study, it is argued that the more conservative a society is the more likely it is to hold negative attitudes towards sex education. Using the quantitative approach, an exploratory study is conducted among 125 respondents representing students, teachers and parents. The findings confirm the hypothesis formulated in the study. A number of conclusions are reached regarding the extent to which sex education can be implemented in the Moroccan educational system.

Key words: Attitudes; Implementation; Morocco; Sexual Education

Background of the Study

According to Magoon (2009, pp 7-8):

Sex education would encompass sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Included would be anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the sexual response system gender roles, identity and personality, and thoughts feelings, behaviors, and relationships. In addition, moral and ethical concerns, group, and cultural diversity, and social change would be addressed [...] sex education is the process of gaining knowledge about sexuality, sex,
intimate relationships. It also involves forming opinions and beliefs about what sexual feeling and behaviors are right and appropriate.

According to UNESCO (2009), the experience of implementing sexual education worldwide has always been an issue of debate between opponents and proponents. For example, in US the implementation of sex education was mainly opposed by both Catholic church, conservative people and the state. Despite the broad efforts made by those advocating comprehensive sex education programmes, conservative parents and the state won the battle by limiting sex education to abstinence -only- until marriage programmes. Unlike US, Denmark can be considered a successful country in the enforcement of comprehensive sex education programmes in schools. One of the main factors behind this success is the fact that the ethnically homogeneous nature of the Danish somehow makes the implementation of sex education in schools easier. This can be attributed to the Danish culture’s openness and positive attitudes toward sexuality, which creates an environment in which sex education is not only viewed as something natural in everyday life, but it is also considered as a normal component of the curriculum. Another factor behind this success is the full support of all stakeholders including the government, the Ministry of education, the Ministry of Health, media among others (Knudsen, 2006).

In Morocco, sex education has been closely bound up with conservative social norms and religion; however, the recent decrease of the influence of religious values and the intensity of different perversive acts and behaviours in the Moroccan society have brought the issue of sexual education into an area of focus and have made it urgent more than ever to properly cultivate the future generations with respect to the notion of sex and sexuality.

Despite the fact that sex education has been a controversial issue in Morocco from the very beginning, the debate reached its peak in 2014 when the program that teaches sexual education in Morocco was established as an outcome of the agreement between the Moroccan ministry of national education and Moroccan modern industries. This program was established due to the collaboration of the
efforts of ministry of health, the ministry of education with its staff, namely teachers (Arbaoui, 2016).

According to UNESCO (2009), a successful implementation for sex education relies on the involvement of well trained and qualified teachers who can accurately deliver valid and proper information about sex. Additionally, UNESCO(Ibid) emphasizes the importance of teachers’ attitudes towards sex education, which may vary from one teacher to another. That is to say, teachers have their own personal, cultural and traditional beliefs and values which can have an impact on their comfort, willingness and ability to teach issues considered to be sensitive (Iyoke, 2006). Similarly to the teachers, it is also important to acknowledge that the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the students, the government, the parents and other stakeholders would affect their attitudes towards sex education and their openness to the implementation of sex education in Moroccan institutions. Since a successful implementation of sex education is bound up to the attitudes held towards it, this study is mainly focusing on investigating the attitudes of the aforementioned stakeholders towards sex education and its implementation.

Research Design

Research Hypothesis, Objective and Questions

In this study, it is assumed that the more conservative a community is the more likely it is to hold negative attitudes towards sexual education.

The objective of the study is to investigate educators, students and parents’ attitudes towards sexual education. The study also aims to unveil the motives behind those attitudes as well as their impacts.

This paper attempts to answer the following questions:

• What are the educators, students and parents’ attitudes towards implementing sexual education?

• What are the motives behind the positive and the negative attitudes towards sexual education?

• To what extent can sexual education be implemented? And how can sexual education be implemented?
Sample Population

The sample population chosen is 125 respondents whose ages vary between 15 years old and over 45 years old. 56% of the respondents are females, and 44% are males. The segments chosen for the study are students (45%), teachers (21%) and parents (34%). Both the students and the teachers belong to different levels of education (primary, secondary, high school and the university). Random sampling is the technique used in order to choose a representative sample of those educators, students and parents. This technique of sampling was chosen because it is more objective, and it gives the chance to everyone to participate in the study.

Research Approach and Data Collection Instrument:

Since this study is exploratory and descriptive in nature, only the quantitative approach is relied upon. The questionnaire is the quantitative instrument used in this study. It will be helpful in determining the attitudes of the educators, students and parents towards sexual education, in finding out the different factors behind and impacts of their attitudes and in determining the extent to which implementing sex education in schools is possible and how this course can be officially established.

Findings

Attitudes towards Sex Education

The findings revealed that the attitudes towards sex education tend to be positive with some reservations. For example, though 33% of the respondents disagree with the statement saying that sexual education is immoral (against family and religious values), 21% approved the statement. Moreover, when asked about whether introducing a course on sexual education should be a priority among all stakeholders, 28% of the respondents agreed while 24% disagreed. This uncertain attitude towards the issue of sex education was found to correlate with the profiles of the respondents (e.g. the degree of family conservatism, the socio-economic level, the geographical background, … etc). For instance, the study yielded that 40% of the respondents categorized themselves as belonging to conservative families, and only 12% identifed themselves as being modern. Moreover, 48% of
the respondents see themselves as belonging to both, which implies that conservatism is predominantly influential in the Moroccan society.

Along the same line of reasoning, the results further confirmed the correlation between the respondents’ profiles and their attitudes since the majority of the respondents who are assumed to hold positive attitudes belong to the categories of students (100%), teachers (100%), NGOs (100%), educated people (99%), rich people (95%), people living in urban areas (87%) and political leaders (71%). On the other hand, the categories claimed to show negative attitudes are: people living in rural areas (100%), poor people (91%), religious people (75%) and parents (71%). These results reflect the extent to which cultural norms, traditions and the attachment to religion influence the respondents’ perceptions of sexual education and their attitudes towards the issue. This is supported by Gallagher & Gallagher (1996), who state that attitudes towards sex education vary from one group to another depending on the dominant perceptions, social and cultural norms, religious beliefs and socialization in which children grow up. To use Macleod’s (1999) words, sex education is believed to be a strong incest taboo. It is also perceived as a social force coming with modernization to break down the moral principles of society.

**Motives behind the Positive/Negative Attitudes towards Sex Education**

The study revealed that the main reasons lying behind the negative attitudes towards sex education are: conservatism (70%) and religion (54%). Other reasons contributing to the negative attitudes are: people’s misunderstanding of the term “sexual education” (49%), fear from the assumed negative impacts of sexual education (49%) and people’s lack of awareness of the importance of sexual education (33%). These findings can be attributed to the fact that 96% of the respondents have never taken any course in sex education, which implies that they don’t have any idea about what the course is about, and what benefits it can have. This is reflected in the restricted understanding the respondents have towards the roles of sex education courses. The respondents perceive that sex education courses can only have the following negative roles and impacts ranked from urging
people to have sex out of wedlock relationships and normalizing it(20%) to increasing some immoral behaviors (sexual harassment, prostitution…etc) (11%), to the breaking of the socio-cultural norms(10%). The other assumed negative roles of sex education courses include: urging sexual intercourse at an early age(3%), normalizing dating(3%), normalizing different sexual orientations (lesbianism, homosexuality,…etc)(1%), increasing parents fear about their children’s upbringing, morals and principles (1%)and breaking the religious norms(1%).These negative perceptions can be explained by the fact that for some Moroccans sex education is considered as a transgression of the Koran as it opposes the conservative values of decency and dignity which characterize the Muslim faith (Dialmy, 1998).

As for the positive attitudes expressed by the respondents, they were mainly motivated by health concerns (reducing the rate of sexually transmitted diseases by 22%), abstinence issues (reducing the rate of pregnancies out of wedlock by 18%) and sexual harassment issues by 14%. The respondents’ concern with the source of information about sex came in the fourth position (13%), which is alarming in a way since it was reported by the same respondents that 56% of teenagers receive and look for information about sex via the internet, and they are constantly bombarded with sexual messages in the movies, TV shows, and magazine Ads. Much importance should have been given to the role of sex education experts in providing appropriate and accurate information about sex in a safe environment especially that there is no censorship on the use of media (both mainstream and social media) by teenagers, which poses a real risk for them as far as awareness about sex and sexuality are concerned. In this respect Dialmy (2015) mentioned that according to the National Survey on the Youth (1993), 70% of the citizens in Urban Morocco use TV channels as a medium through which the young Moroccan enjoys the liberation and detachment from the taboos of the Moroccan. For the Moroccan Youth, the screen remains the main source of information about sexuality.
The positive roles played by sex education courses in breaking taboos (8%), raising awareness about biological body transformations (puberty, menstruation...etc)(5%) and respecting the other sex (as a body and a human being)(2%) were also underestimated by the respondents. Had the respondents been aware of the real roles of the latter, they would have known that the last three cited roles of sex education (which they did not accurately value) are the keys to reducing sexual harassment and avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

The respondents’ motives behind their positive attitudes towards sex education seem, prima facie, to be rooted in and shaped by their conservative and narrow-minded mentality, which in reality finds in abstinence the ultimate solution to any sex and sexuality related issues. In fact, progressive changes are usually challenged by traditional mindset that uses culture as an excuse to hinder the implementation of sex education denying the fact that culture is not to blame, and that it can only change when the dynamics between the state and the citizens change or when the mindset of those in power change.

**The Implementation of Sex Education**

The respondents provided their own vision concerning when and where should the course be taught, who should teach it and what issues should be taught in the course. In this respect, the findings revealed that 32% of the respondents opted for teaching the course at the secondary school level while 19%, 18% and 8% preferred that the course should be taught in primary schools, high schools and the university levels, respectively; however, 18% of the respondents reported that the course should be taught at all levels. As to the gender of the instructor who should teach this course, 80% of the respondents viewed that both females and males can equally teach it. 58% of the respondents also seem to prefer that the course be taught in mixed sex classes while 37% go for single sex classes.

With regard to the issues to be taught in sex education courses, the respondents ordered them as follows: body image (23%); sexual abuse and rape (16%); puberty and menstruation (12%); abstinence, sexual infections and diseases
(11%); love (6%); contraceptives and condoms (5%); sexual intercourse (5%); reproductive health (4%); homosexuality (1%).

The aforementioned issues go in alignment with the viewpoints of the Moroccan public sector health care officers, which stress four major components of sex education (Dialmy, 2015):

- A biological component which focuses on information related to the human body, genital organs and their function.
- An erotic component which focuses on the technicalities of the sexual act and doesn’t raise the pleasure aspect of sexual intercourse.
- A contraceptive component which stresses the importance of contraception techniques.
- A preventive component which deals with sexually transmitted diseases (especially HIV-AIDS), their dangers and means to avoid them.

With this background in mind, the question worth addressing here is: to what extent can sex education be implemented in Moroccan institutions?. If so, how can this phenomenon be implemented? It can be deduced from the findings elicited from the study that the attitudes towards this controversial issue were not clear-cut. Though the majority of the respondents may appear to be in favor of sex education, they seem to display many reservations concerning any role sex education might play in instilling gender equality, eradicating stereotypes and in respecting the other sex among other related issues. Their seemingly positive attitudes are fueled by their fear from breaking the socio-cultural and religious norms and normalizing raising different issues considered to be taboos in the Moroccan society.

**Conclusion and implications**

The study has confirmed our hypothesis stating that when the community is conservative, it is more likely to hold negative attitudes towards sexual education. It is worth mentioning that aspects of conservatism have been witnessed even amongst the respondents who reported having positive attitudes towards sex education. This goes along with the assumption made by UNESCO (2010) that the debatable issue of sex education should not be studied and investigated uniformly
across cultures, but it should be explored taking into account the specificities that make one culture differs from the other(s): despite the many progressive aspects that may seem to characterize the Moroccan context, conservatism prevails in many human behaviours in Morocco, and sex education is no exception here. This study remains an exploratory attempt to investigate the issue of sex education based on quantitative data. It is part of a work still in progress whereby both quantitative and qualitative instruments will be used on the broader scope to be able to draw more generalisations about such a very important issue scarcely investigated in the Moroccan context.

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(http://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org)
GENDER IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: PARADOXES, MANIFESTATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS¹

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Abstract
This paper explores and analyses the extent to which gender is a complex issue which has an impact on making visions about its implications and consequently the extent to which it has an impact on the process of education, learning, institutions, and the tools which are always necessary in maintaining equilibrium in the country and building a new identity congruent with new situations, circumstances and relations. The field of gender in its connection with language has been explored and thoroughly investigated by feminist linguists. Various studies in the field of language education have focused on gender differences in the language classroom. Oxford & Ehrman (1995) examined learning styles and strategies from a gender perspective. In a similar vein, Murphy (1980) stressed the link between the student’s gender and his/her academic performance. Additionally, Sunderland (1998) explored the impact of student’s gender on the patterns of teacher-student class talk. Much of the literature and writings in human sciences has shown that the relationship between gender as a social construct and education as a true source of empowerment does not take place in a vacuum (Sunderland 1994, Gurian 2001, Sanders 2003).

Key words: Stereotypes, gender, feminism, representations, identity, equality, parity.

Preliminary note

The new Moroccan constitution stresses the equality of men and women reinforcing the basic principle of parity that acknowledges and recognizes a socially articulated difference. Article 19 stipulates that men and women shall enjoy equally political, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental rights and freedoms. It should further be stressed that these rights are guaranteed under the constitution by the international conventions and treaties of which Morocco is a member. The constitution has also created through article 164 means and tools for the enforcement of these rights by setting up the authority for parity and the fight against all forms of exclusion including those that have been perpetrated against women historically as well as by the creation various consultative councils for youth, women, and children.

In a similar vein, the Moroccan public authorities have recently launched a number of initiatives to fight and struggle against gender-based violence and discrimination. These initiatives were further consolidated and expanded by the constitution, under which “the physical and moral integrity of anyone shall not be undermined by any person whatsoever, private or public, under any circumstances. No one shall inflict upon another, under any pretext whatsoever, any cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment which undermines their dignity” (art. 22). However, gender has always been a key factor in power relations, which determine not only roles, rights and freedoms, but also identities and features through which “masculinity and feminity”, are being transformed into “male-hood and woman-hood” (Zaki 2013).

It should be highlighted, in this respect, that our language classroom is no exception and the intersection of gender and education is not born in the classroom. In his explanation of how women became bound to the household and fell under the power of men, Engels wrote that “women’s oppression [do not lie] in biology, but in social conditions.” (Quoted in Zaki, 2013). The classroom, being a key feature of society, reproduces social conditions including those that create, perpetuate, and legitimate all forms of oppression among which those deeply
rooted in cultural practices. These assumptions might seem to reflect reductionism in the roles held by women as well as inequality arising from power relations in which male dominance has a powerful impact. Gender is primarily constructed and reinforced in family socialization but education is mainly “manufactured” by state policies. Simply put, we should expect our classrooms to be environments that hold the complexity of the gender issues present in our society.

**Gender and power balance in language education**

Gender is a significant linguistic feature in any EFL context; thus, the classroom environment is characterized by considerable reflection that it can itself provide. In education, and more specifically, in language classes, be they native or foreign languages, one may, hence, have to stress the many forms of power and control which are either constructed or manufactured by the state policies (Diab, R 2000; Zaki, A 2013). The impact of the historical, cultural, and ideological heritage is one of the biggest constraints that restricts the transformation of human relations. Morocco is no exception. Such impact needs to be lessened through the enhancement of critical thinking, promoting alternative analytical models, anticipatory involvement, and sustainable assessment methods. Along with this, Moroccan women have always developed defensive and adaptive mechanisms that allow them to survive at a low cost. Among these mechanisms, adopting a low profile, pretending to be but a bunch of simplest individuals good at avoiding the worst forms of violence and accepting servility according to Zaki *Ibid*.

**Language vs discourse: explanations and implications**

As teachers of English, we might not venture to state that the mechanisms stated earlier have been noticed for a long time as being dominant in the classroom culture in Morocco which is still largely reproducing these attitudes and self-perceptions! Language seems to fail to address reality and its complex discourse has been discarded from the necessary human relationships it is usually expected to maintain (Sadiqi 2003, Ennaji 2005, Zaki 2013). Looking at what is happening around us; one may assume that people actually display attitudes, behaviours, and judgments that are unambiguous. However, when listening to the same people talk,
ambiguity tends to be contradictory, as neither language nor discourse seem to be possible to come from the same people whose behaviours and attitudes have been observed.

One possible explanation of the paradox is that discourse and behaviour do not meet simultaneously in the same point. It may be highlighted that the gap is triggered by the relative speeds at which discourse and behaviour catch up with new values and ideals in their struggle to feature and manifest in society.

Another explanation for this may be that both language and discourse are operating as substitutes to what should be taking place in real contexts instead. According to Sadiqi (2003), language and discourse went further and silenced the voice of women, and continue to do so in many instances, when they excluded them from those who can generate knowledge, opinion, and alternatives to the male dominated ways of life. Zaki *Ibid* contends that women, except in certain rare cases, were not allowed to be ministers of their religions, they were not allowed in places of worship and when they have managed to access them, they simply were not allowed to speak. This heavy heritage, according to the same author, seems to be still weighing on the speed at which attitudes, behaviours, language, and discourse are faring to accept the inevitable change that is taking place in the representations of what it means to be human, to have rights, equal rights, and to be entitled to them.

Although some sort of a process has already been launched in the kingdom, we will still have to be involved in reinforcing its course by supplying adequate knowledge and making sure it is integrated efficiently in the various institutional means available. For us, as teachers of English, these means will include the curriculum, professional development, teaching materials, education management approaches, school cultures etc...In fact, we are professionals among the many stakeholders involved in fostering awareness of gender issues, initiating, and assuring change.

As teachers who judge and wish their pedagogy to establish an environment in which women are not subjected to discrimination, and exploitation, our
discourse will have meaning only if, on the one hand, it is based on analyses that display the mechanisms through which society ensures that the status of women is maintained unchanged in our classrooms, and on the other hand, it is reinforced with actions that aim at taking apart these mechanisms both in our classrooms and in society at large.

Given the fact that language being, itself, an institution whose functions include holding and preserving cultures and values, the challenge for us is how to reconcile these functions and our goal of being change agents, promoters of critical thinking, initiators of tolerance and of acceptance of difference (Bouznik 200; Zaki 2013).

**Gender significance in EFL context**

According to Spender & Sarah (1980), research in the field of EFL and ESL shows that like age, race, social class, or ethnic group, gender is an outstanding factor that determines the success or failure of any teaching/learning environment. From a feminist perspective, education in Morocco is a genuine context for progress and change and remains a powerful venue where paradoxes can be “unpacked and addressed” (Sadiqi, 2013).

Although Morocco has made huge strides to completely dismantle inequality between boys and girls in schools, much work still seems needed in this regard. The number of female students has been on the increase lately at different levels of education (i.e. primary, secondary, and tertiary); however, their academic performance and school achievement decreases alarmingly with regard to employability especially in higher positions and decision-making spheres. This paradox, it is assumed, stems from a number of facts according to Sadiqi (2003). She contends that in Morocco, females are present quantitatively more than qualitatively in classrooms and this is mostly noticed in classroom feedback according to the same author. What is more, the linguistic space of girls is smaller than that of boys, which undoubtedly restricts their learning opportunities. Furthermore, women’s silence that generally favoured in our culture seems to be transmitted and transposed to the classroom context.
Focus on language education: pedagogical implications

As a teachers of language, our gender action plan and strategy should aim at integrating our gender related actions in a national multidisciplinary across themes of relevance, seeking a cultural, socio-economic, and political validation of language related syllabuses, and explicitly formulating a school to enhance awareness and fight of all forms of gender related stereotypes, and discrimination (Strategic Vision 2015-2030). Our work should also contribute to and support the efforts of other parties active in the domain. Additionally, assessing and elaborating indicators to identify various gender issues in our classrooms, and identifying the mechanisms through which gender discrimination, injustice are integrated in language classrooms should be given much room in our mission as teachers. Further, as agents of change and promoters of critical thinking, we should try to capitalize on the learning competences of females and their participation to the governance of the civil society organizations in their schools and involve female students in advanced scientific and academic research projects. (Quoted in Zaki Ibid).

Conclusion

By focusing on enhancing understanding what opposes people in their society and how opposition is expressed in attitudes, values, cultures, policies and behaviours, and how it results in economic and political opportunities and statuses, the language class creates the ideal learning conditions described in relevant studies and researches and tends to meet the ideal objectives of such a class in sustaining equality between men and women and overcoming gender issues.

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2.5. CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The materials of this chapter are published in special issue of the journal “Culture and Society” (2018 9 (1)).

MOROCCAN FEMINISTS: BETWEEN ACTIVISM AND MUSLIMA THEOLOGY

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Abstract. This paper rereads Moroccan feminism within a nascent methodological interpretive framework dubbed “Muslima theology.” Examining the work of Moroccan Muslim feminists Asma Lamrabet and Khadija al-Battar, it addresses the social and political implications of the emerging critical engagement of Muslima theologians with the old-anchored male hermeneutic tradition of the Sacred Texts. It puts into question the ideological basis of the principle of the “closure of the gate of ijtihad” by revealing how the interpretive tradition is heterogeneous and has been over history subject to religious considerations as well as political and patriarchal changing realities. Focus on the contribution of “Muslima theologians” aims at tracing, recouping some aspects of the systematically foreclosed female interpretive narrative, and subverting the exclusive male norms of interpretation conducive to the formation of a socio-cultural reality that validates in the name of Islam the low status of woman. Enlightened gender-inclusive interpretation of the Sacred Texts allows for alternative histories and agencies bringing to the surface new articulations based on particularities, gender, specific temporalities, contexts, and circumstances. The paper concludes that without Muslima theology as a liberating sub-branch of Islamic feminism, feminism in its activist form would fall short of achieving its objectives, for the traditionalist and literalist exclusive interventions will continue to shape cultural politics at an elitist and grassroots levels.

Keywords: Moroccan feminism, Muslima theology, Muslim feminism, Sacred Texts, genderinclusive interpretation, gender equality.

1 This article was first published in journal “Culture and society : journal of social research / Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas. Sociologijos katedra ; redaktorių kolegija: vyriausias redaktorius Artūras Tereškins … [et al.]. - [T.] 9, [Nr.] 1. – Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2018. – 146 p. : iliustr. - Bibliografija straipsnių gale. – Santraukos lietuvių kalba. ISSN 2029-4573”
This paper addresses the social and political implications and functions of the contemporary body of critical engagement of “Muslima theology and theologians” with the old anchored male interpretive tradition of the Sacred Texts. It aims at revealing how the interpretive tradition is heterogeneous and has been subject not only to religious considerations, but also to ideological and patriarchal realities. As such, my focus on “Muslima theologians” is designed to trace some aspects of the systematically marginalized and foreclosed female interpretive rhetoric and challenge the hegemonic and exclusive male norms of interpretation, affecting the social and cultural status of women in the Muslim societies in general and Moroccan society in particular.

As such interpretation is a social act as much as it is not a mere intellectual exercise, it rather has a direct impact on the male female dynamics. I would like to stress, following Gayatri Spivak’s famous article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that women spoke and speak but they could not be heard because they do not own power structures (education, media, and decision-making positions for example). I shall put particular emphasis on the contribution of Moroccan Muslim feminists to the controversial debate over women’s right to the reinterpretation of the Sacred Texts; these include Asma Lembrabet, and Khadija al-Battar; Fatima Mernissi’s contribution would require a separate article. I contend that the feminist interpretive trend in countries like Morocco gained momentum during the last 25 years thanks to the revival of Enlightenment, modernist, liberal, and rational epistemologies, ideologies, and philosophies. Such trend, side by side with the growing influence of feminism, helped shake the long-anchored hierarchy of difference, giving way to the possibility for the transcription of a female intellectual, political, and religious subjectivity.

The systematic exclusion of women and their invalidation as interpretive communities in the long exegesis tradition has political causes and dangerous consequences. These include:

1. Many hadiths (prophetic tradition) were invented and are misogynistic; they don’t chime in with the spirit of Islam. They are “inventions of the Umayyad
period and other post-Prophetic dynasties, when legal regulations and theological doctrine promoted the intellectual and physical enslavement of Muslim women reflecting a culture of harems, where women needed to be controlled” (Wadud 2006, 42). Although the Hadiths were inauthentic, they legitimized in the name of Islam the long tradition of patriarchal tyranny of harem-life and political hegemony.

2. The Gnostic and literalist textual-interpretive line of Arab-Islamic civilization eclipsed the rational trajectory of thought, leading to the eclipse of women’s contribution to rational and enlightenment narrative in spite of its presence at different phases of history. In the context of his reform project, al-Jabri proposes epistemological solutions to the eclipse of Arab civilization in the modern age by classifying the Arab-Islamic sciences as textual-interpretive (*ulum al-bayan*), gnostic (*ulum al-irfan*) and demonstrative-experimental (*ulum al-burhan*). The domination of the two former over the latter, he argues, resulted in the Arab world being surpassed in the modern age. The adoption of a rational rethinking methodology of the religious heritage is meant to counterbalance the ideological and at times irrational interpretation and praxis.

3. More dangerously, the monopolizing male tradition of interpretation of religious texts validates the relegation of women to a secondary political and social position. I shall argue later that Muslima theologians and their act such as Amina Wadud’s unprecedented performative act of leading a congregational mixed prayer is an act of addressing, redressing, and subverting the male politics of religion. Islamic texts or rather male interpretive traditions would be revived to legitimize the political exclusion of women in a way that would be dismissed as political absurdity if espoused by non-Muslim modern states. Fatima Mernissi uses the story of Benazir Bhutu’s victory in Pakistani elections in 1988 to launch mordant criticism against the double talk of the male politicians in Muslim countries. When Benazir Bhutto was democratically elected Prime Minister of Pakistan after winning the 1988 general elections, “all who monopolized the right to speak in the name of Islam, and especially Nawaz Sharif, the leader of the then
Opposition, the IDA (Islamic Democratic Alliance), raised the cry of blasphemy: ‘Never - horrors! - has a Muslim state been governed by a woman!’ Invoking Islamic tradition, they decried this event as ‘against nature’” (Mernissi 1993, 1). She goes on to stress that Nawaz Sharif and his supporters “could not have waged a similar campaign against the candidate who won the election if he had been named Hasan or Muhammad. The resultant ambiguity (always a bearer of violence in matters of rights) only comes into play when it is a question of a woman” (Mernissi 1993, 1). Recourse to the seventh-century (Prophetic Tradition) to hone a misogynistic political status quo and absurdly invalidate a twentieth-century election was dismissed by many Muslima theologians and secular intellectuals and activists as a striking example of the politicians’ manipulative utilization of religion for political purposes.

4. The place of women in Arab-Islamic countries has over centuries been prisoner on the one hand of male partial and partisan rhetoric and on the other hand of two reductive “radical perspectives”: “one rigid Islamic conservative; the other western, ethnocentric and Islamophobic” (Lamrabet 2016). Several critics call for a “third way” approach or what I prefer to call “Double Critique” to use the term of Abdelkbir Khatibi to deconstruct and eventually help dismantle both the Islamic conservative stance and the Eurocentric binary perspective.

5. Interpretation of the Sacred Texts has a direct impact on the laws that regulate the relation between men and women. An orthodox literalist male interpretation can produce rigid codes as is the case of the 1957 Women’s Personal Status that was drafted by a commission that consisted of ten male religious scholars in the total absence of women. Conversely, a more liberal, moderate, and more inclusive interpretation can produce a far less discriminatory law as is the case of the 2004 Family Code drafted by both men and women representing different ideologies. Such restrictive politics that made women subject to double-bind articulation of conservative and Eurocentric hegemonic hierarchy led a group of Muslim feminists to reengage female alternative voices in the field of theology. I shall argue that Muslima theologians and the increasing acts of subversive
observation of religious rituals such as women leading prayers and creating all-women’s mosques affect not only theological gender equality, but also the politics of the space of worship.

1 Moroccan feminism operates at least at two different but mutually influential paradigm trajectories.

As much is written about the former, I shall devote less space to it than to the latter. The first one concerns political feminist activism which can be traced to the early 1980’s when Marxist Leninist activists led campaigns to empower women and subvert the maledominated cultural politics. As the enthusiasm following the independence of Morocco in 1956 started to peter out, the gender issue which was not top priority during the State Building phase (1956-1974), came to top the agenda of the social movements. The feminists started off their rhetoric of difference discourse on the premise that “the subordination of women was not a class issue, but rather a gender one” (Miller 2013, 191); this paradigm shift from class to gender was supported by a growing regime of universal human rights and women’s rights standards (e.g. the CEDAW, the UN Decade for Women). This movement gained momentum when a group of Moroccan secular feminists and associations especially the Marxist Leninist 1 Over the last few years, a growing number of women subverted the conventional religious practices. For example, Sherin Khankan started up an unprecedented Mosque run exclusively by women in Denmark called “Mariam Mosque.” Khankan came to this decision as she thought that the Mosques as they were and are still run do not provide an environment where women can feel at home as they are male-dominated. She is also critical of the reproduction of patriarchy in religious spaces. Besides, Yemeni academic Ilham Manie gained media visibility when she delivered an unprecedented Friday khutbah (sermon) to a group of female and male Muslims in Switzerland.

The prayer led by Halima Josay Hussein was intersected by pieces of music. Union for Feminine Action, affiliated to the Democratic Political Action Organization championed a grass-root campaign by mobilizing women and human rights activists through the collection of one million signatures to revisit and
reform the institutional patriarchal Family Code enacted in 1957 and slightly amended in 1993. Fortunately for them, the endeavor to dismantle the dominant political and religious conservatism and push for more social and political visibility of women benefited from Morocco’s ratification of the UN Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1993. As the women’s rights and human rights’ narrative was gaining more momentum, King Hassan II, in line with the Palace’s unprecedented opening up to opposition parties, appointed Abderrahman El Youssoufi, leader of the long-opposition Socialist Union for popular Forces Party to form a socialist government in 1998. This government proposed the controversial National Plan for the Integration of Women in development.

This plan was among other things designed to reform the discriminatory family code within the framework of the international covenants of human rights. This move was dismissed by the masses and by the Islamists, including the Party of Justice and Development currently in office and the Sufi-based opposition religious group Justice and Benevolence, as dictates from the West, just as they accused the socialist parties as horses of Troy used by the West to secularize the country and Westernize women. The Islamists and conservatives marched in Casablanca in fierce reaction to the National Plan and to its supportive Rally of the liberal parties and groups in Rabat. The Rabat/Casablanca rallies showcased two seemingly polarized narratives. The government’s withdrawal of the National Plan following the Islamists’ “show of force” in Casablanca prompted the leftists and the feminists to reactivate their lobbying mechanisms in order to keep their liberalizing project alive. Two major players were involved for this end: the ulama (religious scholars) and the street (Salime 2011, 70). Facing the reaction of the Islamists to the draft reform of the socialist government, the liberals shifted their battleground from elitist to grass-root locations. They spearheaded their campaign towards the masses to counterbalance the growing influence and popularity of the conservatives among the ordinary people. Following this logic, it is the Islamists who played a crucial role in the major paradigm shift of the leftist/secular feminists
from elitist political discourse to grass-root politics of the street so much so that, as Salime would argue, the Islamists and the liberals should be reconsidered not in terms of separation and binarism, but rather in terms of intersectionality and mutual influence. Another crucial movement moment in Moroccan feminist history is the terrorist attacks of Casablanca in 2003. A group of young Moroccans influenced by fundamentalist ideology perpetrated attacks in the economic capital of Morocco, claiming the lives of over forty people. These attacks compelled the State to take measures. One the other hand, it accelerated the reform of the religious field where women came to play unprecedented roles: the Higher Council of Religious Scholars includes women for the first time, and female religious guides / murshidat were appointed to meet the specific religious needs of women. On the other hand, the State started up a long process of reforming the Family Code, based on a liberal re-interpretation of the Sacred Texts and which takes human rights, women’s rights, democracy, tolerance, and moderation as referential principles. This liberal orientation of cultural politics in favor of women’s rights was even more reinforced thanks to the Arab Spring/Democratic Spring in 2011. The qualitative political visibility of women in the 20th of February Movement (the Moroccan version of the Arab Spring) has made the political debate over gender issues occur outside of the exclusive closed doors of the small close elite of the government and the monopoly of the religious interpretive community. The ultimate achievements of the Moroccan feminist movement are the relatively advanced reform of the Family Code in 2004 and the recognition of the 2011 Constitution of more rights, especially symbolical Article 19. The latter reads as follows:

*The man and the woman enjoy, in equality, the rights and freedoms of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental character, enounced in this Title and in the other provisions of the Constitution, as well as in the international conventions and pacts duly ratified by Morocco and this, with respect for the provisions of the Constitution, of the constants [constantes] and of the laws of the Kingdom. The State works for the realization of parity between men and women.*
An Authority for parity and the struggle against all forms of discrimination is created, to this effect (Constitution of Morocco, 2011, 9).

The second trajectory to which I shall devote most of the rest of this paper is the emergent deconstructive interpretive tradition of theology that brings to the surface the work of female theologians who have been at best 2 The italics are mine. The Arab Spring brought the Islamist Party of Justice and Development to power in Morocco; this turn of events turned out to be a backlash against the rising positive advancements in women’s rights. The post-Arab Spring government brought down the number of female secretaries of State from about 7 to one. back-lined and at worst excluded of the privileged hermeneutic positionality and subjectivity. The work and activism of female religious scholars such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, Fatima Mernissi, Riffat Hassan to name but a few announced the rise of a new sub-feminist intellectual and activist branch; this is namely “Muslima theology.” Increasing attention to this nascent theological trajectory prompted Ednan Aslan and Mercia Hermansen to edit a pioneering book entitled Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians in 2013. The methodological and ideological delineations of the new sub-discipline are in the process of making, just as their delineations are not yet clear. It places women not only as subjects of study but at the heart of the interpretive process and as a category of theological knowledgeproduction, intellectual analysis, and interpretive communities. Muslima theology calls for new discursive trajectories and interpretive subjectivities beyond the long-anchored gender hierarchies and gender blindness. Making use of the specificity of the Muslim feminists’ autobiographic moment Muslima theology also attempts to re-enact feminism outside the exclusive Eurocentric and Christian canons and historiography; it tends to rewrite feminism within a more encompassing perspective that takes into account “Muslim feminism” and the centrality of Islam in gender identity in Arab-Islamic countries. To grasp the performative and interpretive thread that runs through the work and action of these pioneering intellectuals, we have to always remember that their endeavor is deconstructive in a Spivakian way. That is to say a deconstruction that
is not destruction but construction in that it stresses more intimacy than “critical distance” (Paulson 2016). Muslima theology is “broadly defined to encompass a range of interpretive strategies and perspectives arising from multiple social locations, interrogates Islamic scripture and other forms of religious discourse to empower Muslim women of faith to speak for themselves in the interests of gender justice. Contemporary female Muslim ‘constructivist’ approaches articulate and religious pluralism, paralleling developments in womanist and mujerista readings of religious texts” (Aslan 2007). As such, this discipline/branch highlights difference and pluralism and calls for a more inclusive approach, just as it indicates an unequivocal stance towards gender equality, cultural politics gender visibility, and social justice as guaranteed by the Sacred Texts but foreclosed by male interpretive communities. This challenging rhetoric has certainly a supportive logic within religion itself; social justice and equity. It is premised on the idea that Islam privileges the Maqasid of Sharia, that is to say the objectives of the legislation which capitalize on saving the interests of humanity and warding off the threatening dangers. As a matter of fact, some of the maqasid of Sharia include justice and equity and it so happens that women have suffered for a long time the practical injustice and inequity caused by unjust male hermeneutic tradition. The emerging discipline aims at addressing and redressing the injustices of male theology. Muslima Theology is about “the growing role played by female Muslim theologians and academics working in the field of religious studies who are critically reflecting on their position within Islam through making interpretive contributions that challenge the prevalent patriarchal readings of religious tradition” and also that put into question the fixation and sacredness of male interpreters. Religion is divine, but interpretation is human and therefore it’s not a religious sin to subvert interpretation. As a matter of fact, the Muslima theologians’ objective is not to deconstruct Islam, but to radically reconstruct the tradition from within; it promotes the integration of gender as a category of thought and seeks to combat fixation and a historicality, as the divine always evolves within the limitation of mundane human. As Wadud puts it: “Allah cannot
be fixed by any one moment, any one text, and any of the multiple interactions with that text. But as human knowledge and epistemology continues to develop, so do human ideas about Allah” (Wadud 2006, 112). Some of the reasons that hindered women over the centuries from venturing into the “labyrinths” of reinterpreting the Sacred Texts outside of the mainstream male exegesis tradition is the amalgam between Sharia and fiqh. Mir-Hossieni clearly eliminates confusion between Sharia and fiqh in the following citation:

In Muslim belief, sharia – revealed law, literally “the way” – is the totality of God’s will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Fiqh – the science of jurisprudence, literally “understanding” – is the process of human endeavor to discern and extract legal rules from the sacred sources of Islam – that is, the Koran and the Sunna (the practice of the Prophet, as contained in hadith, Traditions). In other words, while the sharia is sacred, universal, and eternal, fiqh is human and – like any other system of jurisprudence – subject to change. Fiqh is often mistakenly equated with sharia, both in popular Muslim discourses and by politicians and academic and legal specialists, and often with ideological intent... (Mir- Hosseini 2006).

It is only with the denial of the divine nature of the fiqh that the religious field is more open to a wider range of intervention including women who came to be able to challenge male tradition within the scope of a secular human criticism rather than within a challenge of divine orders. Jerusha Tanner Lamptey’s attempt at laying down the contours of a growing discipline shows that the work of Muslim women interpreters of the Holy Quran represents an alternative conception of difference and is an essential resource for two major reasons:

First, women—whether silent, silenced or unheard—have generally suffered from interpretative “voicelessness” within Islamic history; the Islamic interpretative tradition has historically been dominated and controlled by men. Thus, the mere inclusion of a largely excluded voice has the potential to proffer new insights. Second, the central interpretative task of these scholars is the elucidation of a Qur’anic conception of human difference, specifically
sexual/biological difference. Certain elements of this conception of difference can be generalized and utilized as a guide in articulating other conceptions of human difference (Lamptey 2007).

In the same vein, Meena Sharify-Funk and Celene Ayat Lizzio position themselves within a female-centric tradition critique of “purity norms;” an approach which favor “femalestream contemplations of piety, female-centric modes of leadership, and female epistemological authority, in this case as inspired by engagement with Islamic heritages.” However, the gynocentrism of Muslima theology is not meant at substituting the superiority of men by a superiority of women and exclusion of male engagement (Lizzio 2007). The hermeneutic endeavor of Muslima theologians and Muslim feminists was possible thanks to the pioneering work of contemporary Arab-Islamic philosophers such as Fazlurahman, Mohamed Arkoun, Sadeq Jala al-Adm, Bouaali Yassin, Moahamed Abed al-Jabiri, Abdellah Laroui, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, to name but these, who put into question a whole tradition of ideological, theological, and intellectual legacy. The traumatic effect incurred by Western colonialism prompted the conservative and orthodox scholars (the curates of traditional ideologies) together with the masses of the Arab-Islamic world to dismiss the Western logosphere and epistemological foundations as a threat and disfiguration of the Muslim cultural order. Face to what they see as a parochial stance, the Muslim liberal scholars proposed open ways of negotiating Western thought and critically revisiting the Muslim heritage, criticizing on the one hand its epistemological and epistemic bases, and on the other hand, celebrating Western methodological and pedagogical frameworks. Arkoun, for example, suggests that “rational modernism breaks with dogmatic truths of traditional faith and dogmatic postulates of a closed system” (Arkoun 1996, 43). Laroui opines that Western civilization has achieved the best progress that humanity has been able to reach so far and that various civilizations across history including Arab civilization have contributed to building up what he views as human or universal civilization.
Western civilization as such is multi-handed; therefore, the Arabs and Muslims have the right and probably the obligation to import Western institutions to which they have contributed: democratic institutions, human rights, women’s rights, technology, and values not as Western, but rather as human and universal. This position is meant as an answer back to the conservative rejectionist stance towards the West. This deconstructive anti-conservative approach helped hone a revisionist line of thought and conduce modern Islam to “reconnect with its creative past and intellectual legacy that flourished during the period between the third and the fourth centuries [AH]. This was a prominent period I referred to earlier as Arab humanism” (Arkoun 1996). Interestingly, this citation implies that this rational narrative isn’t borrowed from the West; it is rather inherent and intrinsic to the Islamic philosophical tradition. Elsewhere Arkoun bemoans the scholastic trend of the Arab thought. In his seminal study The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought, he essentially ascribes the eclipse of innovative rational thought in the Arab-Islamic world to the triumph of the unthinkable and the conscious and unconscious praise of the limitation of the space of the thinkable. As he succinctly puts it: “when the field of the unthinkable is expanded… the intellectual horizons of reason are diminished and its critical function narrowed, and there is little space for the unthinkable” (Arkoun 2002, 12). The systematic shrinkage of the margin of (l’inpensé) “the unthought” and (l’inpensable) the “unthinkable” led to the a-historicality and a-spatiality of the very act of thinking and interpreting. The corollary guillotine of pluralism based on ideology and gender silenced the voices of difference and reason for long centuries. The changing social, economic, and ideological conditions faced the colonial reality in the beginning of the twentieth century followed by major intellectual and ideological shifts starting from the second half of the twentieth century kindled by the 1967 Arab defeat known as the Nakba polarized the Arab-Islamic world into vehement curators of the “the sacred traditions” and the liberal secular holders of reformist ideologies. It is in this conjuncture that women as a sociological, interpretive, intellectual, political and activist category came to
power. Although the liberal line of Arab thought did not address women’s issues or addressed them only at a secondary level, it opened up horizons of cultural politics that are not monopolized by colonial and patriarchal epistemological ideologies. It is within the pluralistic and gender-inclusive approach that I will examine Moroccan Muslim feminists: Asma Lamerabet and Khadija al-Battar. The former rereads the Holy Quran from a Muslima perspective with particular focus on al-Bukhari’s Sahih. I have to clarify here that while it is significantly important that women like Amina Wadud addressed Islamic perception of woman by an immediate and unmediated exploration of the Quran outside of man’s mainstream hermeneutic tradition, it should be pointed out that such reading is incomplete, for Muslim theology, sharia and fiqh are not exclusively drawn from the Quran. The other source of theology that Wadud excluded, particularly in Woman and The Quran, is the Prophetic Tradition (Sunna).

The latter is examined in the work of Muslima scholars like Asma Lamrabet and more particularly Khadija al-Battar. The reason that makes imperative the examination of the Quran and the Hadith side by side rather than in separation is that are both revealed and that “the truth does not contradict the truth;” indeed the prophet’s tradition is itself a revelation. In Sura an-Najm, Allah said: “Your companion [Muhammad] has not strayed, nor has he erred (53:3). Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed” (53: 5). Accordingly, the egalitarian and equity rhetoric and social justice that permeate the Holy Quran cannot be contradicted in the Prophetic tradition that vilifies women and spreads a misogynistic patriarchal discourse. In Morocco, a new generation of Muslim feminists aims at rereading the Sacred Texts outside of the patriarchal and the colonial hermeneutic machines.

For example, Asma Lamrabet, director of the Center for Feminist Studies in Islam affiliated to the religious institution Rabita Mohammedia of the Ulema, operates within the principles of a growing school of holistic, gender-inclusive, and subversive modern methodology that is facing strong resistance on the part of the traditional conservative institutions and figures. Lamrabet identifies twenty
problematic and controversial questions that have been at the basis of the perpetuation of a misogynic tradition in Islam, on the one hand, and the Western misconceptions of Islam on the other hand. These questions include: the origins of the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib, (in)equality between men and women, men’s authority over women, violence against women, stoning as punishment of adultery, women’s dress code and the Hijab, interfaith marriage, testimony of women. She argues that women need to promote an innovative reformist discourse as “a third way” to counterbalance both the colonial ideology and the traditionalist Islamic discourse. On these grounds, she thinks that wearing the veil is not an obligation, inheritance laws should be revised, and more importantly the educational system, especially Islamic tracks, must be reconsidered in the light of the advancements in the universalistic democratic promises of democracy, human rights, and modernity. She warns us however that while discrimination against women is a common characteristic of all cultures, it is almost exclusively associated with Muslim societies.

She rightly stresses that in “our post-modern and hyperglobalized world, the correlation between patriarchy and ultraliberalism has resulted in new forms of exploitation and domination of women” (Lamrabet 2016, 5). Besides, like Fatima Mernissi, especially in her later work, she argues that criticism should not be launched against Islam as “a spiritual message;” for her it’s not Islam that is oppressive to women, but rather its “different interpretations and legal rulings founded by interpretative ideologies many centuries ago”4 (Lamrabet 2016, 6). In her revisionist revisit of the Sacred Text, Asma Lamrabet, like Amina Wadud, builds her critical articulations on the premise that the Qur’anic rhetoric is often linked to the time and context of its revelation and its teachings should be negotiated in line with the circumstances of different communities and temporalities.

There is no wonder that in societies like Morocco that are still dominated by conservative cultural politics, such a re-interpretive act would be encountered by a strong rhetoric of resistance. Needless to say that in a social and cultural
environment where the rates of illiteracy are inauspiciously high more particularly among women, Moroccan Muslim feminists’ engagement with the Sacred Texts and with the male misogynistic *fiqh* tradition remains elitist. It did not go grass roots as is the case of feminist political activism which managed to mobilize the masses around their conservative Islamist ideology at different movement moments starting from the early 1990’s. For Asma Lamrabet, Muslim scholars as well as laymen built on the Qur’anic concept of “*quiwama*” to legitimize the superiority of men over women. This refers to verse 4:34: “Men are in charge ‘*qawamun*’ of women because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property.” The male abusive interpretation of *quiwama* decrees in the name of God the absolute material and moral authority over women, which is articulated in the family (wife’s obedience to her husband), in politics, and in economy. Lamrabet comes to the conclusion that *quiwama*, as is the case of other Qur’anic concepts, is meant to evolve over time especially that the Quran did not assign specific social roles for men and for women. For that matter, it should lend itself to evolving (re)interpretations. As Morocco is undergoing major socio-economic transformations, the interpretation of the Quran should be fine-tuned to the practical demands of life. “Both spouses” she writes “are today confronted with daily reality in which financial co-responsibility has become a fact on the ground” (Lamrabet 2016, 21). It should be stressed here that 21% of the households in Morocco are run by women and that there is a growing number of single mothers. On these grounds, Lambrabet doubts that in such cha(llen)ging times in the job market the husband alone can support *quiwama*. She calls therefore for “mutual support and shared responsibility” between the two spouses and a more egalitarian partnership in the marriage institution in accordance with the Qur’anic commandments of social justice. This falls into place with the relatively “progressive” provision of the Moroccan Family Code which articulates the shift from the wife’s minor status (1957) to the status of partnership between the two spouses (2004).
Although Lamrabet seems to be avant-gardist in her gender-inclusive theological intervention, her views can still be dismissed as conservative both by Western and Arab liberal-secular scholars and activists. For example, she still views women as minor agents that need even in the present time “additional measures of protection” equating them with vulnerable beings such as children and the elderly. She is trapped between the demands of the liberal narrative and the constraints and resistance of a powerful orthodox ideology. In the same logic, Asma Lamrabet addresses the even more controversial question of hijab. Ever since the early 1990’s, the issue of the Hijab in Morocco and elsewhere including in the West became more visible, contributing to a growing polarization between feminists and Islamists. She warns us in the beginning as to the common misconceptions about the term “Hijab.” She convincingly stresses the slippage and discrepancy between the Qur’anic use and the conceptual and practical interpretations of the term. Going through the seven instances where the Quran refers to “Hijab” she shows that it in no instance indicates the scarf that covers the hair. In a very controversial move, she argues that the verse commonly used to prove the “obligation” of the Hijab: “O you who have believed, do not enter the houses of the Prophet except when you are permitted for a meal… And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a separation (Hijab).” Quran 33: 53 is addressed to the Prophet’s wives and it was subject to specific causes of revelation, aiming at respecting the private life of the Prophet. A quick conservative or even layman critical reaction to this argument is that the Prophet in Islam is a model to be followed by the Muslims and his wives are called Muslims’ mothers who are meant likewise to be taken as models in faith, behavior, and social roles. In her view, the Qur’an does not set up a particular dress code for the Muslim women. In the course of her interpretive analysis of the Qur’anic regulations of the hijab, Lambrabet discusses another verse that denotes the scarf:

*And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not to expose their adornment (zinatahunna) except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers*
(Khumurihinna) over their chests (Juyubihinna) and not to expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands’ fathers, their sons, their husbands’ sons, their brothers, their brothers’ sons (Quran 24: 31).

This divine command was subject to a multiplicity of interpretations or rather misinterpretations. On the one hand, the Quran uses the term “khimar” rather than hijab which is dominantly adopted by religious and conservative scholars. On the other hand, the khimar was used by pre-Islamic Arab women “to uncover their neck and upper chest” (Lamrabet 2016, 47). Lemrabet deliberately indicates a milder form of divine command to refer to the divine order of veiling: “The Quran,” she tells us, “invites the believing women to fold their scarves (Khimar) over their chests (Juyubihinna) to hide the upper part of their busts when they are in public” (Lamrabet 2016, 47). The slippage between the invitation and order leads her to conclude without enough convincing historical, political, theological, and linguistic data and explanation that a deliberate semantic shift from “Khimar” as part “of the Qur’anic message of liberation and a symbol of dignity” (Lamrabet 2016, 48) to “Hijab” is a way of “separation” in order to “show them [women] their place in society, and exclude them, in the name of Islam, from the sociopolitical sphere” (Lamrabet 2016, 48). She implicitly accuses the male exegetical tradition of invention; an invention that was politically and socially disempowering to women, for by imposing the veil on women in opposition to the divine message “they will lose all the rights acquired at the advent of Islam. And the ‘veil’ or Hijab will remain the single powerful indicator of the deterioration of Muslim women’s legal status, since they will be secluded and excluded from the public space, in the name of this symbol” (Lamrabet 2016, 48).

Imposing the veil on women falls short of the teachings of the Quran premised on the general principle: “No compulsion in religion.” As a matter of fact, Lembrabet does not fully cover her hair. In June 2017, Asma Lamrabet shelled the literalist traditionalist theologians by scathing criticism. She insisted that the religious reformist project in Morocco is fragmented and disorganized, calling on the decision makers to put into place mechanisms that institutionalize the reformist
act of interpretation. She reiterated that in spite of the dominance of the literalist theologians of the religious scene, *ijtihad* is inevitable. The literalists’ interpretation cannot meet the requirements of the Muslims in the present time. Her reformist perspective departs from the necessity to desacralize the interpretative heritage without desacralizing the Sacred Texts themselves. This process should bring together sociologists, economists, historians etc…. to start up an inclusive, realistic, and enlightened rethinking of Muslim theology. As it is expected, her “daring” reformist engagement has incurred on her the wrath of a huge number of Moroccan internet users. Here I shall provide some random samples of reactions following Lamrabet’s lecture on “What is our Position vis-a-vis the Reformist Reflection on Religious Thought” in Casablanca in June 2017: 1. You are calling for equality in inheritance, the ban of polygamy, recognition of homosexuality… an Islam light!!! I have a better solution for you. Why don’t you simply go live with your Judeo- Christian masters!!! (in French)7 2. I should tell Lemrabet: “Ijtihad is just like the hijab you are wearing. Half of your hair is uncovered!!! Fear God. (in Arabic) 3. These women aim at dismantling Islam from inside; they are more threatening to the Islamic nation more than the military of the enemy. They combat Islam on behalf of the colonial West. (in Arabic) 4. We want separation between religion and laws; we want a secular state, and we want religious marriage and secular marriage separated. It’s time to make things clear and fight corruption! Who wants Islam follows it, and those who don’t want to should follow secular law! We are fed up of feminists trying to impose their distorted ideas on Islam. (in English) 5. The Islamic Sheikhs excelled at poking their nose in every single detail of public and private lives of our societies. Over history, they prohibited painting, photography, music, arts, philosophy, printing, coffee, television, telephone, pants and things nobody can think of. Today, they are combating intellectual freedom, secularism and demonize difference. They use all forms of oppression and terrorism; they imprison and kill atheists, thinkers, and innovators. But we let them know that their endeavor will fail. Humanity has overridden you and you won’t be able to control and silence ideas…
Enlightenment is coming and change will happen, and you won’t manage to stop the deluge… (in Arabic) This gives us an idea about how the Moroccans from different walks of life, ideological affiliations, and social backgrounds address the genderinclusive interpretation of the Sacred Texts. This issue requires a fieldwork study for a better insight into the sociology of religion in Morocco. In her intrepid *Fi Naqd al-Bukhari*, Moroccan theologian Khadija al- Battar launched caustic criticism against one of the most established compilers of the Prophetic Traditions, al-Bukhari and his Sahih. She called for the desacralization of al-Bukhari who she claims has invented many Hadiths less for religious purposes than for political and patriarchal motivations. In Muslim theological tradition, it’s very adventurous to attack this most established compiler; he has the accolade of being the “commander of the faithful” of the hadith and his *Sahih* as second only to the Quran. According to her, these titles are undeserved and fail to the first test. The enlightened religious scholars of Islam such as Mohamed Ibn Yahya al-Dahli, al-Abani, Ibn Dahya, al-Kawthari, al-Ghumari to name but these have, in her opinion, undermined these fake titles and have demonstrated that al-Bukhari was not erudite and showed considerable inabilities in Hadith sciences. One of the major factors the religious scholars have based their scathing criticism against him is that the content of his compiled Sahih contradicts the Quran, the noble prophetic biography, and the rational spirit of Islam (al-Battar 2003). Likewise, she stresses that the Sahih is replete with contradictions and mainly with misogynistic statements that are in stark opposition to gender equality, social justice, and the high status with which Islam endowed woman. For example, he inserted hadiths that woman is created of a crooked rib at a time when the Quran says that men and women are created of the same soul. Besides, al-Bukhari includes in his compilation a hadith about the circumcision of woman, one associating augury with women, and one about the decrease in mind and religion. The hadith reads as follows:

Prophet peace be upon him left for the prayer to the mosque for the Eid (Adha or Fitr) and then admonished the people and command them to pay charity,
therefore called out “O people do pay alms” and then passed by women and called out to them: O assembly of women, do pay alms for I see you making up the majority in Fire (Hell), and he was asked why/how is that O Messenger of Allah, he replied: (You women do) excessive La’na (Cursing) and ingrate to husbands (refusing them), and Naqisatu ‘Aqlin Wa Din-in (females decreased in religion and mind).

Khadija al-Battar backs her refutation of this vilifying prophetic saying by referring to established religious scholars like al-Shawkani, al-Nawawi, and al-Jaziri who argue about a lot of injustices to woman and to the Prophet whose statements are revealed by God. Al-Battar concludes in an unequivocal manner that incurred on her the wrath of the general public and the orthodox scholars that al-Bukhari is the embodiment of extremist and irrationalism in Islamic theology. He guillotined the principles of enlightenment and reason that are at the heart of Islam. His fundamentalist ideology that has shaped cultural politics in the Muslim societies over history, being one of the most influential hadith compilers, has among other things denied women’s rights and institutionalized the patriarchal male-female dynamics. Al-Battar’s deconstructive act is certainly one of the major interventions in the process of shaking the bases of patriarchal injustice in the name of Islam. As it is expected in such revisionist interpretive cases, the conservatives, in opposition to the teachings of the Quran “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and debate with them in the most dignified manner” (Quran 16: 126) attacked al-Battar accusing her of heresy. A considerable number of Moroccan ulema (religious scholars) have used conservative outlets such as an-Nour Journal and al-Tajdid newspaper to dismiss her allegations. The fact that she chose the leftist al-Ahdath al-Maghribiya Publications that they claim is affiliated with the Union of Socialist and Popular Forces Party to publish her book is seen as a thinly veiled sign that her act is ideological. She is used by the left to shake one of the major foundations of the Islam. Besides, they claim that her study is plagiarized; she is said to have drawn her material from “her chief who taught her magic” Mohamed Arkoun. Although
al-Battar is the least mediatized of the Moroccan Muslima theologians, she succeeded in making herself more visible in so much as she attracted the attention of the ulema due to her audacious reflections on al-Bukhari. Conclusion This paper has shed some light on the importance of innovative genderinclusive interpretation of the Sacred Texts which resides in shaking the long exegesis tradition preserved by the notion of “the closure of the gate of ijtihad.” The ijtihad as jihad was possible thanks to the enlightened work of a number of Muslim scholars in the light of the latest developments in humanities, history, linguistics, hermeneutics, anthropology, history, feminism, cultural studies, philosophy, and post colonialism. Focus on alternative histories and agencies brought to the surface new articulations based on particularities, gender, specific temporalities, contexts, and circumstances. It can be argued that without Muslima theology as a liberating subbranch of Islamic feminism, feminism in its activist form would fall short of achieving its objectives. As long as male orthodox theologians monopolize the religious field, feminism will be incomplete, for the traditionalist and literalist exclusive interventions will continue to shape cultural politics at an elitist and grassroot levels. The gender turn of theology is seen as an answer back to Islamophobia. In a BBC interview on March 19, 2017 with Sherin Khenkan the founder of the Mariam Mosque, the first-led female mosque in Scandinavia, she proudly indicates that “I think that it is very difficult today to hold on to the narrative that Muslim women are oppressed when they can see that we have Imams.” Her ending note is very powerful: “the future of Islam is a woman.” In Morocco, the feminists address daring issues but they didn’t push through to the question of the imamate or political leadership of a woman. The future of feminist activism is genderinclusive interpretation of the sacred Texts. There are signs in the Moroccan social movements’ horizon that the reinterpretive process of gender equality is going grassroot. In June 2017, the Democratic Association for Moroccan Women launched a campaign called O3lach la? (Why not?) to denounce the failure of the implementation of the provisions of the 2011 Constitution, especially Article 19. They call for more equal rights concerning
inheritance and the expansion of the scope of ijtihad to end the injustices done to women.

References


Promoting Gender Equality in Moroccan Educational Institutions: Reality or Illusion?

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Abstract. The paper seeks to investigate the extent to which the reproduction of gender inequalities in educational institutions shapes Moroccan students’ identities through the intersection between gender stereotypes in the textbooks, manuals and media and the reproduction of traditional gender roles within family and society as a whole. By so doing, the paper argues that despite the fact that Moroccan universities have made good initiatives as far as the culture of gender equality is concerned by introducing gender studies course at the university level, the traditional gender roles seem to be still reproduced. The study particularly explains why a radical change from the pre-schooling to the schooling and the family institution to the higher education is important in shaping gender identities of Moroccan university students. It demonstrates that to promote the gender equality culture among students all stakeholders (policy makers, the family, media, educational institutions, etc.) should collaborate in order to reform the curriculum so as to deconstruct the stereotypes generated in the media and textbooks.

Keywords: deconstruction of gender stereotypes, gender equality, higher education, identities.

Introduction

Morocco is a country where democratic change is making the headlines, and where all major institutions have been reformed to suit the progressive implementation of democratic practices, thus, it is no longer acceptable for a crucial field such as education to be portrayed as “a gender biased” field or as a place where students are still discriminated based on their gender. Despite the

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efforts exerted in empowering women and reforming education in Morocco, it seems that gender equality is still lagging behind. In fact, both gender and education are engineered by different sources of power and authority in the Moroccan culture, which are obviously observed in family and media.

This is asserted by Sadiqi (2013, 15) who states that “Gender is primarily constructed and reinforced in family socialization and education is primarily ‘manufactured’ by state policies.” Equally important, stereotypes in media and textbooks play a substantial role in the persistence of gender inequalities. The present paper is divided into three sections: the first section provides a general theoretical background to the study. The second one describes the methodology used in this research. The study adopts the mixed methods approach, which combines both the qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures and which targets Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah university students as its sample population. The third section provides an analysis of the collected data. The last section puts forward a set of strategies on how to implement gender equality in the Moroccan education system.

Theoretical framework Starting from the assumption made by Nelly et al. (2009, 472), in which he claims that “Frequently, when the state expresses concern for gender issues in education, it sees the problem as one of equal access to education for both girls and boys, and of questions of women’s under representation within certain fields of study.” However, the issue goes beyond this limited level of understanding since it overlooks the substantial process of socialization that is responsible for gender identity formation, the neglect of which yields the consolidation of gender stereotypes and, consequently, the persistence of gender inequalities despite the initiatives that can be taken by stakeholders in this respect. Following Stroquist and Fischman (2009), the concept of gender is constructed within the social, racial, religious, ethnic and economic conditions of men and women and understanding the intersectionality of gender dynamics is crucial to detecting moments in which the creation of new social attitudes and practices may be fostered. The sociology of education provides a useful theoretical framework for our research questions. This theoretical
framework is adopted following Volman and Ten Dam’s (1998) perspective with regard to the conception of gender identity. In this connection, the two authors note that:

*Feminist strategies are still relevant in education as, despite vertical equality between girls and boys, students still receive different messages at school about their capacities, vocation in life and opportunities, and horizontal inequality continues to exist in the form of gender-specific educational choices. However, if feminist strategies are to acquire a place in education, we feel that it is imperative to understand what gender, gender differences, gender inequality and emancipation mean to the present generation of students and to accommodate that meaning in educational practice. For this reason, we think the concept of “gender identity” is important in the sociology of education* (Volman, Ten Dam 1998, 530).

Along the lines of the sociology of education as an approach to understand, explain and analyze the topic under investigation based on the assumption that it is through education that individuals interact in society in a global way and with its diverse components, the present study aims to discuss the reasons for gender inequalities observed at the university and to determine the most critical issues that require vital attention in the context of Morocco. The study also seeks to reflect upon how to shield and support gender equality in Moroccan institutions and eventually to propose a set of general recommendations and actions to be taken for their consequential execution. To address the present issue, two hypotheses have been formulated: 1. It is hypothesized that the way boys and girls are raised and the way they are depicted in media and school textbooks strongly shapes their identities and their perceptions of the opposite sex. 2. It is assumed that raising students’ awareness through the introduction of gender studies courses can promote gender equality. The study attempts to answer the following research questions: 1. To what extent has gender equality been achieved in Morocco? 2. Who is benefiting the most from it? And in which domains? 3. To what extent does there exist equality between females and males within Moroccan families? 4. To what extent are females and males depicted equally in media and textbooks? 5. To
what extent does gender in/equality in families, textbooks and media shape students identity? 6. To what extent and how can the introduction of gender courses help decrease gender inequality? Adopting the mixed methods approach, the study relied on both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments. As to the former, a focus group interview was conducted with 19 students (11 females and 8 males) from the Women and Gender Studies Master Program at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences-Dhar El Mahraz, Fez.

As to the latter, a questionnaire was administered to 163 students (97 were females and 66 were males) from the Department of English Studies at the two faculties of Letters and Human Sciences-Dhar El Mahraz and Sais, respectively. Out of the 163 students, 115 students were BA students (semester 6), 42 were MA students and 6 students were doctoral students. Perceptions of gender policies in Morocco

In answer to the question related to whether gender equality has been achieved in Morocco, 42% of the respondents disagree with the statement saying that gender equality has already been achieved in Morocco for the most part as Figure 1 demonstrates:

Figure 1: The extent to which respondents agree with the statement “Gender equality has already been achieved in Morocco for the most part”

As to the latter, a questionnaire was administered to 163 students (97 were females and 66 were males) from the Department of English Studies at the two faculties of Letters and Human Sciences-Dhar El Mahraz and Sais, respectively. Out of the 163 students, 115 students were BA students (semester 6), 42 were MA students and 6 students were doctoral students. Perceptions of gender policies in Morocco In answer to the question related to whether gender equality has been achieved in Morocco, 42% of the respondents disagree with the statement saying that gender equality has already been achieved in Morocco for the most part as Figure 1 demonstrates: Figure 1: The extent to which respondents agree with the
statement “Gender equality has already been achieved in Morocco for the most part”

It is worth pointing out that this finding was confirmed by both males and females as mentioned by one female respondent who stated, “I don’t think there is social equality between men and women.” Similarly, a male respondent asserted that “there is no equality between man and woman in Morocco.” The results also revealed that despite the fact that there exists some equality between males and females, this equality remains restricted to a particular category of Moroccans, namely the elite as Figure 2 demonstrates:

![Figure 2: The extent to which the respondents agree with the statement “Morocco’s current work to achieve gender equality today seems to benefit mainly the elite”](image)

This can suggest that only favored segments of the society such as intellectuals, highly educated and upper-class people are more likely to benefit from gender equality in the Moroccan society. As far as the domains where gender equality is apparent the most, the study revealed that education remains the most predominant area in which gender equality is observed as Figure 3 illustrates:

![Figure 3: The domains in which gender equality is apparent the most](image)

According to Volman and Ten Dam (1998, 530), currently girls remain
In the education system as long as boys and have quickly caught up with them in terms of the level of educational achievement, sometimes even managing to get ahead of them. Reflecting on the status of gender dynamics in the Moroccan educational system almost 60 years, Sadiqi (2013, 16) equally observed that "The number of female pupils and students has been on the increase at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (over 60% at the tertiary level). However, the academic achievement of this female population decreases of decision making positions in both the private and the public sectors.

This statement is further confirmed by a female respondent, who asserted that females are confined to specific and common jobs (secretary, etc.), saying that: “In the job market I don’t think there is equality because the criteria of choosing employees in positions like secretary are different, directors surely go for females, they should be well presented the way they talk, you know [sic].” While referring to the less frequent presence of females in leadership positions in politics, another female respondent noted that according to the way Moroccans understand the Islamic culture and interpret religious texts only men should be leaders:

*In leadership positions, we see a lot more men than women, so I think it is because of the misinterpretation of the religious texts and culture. We really see that a man is the one that directs a whole family and children and society and then the employees.*

Factors behind gender in/equality in Morocco Once the respondents were asked to rank the institution of family, school and media according to their responsibility for gender inequality in Morocco, the family institution stood at the top of the list as Figure 4 demonstrates:
Figure 4: Factors behind gender in/equality

According to the findings, there are two major ways in which gender inequality is manifested in Moroccan families: inequality in the way girls and boys are raised and the different gender roles assigned to each sex. The majority, 82% of the respondents, reported that girls and boys do not receive an equal treatment during their upbringing as Figure 5 demonstrates:

Figure 5: Whether boys and girls are raised equally

When asked to provide the reasons behind this unequal upbringing, the replies can be presented as follows: 27% of the respondents claimed that boys were believed to be the hope and future of the family, and 23% of the respondents also viewed the boys as the men of the house. However, 21% of the respondents reported that girls’ ultimate place was in the kitchen and their husband’s house, and 8% of them opted for the claim that girls were not as strong and intelligent as boys as the Figure 6 clearly demonstrates:
What can be deduced from the above statistical findings is that the patriarchal mentality has a direct influence on parenting. One female respondent confirmed this finding by arguing that “parents still hold the idea that girls are inferior to boys, they shouldn’t travel, and they shouldn’t do things like boys who are more privileged than girls.” Likewise, another female respondent noted that: “[…] the surrounding of the person (like the family) plays a huge role in gender issues. For example, parents raise their girls to be future mothers and show boys how to be strong and never cry.” Further evidence in support of the above findings can be drawn from the focus group conducted in which one of the agents behind this unequal upbringing was found to be women themselves as claimed in the following statement of a male interviewee: “We find the first institution that enforces the domination of man over women is women themselves. Women are said to be the transformers of culture from one generation to another.” Another male interviewee even went a step further by considering women as responsible for reinforcing patriarchal mentalities within families as he pointed out in the following testimony: “I just want to talk about patriarchy, people associate this word mainly with men and they ignore there are women who enhance or enforce the idea of patriarchy in our contexts.” The respondents also displayed various points of view regarding the issue of gender roles dynamism as Figure 7 demonstrates:
Although a first glance at Figure 7 may suggest that gender roles in Moroccan families are changing, these changes are merely limited to equal access to higher education and relative treatment of women with respect. Children, doing housework, taking care of babies, being beautiful, taking care of children’s education, etc. Even worse, the above findings demonstrate that women are even expected to be illiterate, subject to violence (domestic and other types) and even tolerate and resist violence for the sake of maintaining the stability in the family. The last two views on women’s expected roles are consolidated by one of the male interviewees who states that:

*Males are supposed to be strong, taking and making hard decisions, having a good job position and a better salary than women. In contrast, females are the only creature who is supposed to take care of their children and take responsibility of them; they are supposed to be housewives in its real sense. They should tolerate all kinds of abuse and harassment to keep their homes safe. They do not have to be*
involved in political issues and decision-making positions. Furthermore, they are good at cooking, washing and shopping [sic].

What happens within the family institution seems to become more prominent in schools through textbooks and tends to be further consolidated in media through the stereotypes against women as one of the female interviewees noted:

Women in textbooks and media are represented as either nurses or housewives. The roles attributed to them do not require a sufficient level of intelligence whereas men are constructed as being both emotionally and physically powerful agents who can take care of decision making in politics. The language used in both media and textbooks is gendered.

Based on the data elicited from the respondents, gender inequality in textbooks and schools can be articulated in four major ways, the first of which is the use of stereotypical language to describe both genders as illustrated below in Figure 8:

![Figure 8: The ways gender inequalities are consolidated in textbooks and schools](image)

Figure 8: The ways gender inequalities are consolidated in textbooks and schools

Gender inequalities are commonly consolidated at schools through the teachers’ stereotypical language as a male interviewee stated: “Professors being male or female always have this implication that boys are smarter than girls.”
Another male interviewee further stated that teachers pass and inculcate faulty messages: “What I was taught by some professors at high school is proven wrong, I don’t say that males are more intelligent than females [...] If you tell students they [women] are inferior they will believe so.” What can be deduced from the above findings is that there is an over presence of the sexist language and stereotypes in comparison to the debate over gender issues as pointed out by Ennaji (2013, 25) who asserts that “Teacher education textbooks, for example, allocate minimal space to gender issues and at times give the topic little importance.” Kane summarizes this point by arguing that “Education reproduces rather than challenges social inequality” (Kane 1995, 74). As far as gender representations are concerned, the findings generally revealed that media present gender inequality via different tools and normalize gender inequality as a female interviewee claimed: “women are largely depicted as housewives, weak, dependent and beautiful while men are depicted as intelligent and strong who guide women and save lives, so media play an essential role [sic] in normalizing gender roles.” More particularly, media foster gender inequality in advertising and print media as Figure 9 shows:

![Figure 9: The ways gender inequalities are consolidated in media](image)

In advertising, for instance, women’s roles are restricted to the household as clearly expressed by a female interviewee: “Advertising enhances the fact that women are only housewives and they have to take care of their children and their husbands and it also promotes the idea that housework is for women.” Print media
promote stereotypes and misrepresentations about women prescribing them only secondary and submissive roles in comparison to men. This is made clear by a male interviewee who states that: “[…] the representation of Moroccan women in newspapers [in the research] which I am conducting … women witness stereotypes and misrepresentations in most cases and in most critical domains. They are depicted as a subordinate, submissive, illiterate, sexually constrained, powerless group… etc.”. Gender inequality and students’ identity As demonstrated in Figure 10, it is clearly obvious that gender inequality in the family, school and media institutions shapes students’ identities as 49% of the respondents confirmed this statement.

![Figure 10: The extent to which gender inequality in family, textbooks and media shapes students’ identity](image)

The above findings are rooted in theories such social constructivist theory. For instance, scholars like Lloyd and Duveen (1992) among others, argue that identity is derived from different groups or domains encountered by an individual. Viewed from another perspective, Giddens (1991) argues that the development of identity is a “lifelong project” in which self-image and the way a person sees her/his own life are repeatedly constructed and reconstructed according to the meanings and values that exist in society. Gender courses and gender equality To test the hypothesis formulated in this research, students were asked about their opinions on the extent to which the introduction of gender courses can help
decrease gender inequalities at the university level. The majority of the respondents showed positive attitudes as Figure 11 below demonstrates:

![Figure 11: Whether the introduction of gender courses can help decrease gender inequality](image)

Supporting the statistical findings, one male interviewee argued that “Education is the key to abolish gender inequality.” The same statement was equally confirmed by a female interviewee who stressed the fact that “[…] education is one of the most important factors that can lead to gender equality in Morocco.” When asked about the level at which gender courses should be introduced, the majority of the respondents opted for the primary level of education as Figure 12 demonstrates:

![Figure 12: The level of education at which gender courses should be introduced](image)

The choice of the primary level was supported by two motives. The first one is the belief that the deconstruction of gender stereotypes since the early age is easier as one female interviewee claims: “We should deconstruct the idea that Ali
is by his desk and Amina is in the kitchen; the child should learn to consider a woman as equal human being.” A similar assumption is made by Davies (cited in Volman, Ten Dam 1998, 542) who showed how school children could be given access to discourses which enabled them to reflect on traditional gender discourse. The second motive has to do with the assumption that ideas are easier to mold or inculcate in children as stated by a female interviewee: “children will accept these rules more than adults.” This idea is also supported by developmental psychologists whose theories assume that the formation of the gender consciousness develops since early childhood. This question has been thoroughly analyzed from a feminist perspective since the 1970s (see Volman, Ten Dam 1998).

During the focus group conducted with students, they expressed their agreement with the following two strategies as the best tools of introducing gender courses. The first one has to do with the design of effective teaching materials as one male interviewee suggested: “The primary focus should be concerned with the kind of materials used to address such issues (textbook, alternative media, etc.) for they are the vehicle of raising awareness – a major aim of the intended courses.” The second strategy focuses on the importance of practice over theory. This is made clear in the interviewee’s statement in which she said: “We should teach them […] activities by involving girls in things that boys do and vice versa. We should teach them how to be equal to each other; there are many tools to do so.” This is further backed up by a male interviewee who stated that “gender courses should be introduced by some practical activities because children usually imitate their models – parents and teachers.”

The majority of the respondents reported that gender courses can help reduce gender inequalities in various ways as illustrated in Figure 13.
Based on the findings presented above, the first way that gender courses can help is that they can raise students’ awareness towards the concept of gender equality. Another way of achieving gender equality can be done through changing students’ perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities. A further way can be to urge students to change the beliefs and perceptions of their surroundings. The last two ways can help in eradicating gender stereotypes and urging students to be gender activists. It is worth mentioning that only 22% of the respondents reported that gender courses cannot help decrease gender inequality. The main reasons for that, in their opinion, is that the traditions and families foster gender inequalities no matter what is done and that men and women can never be equal. Besides, they also opted for the fact that the course may be too theoretical. Case study: women and gender studies MA students, SMBAU-FLDM-Fez To cross-check and testify the validity of the quantitative findings and the second hypothesis assumed in this research, a focus group was conducted with MA students specialized in gender studies. Five major motives behind the choice of Gender Studies as a field of specialty by the interviewed students have been identified. The first motive lies in the students’ interest in the situation of Moroccan women and their exclusion from decision making positions as stated by a female interviewee:
As a Moroccan female, I am interested in the situation of women in the Moroccan society and because it resembles the situation of other women in the third world there is exclusion of women from a lot of domains and fields like [...] politics and decision making.

Another motive has to do with the questioning of what is taken for granted as one male interviewee pointed out: “I have chosen this master program, because it aims at questioning what has been taken for granted.” Another reason stated by the respondents is to have the opportunity to prove women’s competence. This was made clear in one of the female interviewees’ testimony: “I am also interested in going forward and proving the competence of Moroccan women.” An additional motive which consists of understanding the other and avoiding gender prejudice was emphasized by another male interviewee who states that:

Gender studies [...] will give you the opportunity to understand the other be it male or female, to understand what they are doing and to not misjudge them based on their gender or appearance. It is enriching and helps people have a distance from how we perceive the others; it is a plus for me as a human being to understand the others.

The last motive is to readdress the domination of men over women and deconstruct stereotypes, which was stressed by a male interviewee who says: “First, being born in a patriarchal society, doing gender studies is an opportunity to try to redress the domination of men over women and to deconstruct the stereotypes about women and females as subordinate to men.” Based on the qualitative findings, we came to the conclusion that the impacts of taking gender courses can be considered as a process which varies from the initial stage of becoming aware of the issue to the stage of reconsidering one’s beliefs and others, through reconsidering one’s perceptions of the other sex up to the final stage of changing others’ beliefs and deconstructing stereotypes. The schema below summarizes the different impacts of introducing gender courses at the university level:
Schema 1: The impact of taking Gender courses at the university level

The chart below comprises testimonies from various interviewees on the different stages represented in Schema 1 to better illustrate the ultimate goal sought in taking gender courses, which is to raise and implement the culture of gender equality in the different institutions including family, school, media, etc.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

The findings of our research confirm the two hypotheses formulated in this study. Firstly, gender inequalities in the family, media and schools were proved to shape students’ identities. Secondly, the hypothesis that introducing gender courses can promote gender equality at Moroccan universities was strongly justified. Nonetheless, the fact that some MA students’ opinions and attitudes towards gender equality were very skeptical and somewhat negative though they were registered in a Gender Studies Master Program raise questions concerning the role of university and higher education in gender socialization. Tertiary education is expected to promote gender equality among its students; however, in the Moroccan context, the strong patriarchal mindset seems to overshadow the many attempts done by both national and international stakeholders to enhance the equality between the sexes in the Moroccan educational system, which makes these
endeavors appear to be more like an illusion than a reality. Given the fact that the involvement of parents, school, media, etc. can only stimulate but not impose gender equality in the Moroccan educational system manufactured by the government, this study puts forward the following recommendations (the collaboration between all institutions is imperative in order to promote a genuine gender equality in Morocco):

• At the family level, it is suggested that fighting gender inequality in parenting should be done by educating parents.

• Concerning schooling, it is proposed that introducing gender equality concepts from primary level to university can help implementing the culture of gender equality.

• As far as media are concerned, the revision of media programs will reinforce gender equality.

• Most importantly, a genuine collaboration between all stakeholders (policy makers, parents, teachers, students, media outlets, etc.) can only lead to the implementation of the culture of gender equity in the Moroccan society.

References


Gender-based Violence in Morocco: Domestic Violence as a Case in Point

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Abstract. Domestic violence is a universal social phenomenon. It plagues all societies worldwide. Undoubtedly, Morocco is no exception. This phenomenon is becoming more and more epidemic; it seriously threatens and dramatically affects the very fabric of Moroccan society. Although a considerable research has been devoted to domestic violence, less attention has been paid to its repercussions and the approaches that would help to eliminate it. In Morocco, violence is overlooked rather than being acknowledged and acted against. This paper focuses on the gender dimension of domestic violence in Morocco. It underlines the blindness of the existing studies to the complex causes and effects of domestic violence in the country. The paper departs from a conviction that domestic violence is a merely criminal act that should be questioned and corrected by promoting and empowering the status of women in Moroccan society. It approaches this phenomenon from its multi-dimensional perspective in order to underline its social, cultural, legal and economic aspects and implications.

Keywords: domestic violence, Morocco, gender dimension, women.

Introduction

One summer evening last year, as a couple of my friends Siham and Hanane were on their way to a nearby pharmacy not very far from the Meknes Central Market to buy some medicines for their bedridden father, a wildly shrieking man attacked Siham who was wearing what looked like expensive gold bracelets, and started beating her, accusing her of having left the family home without permission, while surreptitiously trying to steal her jewelry. The yelling and beating went on without a single passer-by stepping in to protect the woman, assuming that this was a private quarrel between husband and wife or brother and sister. What they failed to notice was that the man was actually trying to steal the young woman’s gold bracelets. It is only when Hanane confronted and neutralized the assailant, using her self-defense skills some men stepped in to lend a helping
hand because they had realized that this was real violence and not some “legitimate” wife or sister-beating, most viewed as a private matter! (from my female friend’s story)

This real-life story clearly indicates that for most Moroccans there exists a category of “legitimate” violence, especially when it is directed to women, wives, daughters or sisters. This violence is often exerted only within the confines of the domestic space but it often spills into the public sphere without being checked by the general public or even by law enforcement officers. If challenged by close relatives or outsiders, it takes the form of intercession and mercy seeking. Many view domestic violence as a strictly private matter if the persons involved are spouses, parents and children. Domestic violence is opposed only when parents become victims of their children. In the minds of many, domestic violence against women is condoned by Islam and is therefore legitimate. The Quran, however, has repeatedly exhorted men to be fair in their dealings with their spouses, but the average Muslim recalls only the Quranic surah that states that

*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband’s) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and illconduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all) (Quran 4:34).*

Islam requires men to treat their wives kindly and to protect them; they should be checked only if a husband fears infidelity. When the marital life is no longer possible because of disagreements, Islam requires men to divorce their spouses although divorce is considered as *abghad al halal*. The patriarchal structure of the Moroccan society and the ensuing economic and psychological dependence of women have reinforced the belief among the majority of men that their wives and children are their own “thing” and that they can do with them
whatever they please. If this has been true to a large extent in the Moroccan context, this “right” has been largely challenged in Western countries to which Moroccans have emigrated. The emigrant community is full of stories of distraught husbands and fathers who had to bear the brunt of the law of their country of residence because their spouses had taken the matter of domestic violence to court, or because social services threatened to take their children away because of continued bad treatment. Morocco has enacted a very progressive family law in 2004, which, in the words of Fatima Harrak, “constitutes a landmark in the history of Moroccan women’s struggle for equality” and ratified a number of international agreements designed to protect women and children’s rights.

This new legislation [...] upholds the principle of equality between men and women through the introduction of the joint and equal responsibility within the family, equality in terms of rights and obligations within the household, and suppression of guardianship of a male member of the family. Other provisions for equality between men and women include equal minimum age of marriage for men and women, the principle of divorce by mutual consent under judicial supervision. Furthermore, dissolution of marriage via divorce becomes the prerogative of both husband and wife under the judicial supervision of a judge, thereby ending a husband’s right to unilateral repudiation of his wife (Harrak 2004, 7).

All of these efforts, notwithstanding, women continue to suffer from widespread domestic violence. This paper is an attempt to study domestic violence in Morocco, bearing in mind that violence against women is a global phenomenon, a sort of epidemic that touches all societies and cultures with varying degrees of virulence. The scholarly community, NGOs such as Amnesty International and the United Nations have devoted considerable resources to study, denounce and combat this phenomenon. But if Western countries have done a great deal to study and document this tragedy, most developing countries, including Morocco, have no reliable data concerning domestic violence because

In Arab and Islamic countries, domestic violence is not yet considered a major concern despite its increasing frequency and serious consequences. [...] The
indifference to this type of violence stems from attitudes that domestic violence is a private matter and, usually, a justifiable response to misbehavior on the part of the wife. [...] religious justifications, plus the importance of preserving the honor of the family, lead abusers, victims, police and health care professionals to join in a conspiracy of silence rather than disclosing these offences (Douki, Nacefet et al. 2003, 165–171).

According to a national survey conducted by the High Commission for Planning (HCP) on the pervasiveness of violence against women, in 2009, 3.7 million married females in Morocco (55%) endured domestic abuse by their husbands. The study also revealed that 13.5% of women aged 18–64 have been victims of violence inflicted by a family member, totaling 1.3 million females. Domestic violence in urban areas reached 56.1% against 53.3% in rural areas. Meanwhile, family violence in urban areas reached 14.3% against 12.3% in rural areas. With regard to the types of domestic violence, the study revealed that in the conjugal environment, the most pervasive form of abuse was psychological violence (38.7%) followed by the infraction of individual freedom (30.3%) and insults/verbal humiliation (22.4%). Threats of aggression and physical abuse ranked 6.6 and 5.7%, respectively. With regard to family violence, the most common form was emotional abuse at 10.3%, and verbal humiliation at 6.1%. In terms of the socio-economic characteristics of the victims of domestic violence, 61.6% are under the age of 40, come mainly from urban areas (60.3%), lack formal education (56.8%) and were married before the age of 25. On the other hand, most women who suffered domestic violence within the family setting were women aged 30 (69.8%) from urban areas (63.1%) (Moroccan Haut Commissaire au Plan 2011).

Causes of domestic violence against women There is a variety of factors that contribute to the unequal power relations between men and women. These factors include alcohol and drugs, societal factors, and the socio-economic forces. Alcohol and drugs In Morocco, alcohol and drugs affect badly the marital relationship. Under the influence of these substances men become violent and act aggressively
and abusively against their wives. This act of violence is directed not only against wives but also against the vulnerable children, subjecting them to a range of dangers that might profoundly affect their future. This could lead one to believe that there is a strong relationship between violence and the use of alcohol and other drugs. The US Department of Justice reports that according to a 1994 study, 61% of offenders of domestic abusers and over 50% of spouses accused of murdering their spouse were under the influence of drugs or alcohol on the day of the murder. There is a definite statistical correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence indicating that the regular abuse of drugs or alcohol is the highest leading risk factor to violence within a family or intimate relationship. However, even if drugs and alcohol may not be a direct cause of violence, they may be a trigger in creating an argument or conflict. So, it is worthwhile to say that excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs is deemed one of the causative factors in making Moroccan women undergo and experience a certain number of distinct kinds of violence.

Societal factors Morocco, like most of Arab countries, is a patriarchal society in which women are relegated to a secondary position after men. Perceptions of the legitimacy of men’s violence to intimate partners are constituted through the agreement with the notion that men should be dominant in households and intimate relationships and they should have the right to enforce their dominance through physical chastisement. In the family and social institutions, socialization strengthens male’s sexual power and disempowers women. The patriarchal belief system presumably contributes to the incidence of wife assault both by creating in males the expectation that their wishes will not be opposed by their wives and by justifying the use of violence to enforce the expectation. The ideology of patriarchy holds that male supremacy is natural and that control of women and strong reactions to their insubordination is vital.

Violence against women stems from unequal power relations between men and women. It is most common within societies that give men priority rights over women, and where appropriate gender roles are strictly defined, where
punishment of women and children is accepted. The traditional distribution of roles in the society still exists in reality notwithstanding some progress in declarations (UN Report on violence against women 2015).

While public violence is recognized and publicly condemned, domestic abuse is justified and considered by everyone including the victim, justice, police, families and health professionals as a private and familial matter rather than criminal act requiring interference. They even go beyond that to legitimize it. This perception has a great impact on the victim who becomes reluctant to report the husband’s violence and perpetuation. This suggests that women encounter the greatest danger indoors, usually within the confines of their social networks and particularly their own homes, from men who are “familiar and familial” and who are supposed to be their protectors. These men are rarely classified as criminal offenders. The family denies it is happening. They believe that wife belongs to her husband. Additionally, for the family, the marital ties must be preserved at all costs. This assumption of their inferiority springs from Moroccan cultural beliefs and norms that trivialize women’s role in the Moroccan society. Unfortunately, the Moroccan patriarchal structure creates the necessary conditions for a conflict model of gender relations that comes to govern the lives of men and women in Morocco. Moreover, women are divested of their human right because men have inclination to fear their emerging position in the patriarchal society. Even though women have endeavored to revolt and change their status within society and get higher position at the political, economic and educational level, they are still obliged to lag behind. In this vein, Fatima Sadiqi states that

North African family structure is generally headed by the father and the father’s male mileage and is legally founded on blood relations. The patriarchal system is built on the exclusion of women from spaces of public power and by the sanction of all forms of physical and moral violence against them in these spaces. Women’s freedom is seen as a challenge to the patriarchal social fabric and men’s status quo. It is in the family that women are initiated into their role of guardians
of social organization. This initiation is channeled through a rigid system of kinship relations and rituals, and taboo (Sadiqi 2006, 6).

Socio-economic factors Economically speaking, domestic violence in Morocco stems from the fact that women are economically dependent on men as providers for their families. They also have limited access to education and training which leads to the limited access to employment in addition to discriminatory laws regarding maintenance and child custody after divorce. One of UNESCO’s reports stated that “Poverty and illiteracy are closely linked which go together everywhere in the world.” Both poverty and illiteracy are part of the complex system of deprivation and discrimination. Unemployment is a crucial factor contributing to violence directed against women in Morocco. Wives who do not have a job are more likely to be vulnerable to violence than wives who have a job. Thus, for these economic reasons women have the tendency to respond passively to this victimization shown by their husbands. And the most compelling reason for such behavior is that these women feel unprotected economically and socially.

According to Loubna Skalli (2001), “Most women become economically dependent after divorce and widowhood especially if they did not have a paid job prior to this change in their marital status. Nearly four out of ten women return to their parents’ home after divorce, more out of financial dependence than personal choice.” Women who are affected by illiteracy are usually weak and do not have the power to defend their benefits and interests, as the illiterates who are often poor live in dependency and subordination associated with an absence of social justice and protection either in their relation with society or state institutions. In view of this, illiterate women represent an oppressed category; they have no effect on the stream of events, they feel inferior since they depend on others in many things of their daily life. Paulo Freire (1974) calls this situation “the silence culture of the oppressed.” Thus, illiteracy and dependency stemming from it make illiterate women deprived. Effects of domestic violence against women in Morocco

Violence against women continues to be a global epidemic that has physical, psychological, sexual and economic repercussions. It is one of the most pervasive

Physical outcomes of domestic violence Little attention has been paid to the serious health repercussions of abuse and the health needs of women and girls who experienced violence in Morocco. Domestic violence against women leads to significant physical consequences, some with fatal outcome. Although it represents only one of many forms of violence, physical violence is among the more visible forms. Assaults result in injuries ranging from fractures and bruises to chronic disabilities such as partial or total loss of hearing or vision, and burns may lead to disfigurement (WHO Consultation 1996). Studies in many countries have shown high levels of violence during pregnancy resulting in risk to the health of both the mother and unborn fetus. In the worst cases, domestic violence may result in the death of a woman.

Moreover, assaulted women have a high incidence of stress-related illnesses such as depression, eating and sleeping disturbance, addiction, elevated blood pressure, anxiety, fear and panic attacks. In the worst cases when the victim is extremely depressed there is no other way but suicide (WHO Consultation 1996). Similarly, a great number of girls and women in Morocco suffer from violence and its consequences because of their sex and their unequal status in society. According to a national study conducted by Morocco’s High Commission for Planning, the National Institute for Statistical Analysis in 2011 on the prevalence of violence against women, 62.8% of women in Morocco aged 18-64 had been victims of some form of violence during the year preceding the study and 48% had been subjected to psychological abuse (Moroccan Haut Commissaire au Plan 2011). This same study found that 55% of these acts of violence were committed by the victim’s husband, and the violence was reported by the wife in only 3% of such cases. Another 2011 report identified that in cases of violence against women, the perpetrator is the husband in eight out of ten cases.

Women who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence suffer a range of health problems, often in silence. They have poorer physical and
mental health, suffer more injuries, and use more medical resources than non-abused women (Human Right Watch 2012). Psychological outcomes of domestic violence constitute serious public health problems and are major contributors to psychiatric symptomatology in women in both the developed and developing world. However, when one compares the literature of violence against women in both places, the difference seems to lie in its public condemnation (Saif El Dawla 2000). And it is critical to ascertain that the psychological effects of violence are more harmful and long-lasting than physical consequences. The result of violence directed against women is their dehumanization, derision, and humiliation that engender a sense of insecurity and fear in female victims. It prevents them from leading independent lives and fully participating in the life of a family, community, and society at large. This demonstrates that contrary to the common assumption that it is just a bruise or a fracture, violence is much more profound and detrimental to the mental health and the wellbeing of Moroccan women. In this context, using the term “battered” Lyn Shipway indicates that the impacts of the psychological violence towards women are often hidden and serious:

...conjures up an image of a woman lying beaten and bleeding... whereas the reality is that injuries may well be hidden and the damage virtually undetectable to the naked eye. Growing evidence confirms that countless women live their lives in constant fear and degradation, suffering severe psychological and emotional abuse perhaps without the accompanying broken bones and bruises. The abuse may be incessant whilst the physical violence is only periodic, but the result remains the same, a woman is being abused and therefore violated (Shipway 2004, 3).

Through violence, women are denied their existence as human beings. Undoubtedly, this lack of self-esteem, stress, debasement, and feeling of humiliation would hinder women’s productivity and creativity. These feelings do not affect women only; they influence their families, children, and the entire community. Thus, changing the situation begins with a decisive refusal of the
Moroccan women’s secondary and inferior position granted to them by the patriarchal society. The Moroccan women should have courage to revolt against these stereotypes and unjust treatments which lead to their lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. Impact of domestic violence on children Children are also affected by domestic violence even if they are not direct victims. It was proved that many of these children who have witnessed domestic violence or have themselves been battered often exhibit health and behavior problems, including frustration, instability, confusion and anger. These feelings become barriers to their being close to their parents. It also makes them distant from their partners when they become adults. Some children may take out their frustration in school or in social relationships. They may have difficulty at school and find it hard to develop close and positive friendships. Instead, these children become either withdrawn or aggressive. They may try to run away or even display suicidal tendencies (UNICEF 2000). Thus, it is possible to say that violence is inherited from generation to generation:

*Gender-based violence can have a severe impact on the physical health, growth and developmental health of the child. The psychological impact of abuse (or witnessing abuse) can also have a devastating impact on mental and wellbeing and can affect bonding and attachment between parent and a child* (Impact of gender-based violence on children 2013).

There is a strong evidence that children who either witnessed such violence or are subject to violence themselves are more likely as adults to adhere to violence-supportive attitudes (and to perpetrate violence). Thus, witnessing or experiencing violence while growing up has a direct impact on the perpetration of violence against spouses and it also influences attitudes that in turn affect the perpetration of violence (Markowitz 2001, 207–208). A meta-analysis of 118 studies suggests that children who witness inter-parental violence show more negative psychosocial outcomes than children who witness only other forms of inter-parental conflict or aggression (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, Kenny 2003). Approaches to curb domestic violence against women Stopping violence directed
against women is a very challenging task that requires various preventive solutions varying from a legislative, religious and awareness-raising approach. Legislative approach Morocco endorsed the Convention on June 21, 1993. The Convention defines torture in Article 1 as severe mental or physical pain or suffering that is intentionally inflicted either by a State actor or with the consent or acquiescence of a State actor for an unlawful purpose. The Convention also obligates Morocco to protect victims from domestic violence and hold perpetrators accountable in Article 2 (non-derogable requirement of effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture, including acts by private actors; Article 4 (acts of torture must be identified as offenses under criminal law and receive the appropriate penalty); Article 7 (criminalized cases of torture should be submitted to authorities for prosecution); Article 12 (prompt investigation by impartial and competent authorities); Article 13 (victim’s right to complain and to have their complaint examined by competent authorities, State’s obligation to protect victim and witnesses); and Article 14 (victims’ right to redress and compensation, including rehabilitation). However, despite the fact that the Moroccan government is engaged in a progressive process of ameliorating and empowering women’s status at a variety of levels, huge numbers of women still feel as victims of both their perpetrators and of legislative law as well. In this vein, the committee against torture clarifies that when the government fails to prevent such violence from taking place and does not prosecute or punish perpetrators of the violence this contravenes the Convention as stated in General Comment no. 2:

...where State authorities or others acting in an official capacity or under the color of law, know or have reasonable grounds to believe that acts of torture or ill-treatment are being committed by non-State officials or private actors and they fail to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish such non-State officials or private actors consistently with this Convention, the State bears responsibility and its officials should be considered authors, complicit or otherwise responsible under the Convention for consenting to or acquiescing in such impermissible acts. Since the failure of the State to exercise due diligence to
intervene to stop, enables non-State actors to commit acts impermissible under the Convention with impunity, the State’s indifference or inaction provides a form of encouragement and/or de facto permission. The Committee has applied this principle to the States parties’ failure to prevent and protect victims from gender-based violence, such as rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and trafficking (Committee Against Torture 2008).

Thus, to curb this social phenomenon, the Moroccan government should implement a Violence against Women Law. This law should criminalize wife perpetration and punish the perpetrators. It is worth mentioning that the judicial gap is one of the main reasons in exacerbating the problem as stated by a report prepared for the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (June 2014) by the Advocates for Human Rights and the Moroccan NGO Mobilizing for Rights Associations:

*CCurrently, no specific legislation addressing violence against women exists in Morocco... (Moroccan) laws have legal gaps, are insufficient to prevent, investigate, and punish violence against women, are discriminatory, and rarely enforced by the justice system in cases of gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment, rape, and domestic abuse. The law enforcement and justice systems do not respond adequately to complaints of violence against women; few VAW cases reach the courts due to the failures of the system to investigate crimes of violence, protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable* (Human Rights Council 2014).

Thus, narrowing the judicial gap is inevitably a severe measurement that should be taken by Moroccan authorities to effectively curb this epidemic and provide women with the independence and stability they deserve. It is just as vital that the law passed is effective and contains all the necessary elements to fully protect victims of domestic violence and punish the perpetrators. In this context, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women also calls on states to “pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women” and further to “exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of
violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the state or by private persons” (General Assembly Resolution 1993). There should be a real cooperation between government and the civil society. The Moroccan Government should collaborate with a wide range of NGOs and experts in the field to ensure that any law draft contains the essential elements of an effective domestic violence law, taking care to not cause further harm to victims. Religious approach The Moroccan society is built on the Islamic law that regulates issues related to women such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. However, the religious text is misinterpreted and misused to serve men’s interests only. Islam has nothing to do with these behaviors, but it is the fault of the misapplication of Islam and its ideologies. In many “Islamic” countries, women are not treated according to their God-given rights.

Many of these rights, however, are based on cultural and traditional customs that have been injected into these societies (Badawi 1971). So, in order to probe this phenomenon, Moroccan people should work on the modification of social and cultural patterns of conduct that violate women’s human rights in the name of Islam. These patterns of conducts are defended by agencies which state that they are essential to the cultural, social and economic integrity of the country. However, it should be understood that these traditions and cultural aspects could be preserved simultaneously with maintaining women’s human rights. A significant step toward the recognition of women’s as such is impossible without making reference to Islam and to the way it contributed to the restoration of a woman’s dignity and rights. Before Islam, girls were buried alive and husbands had the right to their life and death. But Islam forbade infanticide and also ridiculed the fathers who viewed the birth of girls with contempt: “When news is brought to one of them, of the birth of a female, his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain her on contempt or bury her in the dust? Ah! What an evil choice they decide on” (Quran 16:58–59).
In the same way, the prophet added: “Whosoever has a daughter and does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not favor his son over her, God will enter him into Paradise.” It is worthwhile to point out that the prophet who is the Muslims’ best example had more than one wife and he treated them decently and kindly. He forbids all kinds of violence directed against women, teaching his companions and all Muslims in general that women should be treated in such a way that respects their humanity and preserves their dignity either within family or the Muslim community. The prophet never mistreated any of his wives and tended to protect them all. In this sense, innumerable Hadiths ensure that wife abuse is an act that goes against the principles and teaching of Islam: “The best of you is one who is best towards his family and I am best towards the family.” This proves how highly women were valued and treated decently at that time: “None but a noble man treats women in an honorable manner. And none but an ignoble treats women disgracefully.” Through its teachings, Islam tries to explain to Muslims that men and women are equal before God, rejecting the erroneous and deep-rooted idea that men are created as superior to women. Such equality brought by Islam is reinforced by the Quranic verses that prohibit any gender discrimination in stressing the fact that both men and women are equal before God. In this context, the Quran says:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things) (Quran 49:13).

It should be emphasized that Islam honors women in both the Quran and Sunnah and praises the vital role they play either as mothers or as wives. In this sense, the Quran includes a surah whose title is “Ennisaa” or “women.” In this longest surah, Islam indicates that it severely condemns the old customs of the ill-treatment of women warning Muslims to avoid cruelty and the mistreatment of women. His almighty God says:
O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will, and you should not treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the Mahr you have given them, unless they commit open illegal sexual intercourse. And live with them honorably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good “Annissaa” (the women) (19).

Among the most striking verses in the Quran about spouses are the following: “… He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and he ordained between you love and mercy. Herein indeed are signs for people who reflect” (Quran 30: 23). The Quran clearly demonstrates that marriage is an act of sharing between the two halves of society and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are their emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. Awareness-raising approach The Moroccan government has taken positive steps to raise awareness about violence against women and set up cells for receiving women victims of violence in courts across the country. To this regard, the government has adopted a set of measures, including crisis centers for battered women in all courts, the criminalizing of sexual harassment and the adoption of a new family code on October 10th, 2003. The greatest impediment to a more effective criminal justice response to the assault against wives is the victim’s failure to report the event to the police. Many victims do not define the event as a crime.

Therefore, all mistreatments and violence can be avoided and stopped by information, education, and sensibilization. Women need to be empowered via employment opportunities for building a culture of non-violence and an increase of women’s control of their lives and a strengthening of their social networks. They also need to be provided with information about domestic violence and their rights and gender equality.

Thus, public awareness campaigns should use mass media to challenge gender norms and attitudes and attempt to raise awareness throughout society of violent behavior towards women and its prevention. Media interventions should use television, radio, newspapers, the internet, magazines and other printed
publications to reach a wide range of people and affect change in society by altering social norms and values (e.g. the belief that masculinity is associated with aggression) through public discussion and social interaction. In this context, Archer states that “When gender roles become more flexible, most women enjoy greater power, status and economic independence and the threat of violence against them decreases” (Archer 2006). Conclusion Domestic violence is an aspect of the social construction of masculinity that tends to naturalize male violence by giving it a sense of normality. It continues to be an epidemic that affects women, psychologically, physically and sexually.

So, given the magnitude of this phenomenon, its challenges, causes and consequences, all components of society, government, NGOs, criminal justice system (police, judiciary and lawyers), education sector, health care system and women themselves need to work hand in hand to find a strategy that has the potential to eliminate women’s abuse. Women need to be educated and taught self-confidence and self-reliance. They should be addressed as human beings who have the right under international law to be free from all kinds of discrimination as women. Therefore, the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of patriarchal behaviors and conceptions are an essential part of violence prevention.

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THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE IN MEKNES, MOROCCO

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Abstract. Throughout our experience as teachers, we feel intrigued by the observation of changes that have occurred in relation to gender in terms of number and performance. However, this observation needs to be confirmed by studies and scientific results in order to avoid prejudice. This paper investigates the number of girls enrolled in the School of Agriculture compared with the number of boys since the establishment of the school. The study also explores gender differences in their academic achievement. The data used include exam scores of students at the National School of Agriculture in Meknes from 2008 to 2015. The scores will be considered according to the independent variables, namely subjects, the graduating classes and gender. Subjects are classified into three main categories: scientific subjects (mathematics and statistics), technical subjects (agronomy and animal care), and language subjects (English and French). The analysis results showed a noticeable increase in the number of girls compared to boys. Moreover, girls proved to be more likely to perform better than boys in different subjects.

Keywords: gender, academic achievement, scientific subjects, university.

Introduction

Academic achievement or performance in different subjects has always been an issue of great concern to students, teachers, parents, and specialists in education.

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as well. Many reasons are behind the desire to achieve academic performance. Some students, for example, seek self-satisfaction or want to demonstrate their competences while others try to attain high academic achievement to satisfy their parents or teachers by showing them that they are making efforts and working hard (O’Reilly, McNamara 2007). In the same way, parents desire and encourage their children to aspire to outstanding academic achievement while teachers adopt different strategies to ensure effective teaching and learning so that their students get good grades and perform well. As a matter of fact, there are many factors which contribute to high or low academic achievement of students. These factors include, among others, the role of the students, teachers, family, society, the school environment, and the educational system. Another factor that is assumed to have a considerable effect on students’ academic performance is gender. Indeed, differences in how both males and females perform academically have been noticed but need scientific confirmation. Hence, the present paper attempts to study academic performance in relation to gender. First, the concept of academic achievement will be clarified according to the scholarly literature. Then some studies, which have dealt with academic achievement in relation to gender, will be described. The present study aims at exploring the change in gender disparity at the university level in terms of number and performance during the past few years. For this purpose, we will use the official data from the web site of the Ministry of Higher Education from 2009 to 2015 in order to highlight gender differences and dominance in academic ranks among teachers in the Moroccan higher education system. In the same way, data from the National Agriculture School of Meknes (a school of limited access) will be used to show gender discrepancies in academic performance among students. Academic achievement The literature defines achievement in many ways. Simpson and Weiner (1991), for example, defined achievement as attained success in any act while Hornby (2006) viewed it as the ability of an individual to reach a set goal through effort, skill or courage. In fact, academic achievement is the outcome of a good education and indicates how well a student or class of students is doing academically (Ali 2013). In the same vein,
Ganai and Muhammad (2013) defined academic achievement as knowledge attaining ability or degree of competence in school tasks usually measured by standardized tests and expressed in a grade or unit based on pupils’ performance. Academic achievement is commonly measured by continuous assessment and examinations. It is, actually, the results of these examinations that have been used for the purpose of the present research. It is worth mentioning that students’ academic achievement is affected by a host of factors. Among these are factors classified by Ocho (2005) as student factors, teacher factors, environmental factors, and economic factors. First, academic achievement is generally affected by students’ personal characteristics, namely their conscientiousness, personal efforts and motivation in addition to their intellectual abilities, learning strategies and awareness of academic goals. Moreover, family support, social economic background, family income, parents’ education, family participation and involvement and siblings in school have also a considerable effect on the academic success or failure of students (Abubakar, Bada 2012; Boujut, Bruchon-Schweitzer 2007; Majzub, Rais 2010). Additional factors according to Khurshid (2014) involve institutional support, institutional environment, effective teachers, teachers’ expectations and behaviors, quality of lecturers and their instructional strategies, and class size. A determinant element that is closely related to all the previous factors and that is discussed in the present study is gender. The gender gap in academic achievement is an important issue to explore as it is an significant aspect of educational inequality. Gender and academic achievement Many studies on gender discrepancies (e.g. Hyde, Fennema, Lamon 1990; Kahle 2004; Chang 2008; Lai 2010; Abubakar, Bada 2012; Eze, Ezenwafor, Obi 2015) focused on differences in performance related to different science subjects. There are many different points of view, a fact which makes it a contested area (Kahle 2004; Penner 2008; Guo, Tsang, Ding 2010). Some of these studies have shown significant gender achievement gaps, with boys generally outperforming girls in Math and Science (O’Reilly, McNamara 2007; Penner 2008; Else-Quest, Hyde, Linn 2010) and girls excelling at literacy subjects. Others noted that these
differences were not consistent. Ajai and Imoko (2015) undertook a study to assess gender differences in mathematics achievement and retention. The study proved that male and female students did not significantly differ in achievement and retention scores, which showed that they are capable of competing in mathematics. Likewise, Voyer and Voyer (2014) conducted a research from 1914 through 2011 using a meta-analytic model and found out a small but significant female advantage that was largest for language courses and smallest for math and science. In this vein, Voyer and Voyer (2014, 1174) stated, “Although gender differences follow essentially stereotypical patterns on achievement tests, for whatever reasons, females generally have the advantage on school marks regardless of the material.” This implies that in spite of the stereotypical belief that boys perform better than girls in tests as far as logical reasoning is concerned, we, as educators, observe a tendency from the part of females to excel in scientific subjects which require logic and reasoning. In fact, our study intends to confirm the extent to which this observation can be valid. The gender gap in academic achievement has been extensively examined in the U.S. and many other Western countries, yet virtually no rigorous studies of the gender achievement gap have been conducted in developing countries because of the limited availability of these countries’ secondary education data. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to show gender differences in academic achievement. It is worth noting that the paper does not aim to reinforce these gender differences but rather to explore them in order to find out major problems and obstacles that both males and females face to eventually reach gender equality. Methodology The quantitative data used was based on two separate sources. First, the official data from the website of the Ministry of Higher Education from 2009 to 2015 were used; we limited our analysis to teachers and university graduates’ frequency. Second, we also used data from the National Agriculture School of Meknes (ENAM); they consist of the historical frequency of graduates as well as scores of all modules of the third year from 2009 to 2015 to check if there is any possible difference in academic achievement between males and females. Accordingly, two subjects were chosen
from each field of study: Statistics and Computing Science representing Science, Fertilization and Animal feeding for agricultural subjects, and Sociology and English for Human Sciences and Language. To make some results more noticeable, appropriate charts were adopted, and descriptive statistics were produced. Then a two-factor ANOVA was performed to deepen the understanding of the effect of gender on students’ achievement over the years. Finally, some correlations were calculated to model the students’ final results obtained for each subject.

Results and discussion

Ministry

The most important results are related to the exclusion of girls as elaborated by the UNESCO on its official website. In 1970, Morocco was ranked which is somehow congruent with the girls’ conditions at that time. This position did not change until 2000 when we moved to the group between 20 and 30%. Then, immediately in 2002, a notable change took place with the percentage dropping between 10 and 20%. The last shift occurred in 2010 to less than 10%. It is worth noting that, although it is slow, there is a change in the way governments deal with the issue of gender in education. A direct consequence of this historical exclusion of girls is the number of graduates and teachers in the Higher Education System. Indeed, based on the official website of the Ministry, men completely dominate all ranks of Higher Education teachers (Figure 1a) with about 80% of males and only 20% of females in the university lecturer grade “PES”. Yet, when analysing the trend separately, some increase in female representation and a relative decrease in male percentage over the last years could be noticed (figure 1c and 1d). A similar pattern is observed for the other ranks namely associated professor “PH” and Assistant Professor (figure 1b).
This unbalanced situation, as mentioned above, can have an important impact on the percentage of female entrance to universities and their progress in this system. There are some ratios elaborated in order to evaluate the female entrance to universities. At the national level, it seems that both males and females have the same chance at the undergraduate level. However, when it comes to postgraduates, males are more privileged than girls with a difference of 20% that was reduced to less than 10% in 2014 (figure 2). This national gap changes according to the university and the field of study. For example, for Law and Economics college and Arts and Humanities school, the percentage of females is greater than that of males at the undergraduate level and the percentages change in favor of males for graduate students. It is also apparent that the gap is different from one year to another. On the other hand, for Science, there are more males than females both in undergraduate and postgraduate levels; this gap became smaller in 2014. It should be noted here that the same trend is observed for engineering schools. Overall, for all fields, the gap is narrowing and a conclusion could be drawn that in
the near future, there will be no difference in male and female numbers of students if not the opposite (dominance of females in all fields).

Figure 2. Percentage of (a) undergraduate and (b) postgraduate students by gender

National School of Agriculture (ENA) The present study focuses on ENA, Meknes. It is one of the engineering schools that has long been contributing in providing experts in agricultural engineering since 1942. The school has gone through stages as far as gender enrollment is concerned (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The most important Milestones of ENA since its creation in 1942.
As figure 4 shows, the percentage of girls has changed over time since the creation of the school. In fact, in the first years, registration was dominated by male students while girls entrance to the school was very slow. However, starting from 1984, the number of girls increased drastically. On the other hand, the number of male students decreased proportionally. Interestingly, in 1996, this growth was even revolutionary as the number of females surpassed the numbers of males. Indeed, many reasons could explain this change, which can be the subject of a future study. The present paper, however, deals with differences in students’ academic achievement in terms of their gender.

Figure 4. Percentage of ENAM graduates by gender from 1942 to 2015

To verify the extent to which males and females differ in academic achievement in ENAM, the method of ANOVA (Analysis of the Variance) was used to determine whether the means are statistically different. Indeed, the scores means could be affected, in this study, by two factors, years and gender. Based on p-values, the findings revealed that for the Final Results of the Year (FRY) and means of all subjects, there was no interaction between years and gender. This
implies that if there are any differences between males and females, they remain the same for all the years and the gap between boys and girls does not change significantly from one year to another. As far as the FRY is concerned and as shown in figure 5, females undeniably outperform males for all the years of the present study. This gap varies from 1.14 in 2014 to 1.5 in 2011. There are also differences over the years and the highest grades were obtained in 2014 (13.7) and the lowest ones in 2010 (12.7). Although the range is small, it is statistically significant due to the small values of standard-deviation which indicates that grades are somehow homogeneous.

![Graph](image)

Figure 5. Males and females’ final re

Concerning thereabouts that are indicated in the literature as female fields, namely sociology and English, gender effect was evaluated. For sociology, ANOVA results indicate that there is no interaction between years and gender and no effect of years; in other words, the level of students doesn’t change over the years. Yet, the performance of males and females is statistically different in favor of girls. Similarly, a high gender gap of 2.3 was reached in 2015 for the English subject (figure 6) although, unlike in Sociology, both males and females performed better in English over the observed years with a mean of 15.8 compared to 10.9 for sociology.
As mentioned in some previous studies (O’Reilly, McNamara 2007; Penner 2008), girls are expected to achieve higher grades in human sciences and language. In order to explore whether girls maintain this advantage, a study of technical and scientific subjects is performed. The ANOVA results presented in figure 7a show that, although the gap is smaller for technical subjects embodied here by Fertilization and does not exceed 1.6, females obtained better grades than males. More importantly, females largely dominate scientific subjects with a significant difference that can reach 3.3 and which doesn’t go below 1.5 as illustrated in figure 7b.
Finally, to check whether there is a relationship between variables, simple bivariate correlations were calculated for all students, and then separately for males and females. Correlation is a coefficient that varies between -1 and +1. A correlation of 1 or -1 means that the relationship is perfect and the closer is the coefficient to 1 or -1, the better is the relationship while a correlation near to 0 implies a poor relationship. In addition, a positive correlation implies an increasing relationship while a negative coefficient indicates a decreasing relationship. All correlations are positive, which means that good students are generally good in all subjects and the weak ones have poor achievement in all subjects. English and sociology are the less correlated (0.27) followed by Statistics and Sociology (0.37) whereas Fertilization and Computing are the most correlated (0.58). The final results of the year are well correlated to all grades of subjects but with different levels. The highest correlation is observed with statistics (0.77) while the lowest one is for English (0.57). The same results are obtained when males and females are analyzed separately.

Figure 7. Males and females’ average scores of (a) Fertilization and (b) Statistics from 2010 to 2015
Conclusion

The present study was an attempt to explore students’ performance in different subjects according to their gender. It was found that female academic achievement is changing in terms of number and performance. In fact, as it has been observed in the data used, female students nowadays not only outnumber male students but also get better grades in all the categories of subjects. This implies that the stereotype of categorizing subjects as female or male ones should no longer be accepted. In other words, the gender variable should no more consist an obstacle or hindrance in learning or teaching school subjects. However, these interesting results should be enhanced by other studies in order to seek explanations behind good females’ achievement. For this reason, research in the environment of larger classes and other institutions is necessary to confirm the obtained results. Moreover, these findings, which are in favor of females, push us to ask questions about the performance of males. Therefore, more research should be oriented towards boys’ tendency to lag behind in order to discover the reasons why girls tend to perform better than boys.

References


Gender Imbalance in Moroccan Broadcast News¹

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Abstract. In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in gender portrayal and gender bias in media studies in general and newscast in particular. This paper develops a comprehensive account of the distribution of males and females in the news broadcast on 2M, a Moroccan public channel, at the peak viewing time during a two-week period. It investigates one main prime time newscast, namely Almasa’iya, to identify the role and frequency of male/female personnel and the news content they cover. The findings of this analysis reveal that males dominate in all aspects of the news content. Males seem to be associated more with hard and soft news than their female counterparts. In addition, both male and female reporters rely on male sources to comment on the news content they report.

Keywords: gender bias, newscast, personnel, sources, news topics.

Introduction

The news, the most influential genre of broadcast media, is designed to reach a large segment of the population and influence and shape people’s perception of the world in general and society in particular. Besides, TV news covers a variety of topics, including politics, economy, education, health, sports, entertainment, etc. Thus, it can reach a sizable nationwide audience that can be described as anonymous and heterogeneous. Therefore, news content should reflect a variety of opinions, perspectives and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. According to the world bank statistics, Moroccan women consist more than half of the population. That is why, the TV news should advocate the equality of people, irrespective of their gender. It is generally recognized that media texts, the

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broadcast news is not an exception, often represent women in the stereotypical roles of weakness, submission and inferiority; whereas, men are associated more with the roles of power, dominance and authority. Although a considerable amount of research has been devoted to the portrayal of men and women in the newscast, no adequate attempts (to my knowledge) have been made to investigate how men and women are represented in the Moroccan newscast.

The major task of the present study is to examine whether the representations of men and women are discriminatory in the Moroccan newscast since it is believed that TV news ought to be unbiased and objective. In fact, it attempts to demonstrate to what extent objectivity is foreshadowed in the treatment of males and females in the news stories. The TV news is the main goal of the study since most people rely on a TV set as the main source of national and international news. Research problem Media, as the basic realm that shapes ideas, opinions, and thoughts of different receivers about different issues, covering fields of sport, entertainment, art, government, economics, etc., should be the leading domain of the campaign against gender inequality since it can affect how the audiences perceive men and women.

As a media genre, the newscast that makes use of different dimensions (linguistic and audio-visual messages) to inform, entertain and educate should have as a goal the spread of gender balance, not only in relation to the topics it presents, but also in relation to the choice of the personnel and the guests. The problem that this research paper tackles is whether 2M newscast promotes gender equity. To the best of my knowledge, no publications are available that address the issue of gender balance or equality in Moroccan broadcast news. In fact, gender distribution in the newscast is a topic that has not received adequate attention of scholars. Objective of the study The objective of the study is twofold: • To delineate gender representations in Moroccan TV news. • To determine the extent to which Moroccan media makers are sensitive to gender balance when assigning roles in the newscast. Research questions and hypothesis In the present study, the issue under scrutiny is to determine the frequency and the distribution of women in
the evening broadcast news Almasa’iyain order to show whether they are represented in a balanced way and occupy similar roles as their male counterparts. This research paper, thus, provides evidence to answer the following three questions: • Do women cover the news stories as often as men? The first research question intends to highlight the distribution of men and women as Moroccan broadcast personnel in 2M. • How often are men and women portrayed as news sources?

This second question aims at outlining the prevalence of males and females as news sources, describing the choices that male and female reporters make in relation to the gender of their guests (experts and non-experts). • What types of news are men and/or women associated with? The last research question depicts the topics that male and female reporters present to the audience. Therefore, based on the aforementioned review of the literature, we postulate the following hypothesis:

• Concerning the newscast personnel, men outnumber women.

• Expert news sources are primarily men; whereas, non-expert news sources are mainly women.

• Hard news is allocated mostly to males and soft news to females.

Significance of the study The present research paper can be relevant and significant for a number of reasons. First, the results of the study could be beneficial for media makers. The findings can guide them whenever they want to make amendments to meet the changes that our society has been undergoing at the level of education and employment. In fact, the number of literate and working women has been increasing every day. Second, the findings can also be useful for activists and policy makers. While the former can use them as a reference to call for action in their national campaigns, the latter may be interested in the results in order to create new gender balanced policies. Last but not least, the findings will contribute to our understanding of the issue of gender in broadcast media in general and TV news in particular. Review of the literature Previous studies about gender bias in TV news indicate that women are not fairly represented in different
countries. Prado and Hughes (2009, 7), for instance, conducted a quantitative study about media diversity and gender inequality in broadcast prime time news. They provided an ample evidence about the imbalanced distribution of male and female personnel in the newscast of four Latin American countries: Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Uruguay, as the following quotation shows:

*All of the newscasts allocated substantially more air time to male reporters. Women reporters are in the minority in all four markets, appearing on air on average 21.2% of the time given all markets combined. Women reporters were on air one-third of the time in Chile (32% of all airtime), but less than one-fifth of the time in Costa Rica (17.7%), Mexico (15.2%), or Uruguay (19.5%).*

Concerning the topics covered by reporters, previous studies reveal that hard news is more prestigious than soft ones in the news hierarchy. That is why they are more often relegated to male reporters (North 2014; Ross and Carter 2011; Van Zoonen 1998 and many others). According to Van Zoonen (1998), soft news lack “informational value,” for they are not urgent serious topics. Similarly, North (2014) carried out a research in Australia to discern gendered aspects of the “newsroom culture” that are not exhaustively examined in the newscast. She conducted an online survey which raised a number of questions about different issues related to the respondents’ (1067 journalists) work place conditions and experiences. She found out that men still dominated as hard news reporters; whereas, women were assigned more soft news topics. According to North (2014, 15), “women remain steadfastly pigeon-holed in soft news areas that are deemed less prestigious than hard news genres.” She also states, “Hard news is still delivered with a predominantly male perspective” (p. 14).

Therefore, previous research has reached the conclusion that males and females in the news stories are still associated with the traditional gender roles. These findings are also similar to those of Nwabuzor and Gever (2014/2015). In a similar study, Irvin (2013) conducts a research to determine the types of topics associated with male and female reporters and to learn whether the gender of guests is even or not. That is why she uses content analysis to investigate the
gathered data from three prime time newscasts. Her main findings can be summarized in the following quotation:

The results showed that male reporters were assigned more hard news than female reporters, and males were a little more likely to be assigned to hard news than soft news. Male sources were used more as experts in hard news by both male and female reporters. Actually, female reporters relied on males as expert sources more than male reporters (Irvin 2013, 9).

Sources refer to the people chosen by reporters to explain and comment on the topics discussed in the news. According to Irvin, Both male and female reporters relied more on male sources than female sources in most categories. Even the female reporters relatively more heavily relied on male sources in three categories than their counterparts, except for when they covered soft news and used expert sources. Male reporters used male sources more heavily than female counterparts only when they covered soft news and used expert sources (Irvin 2013, 43).

This view is consistent with Prado and Hughes’ (2009) findings of broadcast news in Latin America. In the very beginning of this article, I used the term “representation” to refer to the theory which constructs how the audience views the world (people, places, values, etc.). In this research paper, representation of the personnel of the news media can be regarded as a process of constructing identities. In fact, this process is never transparent, natural or value free. There is always an ideology behind the roles assigned to each member of the news room. Moreover, the construction of cultural identities is tightly associated with the process of production as well as reception. In an attempt to provide a sound analysis of the collected data, I intend to examine the representation of women in the Moroccan TV news in accordance with the variables mentioned in the review of the literature, i.e., personnel, topics and sources. Methodology Almassa’iya newscast is scheduled at peak viewing time each evening around 8:30 pm at 2M, a Moroccan TV channel. This most watched newscast usually lasts about half an hour. It is often preceded by a soap opera and followed by a TV show or a
commentary. Given its time of broadcast, it is likely to attract a huge audience; therefore, it influences and shapes the public opinion and reinforces certain world views among the viewers.

This news program deals with domestic as well as international news; that is why it is considered an appropriate program for analysis. Therefore, data collection took place during the first two weeks of March from 2M official site. This period was chosen randomly. To conduct this study, I used the content analysis of gender imbalance at Almasa’iya newscast at 2M. The use of this method of analysis can be attributed to its systematic and rigorous nature and objective techniques that enable the researcher to make the quantitative analysis of the data collected from the TV news.

The statistics were carried out by categorizing the topics, the genders of the journalists (the news anchor and reporters) and the news sources in each news segment. A news segment (it lasts about 30 minutes) refers to a news coverage presented by one news anchor. The coding parameters of this study take into consideration the aim of this investigation and the research questions mentioned above. Therefore, in an attempt to measure Almasa’iya news segments, the main starting point is to count the number of males and females in relation to the following variables: the personnel (the anchor and the reporters), the news sources, and the topics assigned to each of these journalists. 1- The personnel, in this study, refers to the news anchors and reporters. The news anchor is the person who presents the news; s/he reads the titles, introduces the stories, presents and interacts with reporters, comments on news stories and/or interviews guests. S/he tries to attract the attention of the audience through his/her serious voice, clothes and posture in order to gain loyalty and trust.

The reporter’s job, in this research paper, refers to the voiceover that informs, reports and/or comments on the news content from outside. The audience knows only his/her voice that comments events and activities, and also asks questions of news sources. Therefore, the gender of the reporter is determined via his/her voice. In this research paper, the reporter can also be a correspondent. 2- News
sources are people interviewed by the reporter or the news anchor either as experts or witnesses (non-experts) that answer questions either from the news anchor or the reporter: “We defined news source as any actor appearing in a news item and delivering a text of at least one sentence” (Hooghe, Swert 2009, 13). Experts are guests specializing in a field related to the news content; whereas, non-experts are common people. They are usually bystanders or witnesses. The aim of this study is to determine the gender of the reporters/news anchors’ guests whether they are experts or non-experts. 3- News stories are usually divided into hard news and soft news. Different researchers provide different definitions for these two terms. According to Tuchman (1978), hard news can be defined as serious stories about important topics.

Hard news refers to timely news that includes topics about politics, economics and finance. Soft news, on the other hand, deals with such topics as entertainment, art, health, education, etc. In this research paper, the term hard news covers the following topics: politics, government, the king’s activities, economics, business and financial affairs. They are usually the lead stories, often broadcast at the beginning of each news segment. Soft news covers all other topics. This study is concerned with the gender of the reporter/news anchor in relation to the type of story he/she is reporting. Data analysis and findings The investigation of the gathered data adopts content analysis as a systematic method of analysis of 2M broadcast news. That is why there are tables and figures to highlight the frequency of the main variables (the personnel, news sources and news stories or topics) in relation to males and females. This section examines the representation of men and women in the Moroccan TV news via the use of statistics. Personnel Table 1 outlines the data used to answer the first research question about the distribution of males and females as the personnel of the newscasts, specifically news anchors and reporters who deliver the news content.

The first element we need to delineate is the number of males and females delivering news content in the data. Table 1 displays the numbers and percentages of the personnel presenting news stories. It shows that the ratio of males to females
is 61.2%, a significant percentage that highlights the prevalence of males as the main sources of information. The data in table 1 put forward the view that women appear on the air less frequently than their male counterparts. Women are seldom news anchors, for only 40% of them are allowed to read the title and present other reporters. This is may be due to the fact that women do not inspire trust in Moroccan audiences. 60% of males as news anchors reflect the predominance of males. The disparity between genders prevails in other areas of news stories including the number of reporters. In fact, female reporters seem to be a minority in 2M prime time news since only 45.3% of females are allowed to deliver the news content when 54.6% of males do the same job. Does this mean that women are less competent than men? Or is this an idea that the news makers want to disseminate among the population? It is important to mention that the difference between the number of male and female reporters is not huge, which can be regarded as a positive sign in seeking a bias free newscast. The table 1 illustrates that the percentages of men and women as members of the personnel are different: men have a much greater presence in 2M newscast than women. It also reveals that male reporters outnumber females.

In fact, the most striking feature of the statistics in the table above is the dominance of males both as news anchors and reporters (61.2%) in front of the microphone and the camera in the field of news broadcasting. It seems, therefore, that males are overrepresented given their real number in the Moroccan population (less than half of the population). Women, on the other hand, less frequently cover the news stories than their male counterparts. This imbalanced distribution of man and women in the Moroccan newscast foreshadows whose views, opinions and values the audience is likely to share. News sources Gender discrimination becomes very apparent when we consider the news reporters’ sources of information (experts or just common people). Concerning the roles of the male guests, they hold a wider range of jobs than their female counterparts. They can be ministers, officials, soldiers, teachers, doctors, painters, etc. Women can also hold some of these jobs; however, their number remains trivial when compared with the
number of men. The data generated by the reporters’ choice of their sources are provided in the following table. Table 2: Distribution of news sources by gender

Table 2 clearly shows again that males predominate as sources in the news. They make up about 64.4% of the commentators whereas females – only 35.6%. The number of male experts (70.5%) is much higher than that of females (29.5%). The same thing can be said about the choice of nonexperts since the majority are males (58.1%). One very remarkable finding is the scarcity of women both as experts (29.5%) and non-experts (41.9%). It is important to mention that all news stories included in the data contain at least one male source. Concerning the gender of reporters’ guests, the table above indicates that both male and female reporters cite more males than females (both as experts or non-experts) to comment on the news stories. It provides an ample evidence that the general tendency goes beyond the choice of the primary sources of information (experts) to include the secondary sources (non-experts) as well. In other words, the statistics show the overwhelming predominance of men as news sources in 2M broadcast news. These findings reflect the conservative views prevalent in the Moroccan patriarchal community.

Topics

There are two types of news stories: hard and soft topics. A significant number of studies indicate that hard topics are often presented by males whereas soft topics, by females. With regard to this, the statistics concerning the correlation between reporter’s gender and the topic with which s/he deals are compiled in table 3.

The data in table 3 indicate that the gender gap becomes more widespread when we consider the topics covered by males and females. The association between the topics and genders is rather stereotypical. Hard news, which includes politics, financial affairs, and economics, is allocated mainly to men. In fact, men are assigned hard topics (26.6%) two times more than their female (12.2%) counterparts. Even if soft news covers most of the broadcast news, males (31.3%) are more likely to present soft news, a realm usually associated with females (29.9%) as mentioned in the review of the literature above. For instance, financial topics are nearly exclusive to males. During the collection of the data, the financial
news was presented by females only tweezes far as sport is concerned, it seems to be nearly exclusive to males since more than 96% of reporters are males. These reporters always cite males as the primary source except when the news story is about female sports. Sport and financial affairs are two male dominated fields *par excellence*, which reflects the traditional views on men and women. As far as the field of politics is concerned, even if the number of males is still prevalent (58%), women are not completely absent. On the contrary, they comment on news stories, interview politicians and describe events. In all types of topics whether they are hard or soft a male is invited to comment on an event or activity in each news story. Conversely, females are not necessarily allowed to present and comment on all topics. Consequently, the choice of males over females is evident in the broadcast news. The statistics provided above paint a dim picture of the portrayal of gender in the news broadcast in 2M since they demonstrate the proclivity towards the prevalent choice of males over females. Discussion of the findings It seems that the Moroccan evening newscast Almasa’iya confirms the global patterns that highlight the imbalanced distribution of men and women in the TV news. The following discussion of the findings aims at providing answers to the research questions in order to demonstrate the reasons behind these discriminatory activities.

Concerning the first research question, the data from figure 1 provide an answer to this question by revealing that the female personnel (news anchors and reporters) are underrepresented in news stories. This means that men dominate in front of the camera. This finding is confirmed by the literature review. For instance, Irvin concluded that “Male reporters covered more stories (107 stories) than female counterparts (60 stories). First, viewers would more likely to have viewed the hard news stories that were covered by male reporters than female counterparts” (Irvin 2013, 44). However, this finding is not in accordance with the real number of men and women in the Moroccan population. Given the fact that women make up slightly more than half of the Moroccan society, the statistics revealed in figure 1 indicate that the TV news disseminates patriarchal values often
regarded as normal and natural by Moroccans. In addition, it seems that the traditional discriminatory stereotypes have a strong impact on the selection process of males and females in the Moroccan newscast. RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How often are women/ men portrayed as news sources? Figure 2: News Sources by Gender

The statistics in figure 2 provide a suitable answer to research question 2, for they demonstrate that women are significantly underrepresented both as experts and non-experts. However, they are more frequently portrayed as common commentators rather than experts. Males, on the other hand, are often depicted in specialized professional roles in all domains. This finding is confirmed by Irvin: “The results of this study include female under representation as reporters and sources, probably continuing a perception of women as being in a lower social status than men” (Irvin 2013, 9), hence, the marginalization of the female perspective, which means that the female voice is silenced. Put differently, women are more associated with domains traditionally considered women specific.

Therefore, contrary to our expectations, the analysis has yielded results that reject our second hypothesis which suggest that males are experts and females are non-experts. RESEARCH QUESTION 3: What types of news are women/ men associated with? Figure 3: News Topics by Gender

Regarding the third research question, the data suggest that there is no connection between each gender and the type of topics they discuss. It seems that men outnumber women in relation to both hard and soft topics. This finding is inconsistent with our third hypothesis which proposed that hard topics will be covered by men and soft news by women. In fact, both hard and soft news are preponderantly male domains. This conclusion is also confirmed by Irvin (2013, 44):

"Less assignment of female reporters to glamorous hard news as well as the unequal ratio of male to female journalists featured on the news could discourage women interested in becoming broadcast news professionals from pursuing careers in the field. During this study, male journalists covered more hard and soft news stories than female journalists not necessarily because of the story content, but because there were more male journalists."
The quantitative data provide clear evidence supporting our main finding that broadcast news in 2M is significantly masculine both in content and personnel. In the light of the above discussion, we reach the conclusion that the first hypothesis is correct; however, the second and the third hypothesis are incongruous with the statistical analysis of figure 3. The censure of females from this dynamic field will inevitably affect the views and opinions of the upcoming generations. The factors behind this finding may be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Gender inequality in news stories is concomitant with the disparity between males and females in society. According to the last census which took place in 2015, males are the prevalent working force in all fields. In fact, males hold the key positions in the Moroccan society. Therefore, the news coverage cannot be an exception. According to Prado and Hughes (2009, 10), “Gender discrimination in the work force is a reality… where women are commonly perceived as a secondary source of labor. The scarcity of working women in most of the fundamental fields in society makes the situation worse. On the other hand, “Men are more frequently represented in positions of authority and power that legitimize their dominant role in society” (Prado, Hughes 2009, 9).

2. The key occupations in the field of media are male dominated. The hierarchical ordering inside the field will inevitably affect the choice of the personnel covering the news stories, as Prado and Hughes (2009, 9) mentioned, “Organizational procedures in newsrooms significantly affect which stories are covered and which news sources are used.” The main recommendation stemming from this research paper is that media should deploy more efforts to maintain equity between males and females among the personnel and ensure diversity in their representation. In other words, women should be given more opportunities to hold a wider range of roles and tasks similar to their male counterparts. Conclusion

This research paper has provided adequate evidence to demonstrate how males and females are represented in Almasa’iya, an evening newscast scheduled during the prime time. It has reached the conclusion that women are unfairly relegated to secondary roles in the Moroccan newscast in relation to three investigated
variables: personnel, news sources and news stories. This deliberate and intentional gender inequity may be attributed to the occupational imbalance among men and women in Morocco. In fact, the disparity between men and women in the workplace is rampant even if it is believed that women are better academic achievers. Although the data highlight the gender bias and imbalance in relation to newscast personnel and stories, some of the limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, the results have failed to provide empirical reasons behind such bias. Therefore, further research is necessary to offer a comprehensive explanation of this phenomenon. This study has another limitation since it investigated only one news program Almasa’iya; the chosen data may fail to adequately represent the broadcast news in Morocco. Therefore, larger samples are needed to examine women’s professional participation in the news industry. Besides, more research is necessary to investigate more variables other than the ones discussed in this paper. It seems obvious that the news broadcasting which tries to represent the world and makes it a small village does not mirror this world accurately. On the contrary, the world is presented to the viewers through the male’s lens. Media makers should make an effort and take into consideration the diversity of the communities that the TV news targets. To promote gender balance in the news media and to encourage women to fight for more leading positions, further studies with larger samples and complex design are necessary to empirically determine how to change the situation and make our broadcast media a better field that reflects different interests and perspectives irrespective of people’s gender, color or ethnic group.

References


2.6. REVIEW OF SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF GENDER STUDIES, PHYSICAL SPORT AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE MOROCCAN CINEMA: A GENDER APPROACH

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Abstract
The present paper is an attempt to trace the trajectory of the film industry in Morocco from a gender perspective. The emphasis was on the representation of Moroccan women throughout different phases of this evolution, and the way the filmmakers have depicted women’s challenge to patriarchy. The paper argues that the struggle between modern and traditional stands at the heart of most women’s representations through the different phases of Moroccan cinema’s evolution and which are reflected through the changes in Gender roles in this globalization era in Morocco. More importantly, Female film makers made films differ in the way patriarchy is depicted. This paper tries to answer the following research questions: To what extent has film industry allowed women to gain a platform to perform and be active agents in subverting/re-orienting traditional perceptions of women and being part of the global mainstreaming film industry?

Key words: Representation, the struggle between modern and tradition, gender roles, patriarchy, and Moroccan cinema.

Introduction
In Morocco, which is the focus of this paper, the depictions of women continues the discourse outlined during the colonial period, as well as resisting (neo)colonial discourse, and/or existing outside of the colonial paradigm altogether. In fact, Moroccan cinema, like other third world cinema, operates today in very turbulent conditions, marked by very significant national events and by far reaching development, on world scale technology, economics and culture. There is little

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consensus about the deeper implications of these development. Thus, the aim of the present paper will be to try to trace briefly the development of cinema in Morocco from the colonial period to the present, as well as to consider Moroccan cinema within its contexts, in order to more precisely locate the films under consideration within their historical, political and cultural context. More specifically, I will try to see how the history of this visual fiction can be viewed from a gender perspective. Firstly, I will sketch out the history of Moroccan cinema. Secondly, focus will be put on the representation of women in Moroccan cinema. Finally, I will discuss the impact of globalization on gender roles in Moroccan cinema. Reference to some Moroccan films in due course will situate them in a historic, political and economic contexts drawing links between tradition and modernity in these films under study, Mohamed. Abderrahman Tazi Badis Moumen Smihi Chergui, and Yassmine Kassari’s burning screens; The Sleeping Child Morocco and Leila Kilani On the Edge. The basic argument defended in this paper is that the paradox between tradition and modernity seems to stand at the heart of all the phases of the development of Moroccan cinema though in a quite different way that seems to be influenced by the historical, political and cultural context the country under study knows. Evidence will be provided from the above mentioned films namely. Most importantly, I argue that Moroccan female filmmakers have succeeded in spelling out the unsaid issues and represent patriarchy in a revolutionary way that their male counterparts have not done.

The History of Moroccan Cinema

Looking back at the history of Moroccan cinema, post-independent cinema (from 1956 to 1970), it can be observed that Moroccan post-colonial film history dates back to 1958 with the production of Mohamed Ousfour’s Le Fils maudit, the story of a young man who declines into a life of crime caused by the negligence of his parents. This is followed by an eight-year gap in production, which is broken by La Route de kif (1966), a film which documents the fight against drug trafficking in the Rif region of Morocco. There is a small spurt of cinematic activity in the late 1960s with the release of two films dealing with the problems of rural to urban
migration (*Vaincre pour vivre*, 1968; *Soleil de printemps*, 1969), and a third (*Quand murissent les dates*, 1968) that portrays tribal conflicts which are resolved by the younger generation. The “dominant models” were Eurocentric, and did not culturally or politically serve a newly-independent Morocco that was struggling to construct itself not only against but also separate from its former colonial rulers. That’s exactly what happened after the independence, whereby Morocco knows the establishment of its personal status code that is not serving Moroccan family and mainly women, but it was following France, stating itself in a way different from it in the 1970s, that was characterized by its concretization of an authentic Moroccan cinema that is capable of bringing out local specificities, a cinema that is liberated of its complexes, and is ready to let loose all the contradictions of reality.

Thus, this post-independence cinema history from 1956 to 1970 explores the link between national films and national identity during this important post-independence, nation-cementing era for Morocco. It provides the initial orientation to the cinema developments in Morocco inherited from French colonization and emphasizes that cinema production practices and institutions did not change drastically with Morocco’s move to independence in 1956. The focus here is upon films made in Morocco by Moroccans subsequent to independence. The 1970’s did witness a small increase in film production with the release of fifteen feature-length films including Hamid Bennani’s *Wechma* (1970), Souheil Ben Barka’s *Milles et une mains* (1972), Moumen Smihi’s *Chergui ou le silence violent* (1975), Ahmed Maanouni’s *lyam, Alyam* (1979), MustaphaDerkaouï’s *De Quelques evenements sans significations* (1974), Jilali Ferhati’s *Breche dans le mur* (1978) and Mohamed Reggab’s *Les Cendres du clos* (1977). In this respect, Dwyer 2004 states that the management of audio visual space plays a role in the construction of social identity, especially in developing countries, like Morocco. He adds that the production and consumption of cinema can help in the construction of a common culture that can unify the nation-state, which was the ultimate goal of the state in that particular historical period whereby it did a lot of efforts to define itself.
Later on, Laura Mulvey, cited in De Lauretis, Teresa 2003, states that there was a period marked by the effort to change the content of cinematic representation (i.e., to present realistic images of women to record women talking about their real life experiences), a period characterized by a mixture of consciousness raising and propaganda. Hence, a new perspective has been launched with some Moroccan film makers like Farida Belyazid's *Une Porte sur le ciel* (A *Door to the Sky*, 1987) and *Les Ruses des femmes* (*The Wiles of Women*, 1999), Hakim Nouri *Destin de femme* (*Destiny of Women*, 1998) and Saad Chraibi's *Femmes... et femmes* (*Women... and Women*, 1998), whereby they represent the recent focus of Moroccan cinema on modern, urban women. Thus, the recent interest in the topic of women in Moroccan cinema can in part be viewed as a result of women's increasing involvement in the public sphere. This involvement ranges from political activism in literacy projects and the reform of Family Status Laws (*The Moudouana*), to their growing prominence as authors, professors, and filmmakers. Moreover, the current concentration on women in the Moroccan national narrative must be viewed within its historical context, as part of a narrative thread that can be traced through the nation's colonial, anti-colonial and post-colonial period (See for example, Hamid Bennani 1970 *Wechma* - (a featured film between 1956-1970) and Mounir Smihi (1975) *Chergui ou le Silence Violent*.

It is worth pointing out here that 1975 is an important date in Moroccan film history because it is the year that marks a significant entry into the subject matter of Moroccan film, the Moroccan woman. It is specifically Moumen Smihi's *Chergui ou le silence violent* that marks this shift in interest. *Chergui*, however, tells a "traditional" Moroccan story, about a woman who resorts to magic to prevent her husband from marrying another woman. It is traditional in several senses: firstly, it raises the Islamic practice of men being able to take as many as four wives. Secondly, the film supports a patriarchal worldview, for while *Aicha* does prevent her husband from taking a second wife, it is at the expense of her own life (she drowns while performing the last magic ritual). The idea of polygamy is taken as a man’s right here, and the wife has no way of preventing him from that
legally. Along the same lines, Jaidi (2006) sees Chergui as being part of what is called the "revolt against patriarchal authority" that shows up in Moroccan cinema (both long and short features) at this time (Court metrages). Finally, the film also elucidates how women who transgress the boundaries of tradition are killed. In the last decade, a general, if not, a slight loosening of government control over artistic freedom has been noted in Morocco, and greater attention has been paid by the government, media and the Moroccan Cinematographic Centre (CCM) to develop and fund a national cinema. National and international interest in Moroccan cinema is growing, notably after the recent international success of Nabil Ayouch’s film Ali Zaoua (2000). These issues will largely be discussed in the sections to follow that will mainly address the way women are represented in Moroccan cinema, and the impact of globalization on Gender roles changes in the Moroccan cinema, respectively.

The Representation of Women in Moroccan Cinema:

Though feature-length films have been produced since 1958, the early days of Moroccan independence, postcolonial Moroccan cinema remains an understudied form of the nation's cultural production. As Viola Shafik explains in her comprehensive study Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity, neglect of the cultural component is common throughout Arab cinema studies; "Little attention has so far been paid to the subject of the cultural identity of Arab cinema." I will address this neglect by examining the portrayals of women in recent Moroccan films through the critical paradigms of gender, film, postcolonial, and cultural studies. Four films will be discussed in detail through an analysis of the themes ‘‘modern versus traditional’’ with special focus on the way globalization has impacted gender roles in our Moroccan society in the next section. These are the prevalent thematic and cultural concerns that have emerged from an extensive examination of contemporary Moroccan cultural visual production, and reflect fundamental concerns and anxieties about gender and women's identities in modern Moroccan society. Moreover, the current concentration on women in the Moroccan national narrative must be viewed within
its historical context, as part of a narrative thread that can be traced through the nation's colonial, anti-colonial and post-colonial periods. The construction and maintenance of a national identity can be considered as a continuation of nationalist and anti-colonialist struggles against European dominance, which today takes the form of neocolonialism and globalization. However, gendered readings of nationalism and post-colonialism have exposed the patriarchal underpinnings of the narratives of both the colonizers and the colonized. So, while “woman” can be used in nationalist discourse as a form of resistance, this resistance is almost always within a patriarchal framework. The continued oppression and marginalization of women and their concerns is not merely an unwanted and temporary by-product of nationalist discourse, but it is rather inherent to the discourse and system of nationalism. Thus, the recent focus on women in Moroccan cinema is operating on at least one level within a patriarchal national narrative, while it is also resisting neocolonial appropriation of Moroccan identity and culture.(e.g., Badis 1981 by Mohamed Abderrahmane Tazi)

Thus, recent cinematic representations of Moroccan women, and their roles in constructing and maintaining women's national identities in Abderrahmane Tazi, Narjis Najarr, and Leila Kilani provide a detailed analysis of how women had a significant contribution to the construction of women's identities, and all were received in Morocco with a certain degree of critical and popular acclaim. Additionally, each adds to and occasionally resists the hegemonic and patriarchal constructions of the role of women in modern Morocco. Saad Chraibi’s Femmes...et femmes, heralded by filmmaker and critics as a “feminist film,” portrays the lives of four female friends negotiating the difficulties facing modern urban women in Morocco: sexual harassment in the workplace, domestic violence, and difficulties of romantic relationships. Hakim Noury's Destin de femme also depicts the difficulties facing modern urban women, this time tracing the life of a successful businesswoman and her increasingly conservative and eventually violent husband. Unlike Chraibi's film that operates within a comic register, this film is a pessimistic portrayal of Moroccan society, revealing the constant
struggles and betrayals of Moroccan women by men, by families, and by society as a whole.

However, the passivity of women is faced with the masculine omnipresence. This can be due to class, ethnicity, religion, or language, as well as gender. Yet the women in Chergui, for example, according to Jaidi (1994), do not remain passive victims, but rather act within the limited options available to them. In the context of the film, this is expressed by performing magic as a means to challenge patriarchal society. This is similar to women’s use of cunning that is the basis of Belyazid’s film Les Ruses des femmes, and both raise the same concerns: Should the use of magic or cunning be seen as empowering to women, and/or does the use of these “traditional” female devices actually support patriarchal rule? Chergui, for Jaidi, “[S] Le profile aliénation de la femme, L’ambiguïté d’une tradition, située entre l’orthodoxie religieuse d’essence patriarcale et la persistance des pratiques palennes suractivées dans le monde des femmes.2”

"profiles the alienation of woman, the ambiguity of a tradition situated between an essentially religious patriarchal authority and the persistence of pagan practice carried out in the world of women.3"

But for Aicha in Chergui (like the young heroine in Badis (1988 a decade later) - the only escape from her plight as woman is death.

Thus, magic and especially the magic of women, shows up in several other Moroccan films. Recent films such as A La Recherche du mari de ma femme (1995), Femmes...et femmes (1998), Destin de femme (1999) and Les Ruses des femmes (1998) all include scenes of women and magic. This shows how the woman used to challenge the patriarchal system through magic and later she considers death as the only escape from her plight.

Khafayar (1995), a more recent film, revisits many of the themes raised in Chergui. This film tells the story of two generations of women, a mother and daughter, but also shows a larger societal conflict as these two women represent two very different lifestyles. The mother, who lives in the medina or old section of a city, is
completely immersed in a dark and secretive life, and uses magic to make her husband ill and then eventually die. The audience is privy to all of her secrets, but the children of the family also witness many of the magical practices, including forcing the sick and weak man to bath in and then drink water containing the blood of a black cock. Although the girl is a teenager at the time, it is not until much later in her life, after she has become a doctor and begins to see a series of mysterious illnesses suffered by men in the community, that she is able to realize the evil significance of her mother’s activities.

After *Chergui ou le silence violent* (1975), there is a five year gap before the next woman-centered film *Amina* (1980) is released. But unlike *Chergui* it does not focus on a “traditional” woman with a “traditional” problem. Instead, *Amina* addresses a “modern” problem caused and faced by young women in the modern world. Amina is a college student in Rabat living in a dorm room on campus. She finds herself in the unfortunate situation of becoming pregnant without being married. Her predicament is presented in a discussion between Amina and her roommate during the first scene of the film, and the remainder of the Story follows Amina through her interactions with family and friends. She does not take the expected route of marriage (whether to the young man who impregnated her or to another), and is rejected by her friends because of her unacceptable behavior (not necessarily having gotten pregnant, but having refused to face the consequences of her behavior in the one culturally accepted way, by getting married and dropping out of school). The film is more artistically filmed and narrated than the typical melodrama. It is filmed in black and white, and the camera often films at strange angles, to reflect the period of the piece, and also to reflect the inner angst of a young woman in a terrible predicament. Unlike *Chergui* or *Badis*, which function on at least one level as cautionary tales for Moroccan women (as both of the women in these films who transgress boundaries are killed), neither *Amina* nor the later *Un Amour a Casablanca* (1991) killed themselves.

An important issue worth addressing in this respect is the question of women’s representation in males’ works that has been central to researchers working on
cinema. Male filmmakers are accused of serving patriarchy by providing accounts that perpetuate women’s inferior position in society. Man’s made cinema always serves the patriarchal ideology and places women in subordinate, often negative, positions especially that cinema as a media form are not only means of entertainment but rather agents of instilling values and shaping public opinion. In this respect, a question imposes itself here: To what extent is female filmmaking different from that of men? More specifically, how can female filmmakers be different from male filmmaking? In fact, female film makers succeed in bringing new issues and topics that male filmmakers just keep unspoken about. I argue that female filmmakers add a new dimension to the cinematic scene in Morocco and come up with new gender representations, which helps the audience to have a female perspective towards a variety of issues related to gender. Female filmmakers’ workers always participate in the construction of a national narrative, through refuting patriarchal portrayals of women. Moreover, the considerations of the self-representations of Moroccan women writers, using the categories, and issues that they provide is one way to resist their marginalization. (see Teresa de Laures, 2003 among other feminist critics).

Going back to the literature written on this issue, Dwyer (2011) rightly comments on the late stage of the appearance of films made by Moroccan women. The first film made by a Moroccan woman director was Farida Bourquia’s Embers (al-Jamr/ La braise, 1984), followed soon thereafter by Farida Benlyazid’s A Door to the Sky (Bab al-sama’ maftuh/ Une porte ouverte sur le ciel, 1988). These two were the only women filmmakers until almost the turn of the century, and Bourquia had to wait more than twenty years for her second feature to appear. In 1998, Fatima Jebli Ouezzani became the first woman to win the Best Film award of Morocco’s National Film Festival with her film In My Father’s House (Dans la maison de mon père) in 1998. Thereafter films directed by women began to appear in greater numbers, including three more by Benlyazid as well as first features by Imane Mesbahi, Narjess Nejjar, Yasmine Kassari, Leila Marrakchi, and Zakia Tahiri. Kassari’s The Sleeping Child (Al-Raqid/L’Enfant Endormi, 2004) won
the Best Film award at the 2005 National Film Festival; Marrakchi’s Marock (2005) and Tahiri’s Number One(2008) were box-office successes (see Dwyer, 2011, p.328-329 for more details).

**The impact of globalization on gender roles in Moroccan cinema**

This section predominantly tackles the portrayal of gender issues in Moroccan cinema. More particularly, another cinematic product that provides a profound understanding of the notion of power relations that tend to systematize the division of social roles in which women and men both play will be discussed with an eye to show how this type of Moroccan films aims to challenge conformist ideas of gender roles and emphasize the ways Moroccan female filmmakers reframe conventional concepts. The focus will be on how globalization impacted/disrupted gender roles. This can be seen through the way filmmakers start to shed light on the transnational themes as explicitly feminist, encompassing an internal critique of Moroccan patriarchy. These filmmakers investigate the interactions between their cinema and the cultural and political ideologies of new global Morocco. They present a new reality in Morocco, which is not yet welcomed and usually taken as unconventional. *Erraged* or *the Sleeping Child* by Yassmine Kassari (2004) or Leila Kilani’s film *On the Edge* (2011), will be referred to illustrate such issues.

Since early 1990’s, Moroccan cinema has abandoned the French model in favor of the American one, as the American model has proved to be freer, thus allowing Moroccan cinema to transcend the post-colonial and to connect to the global. Moroccan film-makers started to shed light on the transnational themes of their narratives as explicitly feminist, encompassing an internal critique of Moroccan patriarchy. They construct a particular model of Moroccan cinema emerging from a globalized perspective. These filmmakers investigate the interactions between their cinema and the cultural and political ideologies of a new post-global Morocco. Through their films they present a new reality in Morocco, which is not yet welcomed and usually taken as unconventional (See examples of those films by Yasmina Kissari, and Fatima Jebi OuazzaniLeila Kilani, and Leila Merrakchi among others).
I will start by discussing *The Sleeping Child* (2005) by the Moroccan director Yasmine Kassari (in her first feature film) who shows how “burning” (i.e. crossing borders illegally to become an immigrant worker in Europe) is experienced and seen by the wives and mothers of the migrants. In the process, she shows how the initial male crossing of borders upset traditional behaviors at home and leads to a series of transgressive acts by the women left behind.

In this connection, Florence (2011: 174) rightly that:

“Although the territory is now almost empty of its young and ablemen, and hence of its gendered power hierarchy, The patriarchal system is still maintained in place in the first part of the film by the matriarchs, the older generation. Hassan’s mother acts as an avatar of her son when she makes decisions about Zeinab’s *ragued*”

And yet, as the film progresses, the mother dies and the in-laws disappear from view, as if, literally, their stranglehold over the young women was weakening, had become irrelevant, was no longer part of the old territory as everyone knew it. By the end of the filmic narrative, the old territory has been deprived not only of its male resources, but also of its order and of what constituted it as territory. It has become a place in between the old territory and some other space *en devenir*, in becoming, forever evolving, that is abstract. Halima leaves it, and the *ragued* will not be born into such a space because its boundaries are unknown, strangely mysterious.

In this connection, Florence 2011; 181 rightly notes:

“[Hence], what started as a film on “burning,” on traversing dangerous territories, becomes a film on the reshuffling of gender roles: women are no longer passively awaiting signs of their men in the *douar*; they start making decisions without consulting them. In the end of the film, Zeinab will not wake up her *ragued*”

*The Sleeping Child* thus explores much more than just the women’s mere emotional response to the void(s) left by their “burning” husbands, for the women register the end of an era and witness the birth of an “after territory” that is in becoming. Yet
they are no passive witnesses; rather, they start to adapt to the tectonic shift in their reality and start to actually (re)define active, female ways of gazing.

Another interesting film worth discussing here is Leila Kilani’s film *Sur la planche; On the Edge* 2011. Kilani cited in Barlet& Ellerson (2014:323) states ‘’That only in this way can one understand the current changes, that all communication will run against a wall , that these societies will lapse into violence if they do not provide a future for their youth’’. Talking about Badia her main character, Kilani further states that ‘’ Badia , along with the other three girls with whom she prepares her evening capers , rushes head- long into the void. Her destiny can only be fatal .These young people, full of desperate energy, are on the verge of collapsing. They are on the edge, ready to jump.’’(i.bid).The film in most part deals with the unconventional ways in which women are represented within an American model that has proved to be freer than the European one allowing Moroccan cinema to transcend the post-colonial and to connect to the global. Thus, Kilani’s focus in her film *On the Edge* on the transnational themes of her narrative, her film includes an internal critique of the Moroccan patriarchy and the unconventional way she presents women.

This also explains how gender defines the main interest of Moroccan women cinema as argued by the feminist critic Teresa De Laures(2003). Moroccan female film makers such as Leila Kilani constructed a particular model of Moroccan cinema that looks at gender issues from a globalized perspective. Using Kilani’s film as a lens, it can be noticed that gender is what defines the concerns of Moroccan women’s cinema. This perspective indeed emerges from the connection of those female film makers to both Europe and US, and the significant interest they have been given at the International festivals.

Interestingly, Kilani sheds light on the ways in which Moroccan films make use of moving images to break the silence on controversial issues such as prostitution, abortion, sexual harassment, terrorism along with others. Indeed, this seems to go along with the main political, legal and cultural changes Morocco know during the last few years. In particular, Leila Kilani’ s film *On the edge’
seems to transgress the religious, social and political constraints for various artistic and ideological reasons, causing juxtaposed reactions and responses from viewers with different backgrounds and orientations.

What is special about those Moroccan young female film producers, like Leila Kilani, in this period of Moroccan Film industry is that they have not only restricted themselves to reflect the major transformations taking place in Morocco, but they have gone further to generate a certain kind of awareness and discussion of the unsaid. As pointed out by a reviewer of Kilani’s film *On the Edge*: ‘’[Kilani] addresses these forbidden places, areas of appalling exploitation and lowliness that swarm the planet and that are never talked about’’(Barlet & Ellerson (2014: 224). Indeed, third world filmmaking, over the last few decades, has given birth to significant movies that, boldly, denounce religious, sexual and political taboos as well as social norms. In this respect, Moroccan female filmmakers, unlike many of their male counterparts, bring to these issues and topics a particular female and gender sensitivity whose absence in previous male directed films severely handicapped the film discourse on these issues and topic. Moreover, many of these women film makers open up new spaces of discourse focusing on subject and raising questions on which male film makers maintained a long silence.

**Conclusion**

Taken all in all, it may be seen through the above discussion that the topic of “woman” has not been absent from earlier Moroccan films. In fact, all of the discussed ideas: modern versus traditional, patriarchy…etc. can be seen in most of these earlier films. But it is in the mid- to late- 1990s that there is a deliberate and discernable shift throughout Moroccan cinema, putting a national spotlight on the role of women in modern, urban Morocco. Ali Zaoua’s film by Nabil Ayyouch (2000) was marking the beginning of a transnational cinema. Moroccan transnational cinema was born, and globalization became part of its life cycle from production to distribution and exhibition. When Nabil Ayouch struck again with his millennial classic *Ali Zaoua*, it was obvious to most observers of Moroccan films that this postcolonial cinema had gone global. It perfected the aesthetic
language of transnational Moroccan cinema and bore its landmarks such as its
great audacity in tackling the social, sexual and religious taboos, which were
perceived to be behind Morocco's underdevelopment.
The paper also showed that during the last decade, the Moroccan cinema has
witnessed a “revolutionary turn” at the level of women’s representation. Looking
at Moroccan cinema from a Gender lens, this paper highlighted dismantling
“mechanisms” by which the “traditional perception(s)” of women in Moroccan
cinema has/have been subverted/re-orientated. To achieve such a goal, the Raged
or The sleeping child by Kissari and On the Edge, by Leila Kilani, for example, are
chosen to show that the “traditional portrayal” of women in Moroccan cinema has
been subverted. Thus, the Moroccan women are found to be no longer
“traditionally” portrayed in contemporary Moroccan films and are shown to
assume new gender roles in this age of globalization.

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GENDER IDENTITY CRISIS IN TAHAR BEN JELLOUN’S THE SACRED NIGHT¹

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Abstract
The present paper is an attempt to explore the issue of gender identity crisis through Tahar Ben Jelloun’s narrative The Sacred Night. It analyses it within the framework of the social, political, cultural and religious discourse. The paper undertakes the examination of Tahar Ben Jelloun’s perception of gender identity and the many inequalities that still persist in male-dominated societies, the masking of one’s own identity, the rootedness of the codes and structures that ensure the subjugation of women, the subservient role that society has ascribed to them, and the degree to which they are enslaved in the system. In the same vein, he illustrates the multiple ways society uses to maintain a pre-conceived and hegemonic system that oscillates between power and the ideology of patriarchy that holds male supremacy as natural and women’s subordination as vital in Arab/Muslim world in general and North Africa in particular.

Key words: Gender, identity, crisis, social power, religion.

The Sacred Night (sequel to The Sand Child and winner of the 1987 Prix Goncourt), is a fantastical-poetic novel by the Moroccan-French writer Tahar Ben Jelloun who is one of North Africa’s most successful post-colonial writers. In a lyrical, hallucinatory prose, Tahar Ben Jelloun offers an imaginative and radical critique of contemporary Arab social customs and Islamic law. His main concern has always been the condition of women in North Africa, and his main themes generally deal with Maghrebi society – “the relationship between men and women in a Muslim society, the state and the law, the individual and the collective” (Margaret Obank reviews). Ben Jelloun believes that a writer is a witness

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of his time. In this regard, his concern is to deliver some little messages that are neither political nor ideological but which will depict women’s determination to struggle, challenge and condemn certain norms and aspects of their socio-political climate to attain equality and change their status within their male counterpart. As he stated in an interview: “*My characters are driven by a passionate desire for justice. They are rebellious and incorruptible.*”

*The Sacred Night* particularly centres on the treatment of women in Moroccan society, and reveals controversial and recurring themes that evoke the reader to perceive the injustice of the patriarchal structure and the ensuing economic and psychological dependence of women that reinforce the belief of the majority of men that their wives and children are their own property and thus they can decide of their fate. In a stately, lucid, and flexible incantatory narrative; Ben Jelloun calls up an examination of gender roles in a male-dominated society, the masking of one’s own identity, sexuality, storytelling, and surrealism. The story recalls a Moroccan father’s effort to thwart the consequences of Islam's inheritance laws regarding female offspring. The protagonist of the story Ahmed is born a female, but her parents decide to change her gender identity to a man in order to inherit the wealth of her father, as the last heir to their throne. Thus, the novel opens with the birth of the eighth child of Hajji Ahmed. His first seven children are daughters, and under Islamic law, daughters may only inherit one-third of their father’s property. Hajji becomes obsessed with producing a male heir and when his eighth child is born a daughter, he decides to raise the girl—named Ahmed Mohammed—as a boy, and forcibly turned her life against its natural course as a female. In fact, the father regards his daughters as a curse, it is as if they do not exist, and of course for matters of inheritance they do not. Thereby, the newborn girl is constrained to grow up as Ahmed, and raised as a young man with all the privileges granted exclusively to men in traditional Arab-Islamic societies. There is no way to fight her tyrant father, so she submits to the ugly, disgusting reality of her mother’s worries about her breasts “which she bandaged with white linen, pulling the bands of cloth so tight, I could hardly breathe. It was absolutely vital that no breasts should
Ahmed's story continues into adulthood until her father allows her to stop pretending. However, it is in fact when he was on his death bed, that the father releases her from the bondage of her false gender. Admittedly, Ahmed attempts to accept her feminine sexuality and takes the name of Zahra as dictated by the father. As she matures, however, Ahmed's desire to have children marks the beginning of her sexual evolution, and as a woman, Ahmed begins to explore her true sexual identity. Consequently, she runs away from her family and becomes involved in a series of adventures and further imprisonments. Zahra eventually falls in love with a blind man, allowing her to escape from gender limitations and find true happiness.

Impressive, yet, the narrative suggests a number of allegorical interpretations, the surfacedevolves with enough sheer pleasure and deeper meanings to ensure that these are rarely overt topics to dare put on the fort. Gender, sexuality, and the cultures they impose, and the restrictions imposed on them by cultures, (to cite only a few) are all forms of imprisonment, yet so, too, is the attempt to evade them. Ironically, Ben Jelloun chooses to examine these psychologically complex characters who struggle to survive in the challenging socio-political climate of the post-colonial Arab world. Mohammed Ahmed, a born girl raised as a boy in order to circumvent Islamic inheritance laws regarding female children, remains deeply conflicted about her identity. In a stupefying narrative that shifts in and out of reality moving between a mysterious present and a painful past, Ben Jelloun relates the events of Ahmed's life after becoming Zahra; so, she renounces her role as the only son and heir after her father's death and journeys through a dreamlike Moroccan landscape.

As cited before, many controversial topics are uncovered when reading the book. Noticeably, there is a direct response to the patriarchal system, common binding knowledge which states that women cannot lead nor inherit property. Conflicts which occur in this book are a direct result because of the prohibited gender roles, which causes a conflict of interest in creating a gender identity for Zahra. After her father passes away she/he takes control of property, as the only “male” heir. Then,
after burying the father, a “decisive ordeal” appears and becomes the turning point in his life. His father’s death makes him a semi-crazed recluse who continues to reign over his obedient sisters and sick mother, while seeing his sexual state of being as a challenge that must be resolved. Ahmed has realized that it’s time s/he needs to find out who s/he is and what gender to identify her/his-self with. Definitely, Ahmed decides he has to “return to himself”, but to re-educate his emotions, his body has to “face adventure, on the roads, in other towns, in other places”. Zahra encounters more horrors, and joins a circus as a sex-changing freak, becoming the main attraction, then disappearing.

The most controversial issues which are displayed throughout The Sacred Night plague in the Arab society. And intertwining with cultural and religious beliefs, many of the subjects covered in the novel are Taboo subjects. The story begins with the problem of inheritance, then, it questions the role of gender roles and identity. Before the coming of Ahmed, the last child born and his parents final hope, they decided regardless to what sex their child will be they will declare it a male. When Hajji, tells his wife his decision to make their child a male regardless of sex, she feels comforted and mostly happy. When Zahra/Ahmed is born or made her born a male, the mother/wife feels relieved because she will not be blamed. Ben Jelloun brings out a complicated point at this revealing, he states that women are held responsible for the actions of men; because our contemporary society is still denigrating women and making them feel shameful, and guilty; despite they are innocent, sometimes even victims, because they are living in a system that represses and oppresses them. The blame is put on them when they are helpless, blamed for something that is out of their control, because of the weird, sick mentality and the psychology of a culture that misinterprets religion and conceives some socially, culturally constructed logics as a way of life. Regardless of the fact that both parents father and mother created this child; it has always been her fault for birthing females instead of males. When Ahmed is born, she no longer has to carry the burden of not producing a male heir to inherit. What the author seeks to highlight here is to denounce this institutionalized inequality that is ingrained in
the Muslim Society by showing how much more a male, even a fake one, is worth than a female. Hence, the sisters and mother are described as flat and emotionless, almost simple with no depth or importance. In addition to that, the father Hajji Ahmed is wholly convinced that some heavy curse weighs on his life because, and he believes hard as iron that a house “occupied” by only women, has made of him as if he had no progeny, even doubting his virility or thinking of himself as a sterile husband. All that matters for him is to have a male child/heir; a hope turned into obsession and pushed him to defy the divine will for the sake of sustaining his public image of the powerful and virile man. Thus, when the midwife cries out, “It’s a man, a man, a man…” the father Hajji arrives like a prince” and on his face and shoulders can be seen “all the virility of the world! At fifty, he felt as highhearted as a young man” (17).

In this context, Nina GhamarErfani writes about how Ben Jelloun pictures women’s responsibility a burden of Islam, “women are manipulated to serve the purposes of the male” (Erfani 3). Ben Jelloun misrepresents the priorities of Islam, especially when creating the characters; Hajji Ahmed takes the role of the general based-power dynamic, “… (He) epitomizes the Islamic patriarchy, he has veiled, silenced, and isolated women (represented by Zahra’s mother and her [almost] non-existent sisters)” (12). Ben Jelloun criticizes traditional Moroccan views that tend to undermine women and give more value to men. But his flaw lies in his characterization of Hajji that makes him fall straight into the stereotype of how the West perceives Islam: an oppressive religion for women, but what he fails to accomplish is balance. His views on the way he viewed women in Morocco is what made the interpretation of the audience controversial, they felt like Ben Jelloun was catering to the West when he played into the religious stereotypes of how women are treated. What he forgot to mention is how the Hadith and Quran view women. He did not clarify the difference between tradition and religion. In many “Islamic” countries, the gender inequality is the result of distancing God-given rights towards women and the misinterpretations of the Quranic texts. Many of these rights, however, are based on cultural and traditional customs that have been
“indoctrinated” and injected into these societies (Badawi 1971). Islam brought equality to men and women and this equality is reinforced by the Quranic verses that prohibit any gender discrimination in stressing the fact that both men and women are equal before God.

_O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the most righteous of you._ (Quran 49:13)

Everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah, but Ben Jelloun fails to make the distinction between man’s desire to control and the practice of religion in its true sense. Ben Jelloun brings the question, we can ultimately choose our identity and the gender roles we choose to abide too, but can we have the power to choose how the world views its citizens. Not only did this particular element question our personal identity, but gender roles in the Arab community. What reasoning did Ahmed’s father have to hide his child’s identity? He wanted the family to continue living comfortably after his death, with a wife and seven daughters, he chooses to live a lie than rather make his family suffer the consequences of his death.

The controversial part plays into the religious aspects of gender roles, where do the line of religious gender roles and patriarchal hierarchy separate when it comes to gender identity? Ben Jelloun is describing how Moroccan Women are incapable of choosing their own identity (14). Men are the only ones with true freedom; he is not held to the same standard of women and is fully capable of choosing his own identity and the identity of the women in his life. The women in the novel are constantly abused, turning either crazy or self-censored prisoners.

The life of Ahmed goes on, starts pre-marital sex and discovers “his true-self”. Soon after realizing his true gender identity, Ahmed wants to adventure outside of her community and choose what gender she wants to associate herself with. As she is exploring her country, she falls in love with a blind consultant and begins to have pre-marital sex. Sex without being married is regarded as a sin in the eyes of Islam, but the writer describes women as sexual creatures. Sex is idolized, when
Zahra steps out of the house as a woman, she is raped, by a man who is praying while he is raping her (109). “In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, he begins to chant, “praise be to God, who has decreed that man’s greatest pleasure lies in woman’s warm insides” (56). He then proceeds with raping her. An act of absolute violence, yet, rendered legitimate through faith by some men, granting themselves all rightsto satisfy their bestial lust first thento prove their masculinity/virility afterwards.

Finally a woman he becomes--actually--to wander, to suffer rape, and eventually to wind up in a house shared by a blind man--the Consul--and his repulsive and horrifyingly symbiotic sister. Ahmed, now becomes officially Zahra was not affected by rape; her emotional detachment to sex is disturbing. Her initial reaction portrays that of what a man would feel like after being raped since this was her first time being publicly known as a woman, she still had a gender role mentality of how men are “supposed” to feel: emotionless. Then later on in the book when she became comfortable with herself as a woman, her sexual encounter with the blind consultant is much more attached (127). Now that she has become more in tune with her emotions as a womanand hoping to escape from her uncle and aunt, the envy of her sisters and the madness of her mother and her "wife," for they brought her a wife to make believe her fake identity. Zahra runs away from home after burying all relics of her fake and hollow past in her father's grave.Zahra's journey takes her through dreams and visions, illusions and hallucinations, time and timelessness; it is a journey which ends in an arrival that is also, in a sense, endlessness.

This book caused a multiple array of reactions of his audience, but the problem which occurred was the audience the author was attempting to target. Belonging to the bourgeois class and the elite of the Moroccan society, Ben Jelloun wrote and mostly spoke French. His writing about his culture, religion, and, gender roles were the largest reaction which he evoked, seen in an orientalist way, feeding the stereotypes and pre-conceived notions of the Middle East. How gender identity and roles are derived from Islam, are falsely plagued in the book, these are direct
reactions of the patriarchy of men. The system of power, money, and influence are objects which help lead into the main idea of how the East does not view women as equals. In this context, Fatima Sadiqi states that:

*North African family structure is generally headed by the father and the father’s male mileage and is legally founded on blood relations. The patriarchal system is built on the exclusion of women from spaces of public power and by the sanction of all forms of physical and moral violence against them in these spaces. Women’s freedom is seen as a challenge to the patriarchal social fabric and men’s status quo. It is in the family that women are initiated into their role of guardians of social organizations. This initiation is channelled through a rigid system of kinship relations and rituals, and taboo* (Sadiqi 2006, 6).

Women are depicted as the responsible(s) for the actions of men, what Ben Jelloun did was in fact brilliant. He took some elements which were occurring in society and exaggerated it to the point, where people took notice because he was a native Moroccan. He did not turn people away from religion, but instead brought them closer, by exposing some truth of the underlying Moroccan and human social problems. In a nutshell, *The Secret Night* is a searing allegorical portrait of North African society; and Ben Jelloun uses Arabic fairy tales and surrealist elements to craft a stunning and disturbing vision of protest and rebellion against the strictures of hidebound traditions governing gender roles and sexuality. By doing so, he successfully moves his readers to many emotions, to dreams and to reflections on stark and thought-provoking truths.

**Conclusion**

This paper has shed some light on the status of women in the Moroccan Muslim conservative society and uncovered the gender identity crisis that is still taboo in Arab Muslim societies through the best seller of Tahar Ben Jelloun *The Sacred Night*. Likewise, the paper explored and analysed the extent to which gender roles are a complex issue in the power relation process between men and women that is necessary to maintain a sort of balance in society. Further, as agents of change and promoters of critical thinking, via this fantastic tale, we unveiled such unfair toxic
cultures and traditions, and we denounced and offered a reminder of the rootedness of the codes and structures that ensure the subjugation of women, the subservient role that society has ascribed to them, the injustice, and the degree to which they are enslaved in a system, that has become conceived, adopted and adapted by nearly all as “That’s the way it is” to copy the title of Bruce Hornsby & the Range’s song.

References

by Tahar Ben Jelloun (Author), Alan Sheridan (Translator)

WOMEN AND THE RAGE FOR ORDER IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING ERA¹
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Abstract
This article focuses on the position of women after the Arab spring, and the different battles to gain their rights after many years of dumbing down. The paper seeks to examine and assess the status of women after all the different movements and protests that have taken place during 20 February movement in 2011. It aims to foreground and evaluate the current situation of the North African woman who was the victim of colonialism as well as patriarchy. The approach encompasses an activist, academic, and political perspective to contain the deeply rooted women’s issues. I argue that Moroccan women’s rights improvement is not only the result of the Arab spring, but it is the accumulation and the fruit of decades of sacrifice, protests, and resistance, I also confirm that the post-revolution era is a mixture of ambiguities and contradictions that bring about divisions and confusion. Yet, the Moroccan woman has witnessed a huge progress, mainly in the political sphere that was an unreached gate for women in previous decades in Morocco.

Keywords: Woman, Arab Spring, revolution, rights, protest, Morocco, 20 February, colonialism, political.

Introduction:
The status of women has always been a political issue in the sense that it has been the subject of discussion and debate among different groups. Political parties have even taken advantage of the issue of women to get more power in the political sphere. Politics has never been fair when it comes to women’s rights and gender equality. From the colonial era in Morocco, the woman was and is still struggling to voice out her rights and her existence as a powerful and capable citizen. The

¹ This article was first published in journal “Revue Sciences et Pratiques des Activités Physiques Sportives et Artistiques / Institut de l’Education Physique et Sportive. - N°14: spécial (2018/2) (Juillet 2018). – 91 p. - ISSN : 2253-0541”
Moroccan woman was a very silent but active participant in resistance against colonialism, hiding guns with no fear or weakness. Really, women from all social classes and walks of life had been active participants in freeing Morocco, yet they did not gain their own freedom, particularly in the political field. The latter was subject to the strongholds of patriarchal men who relegated the woman to a second position. Thus, there was the rise of many feminist movements after independence to shake the patriarchal and dominant system in Morocco as The Democratic Association of Moroccan Women, The Union for Women’s Action, The Association 95 Maghreb for Equality and many others. Yet, does the Moroccan woman succeed to gain her rights and assert her active presence? Does the system relegate or reinforce women’s rights and power in Morocco? Does the constitution empower the woman after the Arab Spring? How can we see the position of the woman in the post-revolution era?

1. THE FEMINIZATION OF SPACE AND THE ARAB SPRING:

Women’s movements in Morocco have played a huge role in unfastening the strongholds of power by the patriarchal system in Morocco and the different misinterpreted religious discourses that serve discrimination and exclusion. In this context, The Moroccan researcher Fatima Sadiqi has argued that the monarch as the supreme power in the country has played a huge role in the liberation of women; he is the mediator between the liberal/secularist and Islamist points of view on the position of the woman and her legal status. For Sadiqi, women’s movements are consolidated by the monarch’s mediations and assertion of women’s power.21

Really, what emphasized the improvements in women’s political status is the female leadership of the Democratic Society Party in 2007 by Zouhour Chekkafi for the first time in the history of Morocco. More than that, The government formed in 2007 has the greatest number of women in Moroccan history: seven women head ministries, including the Health Ministry and the Ministry for Social Development, Family, and Solidarity. One woman acts as an adviser to the king, while three women serve as ambassadors and several others head executive
departments. Moreover, women have increased their representation in the judiciary. All these achievements have come after years and years of protests and movements calling for a female political power. Yet, this privilege will not last for long after the strategies of exclusion exercised in the post-revolution era. Nevertheless, the ‘Arab Spring’ (if it was a spring) was the golden chance for the Moroccan women to cross towards the public sphere and transcend issues of class, gender, or origins. All started with the 20 Feb movement in 2011 that presented an unprecedented step in the Moroccan history. The movement created a ‘center’ that encompassed all diverse classes, affiliations and interests (secularists, Islamists, Berber activists, etc.). They all gathered, seeking the winds of change and development while the leader was social networks. The demands were many, like the reduction of the monarch’s power, the reform of the government, the banning against violence, Berber rights, and the reform of education.

The king directly responded to the protest by the reform of the constitution in 2011. In this context, the constitution did not really target women’s issues per se, but at least women succeeded to feminize the public space and get out of their silence after years of domination of space. Again, Sadiqi raises a crucial argument when she compares between the Rights of the women from the Middle East and the ones from the Maghreb during revolutions. I go with her standpoint when she argued that women in the Middle East have never been a great part of the reform agenda as in Egypt for example. The reason is the continuous focus on three fields in the protests: politics, economy, and religions. This is the opposite of Maghreb women, particularly in Tunisia and Morocco that are at the top of the list of the socio-political agendas of the government.

2. MOROCCAN WOMEN’S RIGHTS AFTER THE RAGE FOR ORDER:

The aftermath of the revolution on the Moroccan woman is confusing and still ambivalent. The Moroccan woman’s demands are not thoroughly satisfied, excluding her from the governmental body after revolutions. The first Islamist
government, directly after the revolutions, has collapsed down all the hopes of women after selecting only one veiled minister in the government. Also, the female representatives of the parliament are nearly absent the fact that leads to a huge rage among feminist activists.24 Nonetheless, we cannot deny that the general situation of women has hugely improved compared with the pre-Arab Spring era. Women’s political participation has been guaranteed by the constitution, constituting the article 19 that was named by women as ‘Honor for Moroccan Women’ that democratized the political system. Women and men become equal before the law, stressing the right of women in political participation, decision-making and power the fact that was impossible before. Additionally, the number of seats reserved for women is increased to be 60 out of 395 (15%). Also, there are 81 women in the parliament (21%) (even if not sufficient). Another crucial government’s awareness vis-à-vis women issues is the immediate response to the different forms of violence against women. As an illustration, we take the reiterated case of Amina Filali’s suicide (March, 2012) after being forced to marry the man who raped her (in accordance with the law). Here, many activists, Asma Lamrabet on the top of the list, have called for the banning of this law. The outcome is the ‘repeal of the law’ to be replaced by 30 years of prison for the rapist whether he marries the victim or not.25 Hence, women have many other obstacles to transcend and more other movements to organize. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that there is the rise of a democratization process that values the woman and looks forward to providing the woman with more privileges. The woman has developed a great political awareness that stands against male dominance and hegemony in decision and policy making.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS
- The government should provide legal education to women and help illiterate women to learn about their rights.
- Islamist and secularist feminists have to be united and merge their interests to be more empowered against any systematic exclusion or discrimination. Also, the
different concerns should be culturally based because of the specific Moroccan cultural context.
- Power should not be naturalized and all dividing conditions between men and women should be eradicated.
- Education and trainings for illiterate women to be aware of their rights and obligations.
- Gender equality should be considered as a law in every field to keep the democratization process working.
- Avoidance of blaming religion because it becomes complex when it is related to politics.
- Allowing more visibility of women in media to inculcate the sacred state of women rights and equality.

CONCLUSION
In fact, the feminist movement has managed to feminize the political sphere and raise awareness of the Moroccan woman towards her political rights. It goes without saying that the Arab spring was merely a magnifying glass, foregrounding decades of struggle and resistance. In this respect, the Arab spring was a rich platform for women to give legitimacy to their power in the decision-making. Such a voice was so out loud that it reached the Moroccan constitution and declared the collapse of political patriarchy in Morocco.

References
2.7. The Role Of Academia In Promoting Gender And Women’s Rights In The Arab World And The European Region

La formation et la recherche sur le genre peuvent avoir des implications sur les modes d’organisation de la société. Pour comprendre le caractère crucial des études sur les femmes et le genre, il faut cerner le contexte général de la société marocaine.

Il semble fondamental de s’interroger sur ce qui se passe actuellement au Maroc où l’on enregistre des avancées, des acquis et un mouvement historique forts imprègnent la société, mais aussi des régressions de plus en plus marquées ces dernières années (Taux d’activité des femmes en baisse constante qu’a révélé le dernier recensement général de la population du HCP, *Enquête sur la prévalence de la violence* a montré la recrudescence de la violence à l’égard des femmes, etc.).

Le principe de l’égalité homme/femme est consacré par les cadres normatifs nationaux, au Maroc, y compris dans la loi suprême, la Constitution. De plus, les Objectifs de développement durable (ODD) stipulent clairement les droits de l’homme et la paix ne deviendront une réalité qu’une fois que les femmes et les hommes se verront offrir les même droits, davantage de chances et de choix, sur un pied d’égalité, et qu’ils seront en mesure de vivre libres et dans la dignité.


Les résultats de l’enquête montrent que si l’on assiste à un véritable empowerment des femmes dans toutes les situations sociales, toutefois, pour différentes raisons, ni les hommes ni les femmes ne sont encore en capacité d’assumer cette nouvelle donne ni de se positionner de façon claire. Un

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mouvement puissant, de fond, est en marche dans lequel, au-delà des structures sociales et institutionnelles, les hommes et les femmes produisent leur individualité et leurs relations grâce à des pratiques de libertés qui ne sont pas encore admises, mais témoignent d’un changement en profondeur des modèles. Les attitudes et les lois changent, les normes de genre bougent et chacun, homme et femme cherche sa place. Ceci entraîne pour beaucoup de personnes une forme de désarroi sur les rôles sociaux de chacun.

Ainsi même si depuis les années 2000 le Maroc a intégré le concept genre dans l’élaboration et la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques, même si la législation a été modifiée aussi pour lutter contre les inégalités entre les sexes et les discriminations, même si le genre est donc devenu un concept-clé au sein d’une société marocaine en forte mutation, les freins ou les résistances à l’égalité sont importants.

Une question importante se pose alors : L’égalité des sexes étant une priorité stratégique et politique, quelle production de savoir, quelles structures de recherche, et quelle formation des citoyens sont-elles nécessaires ? Autrement dit, quels doivent être le rôle et la responsabilité des universités dans ce domaine, au vu de l’impératif sociétal et normatif ? Par l’analyse des « études de genre » dans l’université au Maroc et, à titre d’exemple, à l’université Hassan 2 de Casablanca, nous verrons quelle place elles y occupent, la dynamique qu’elles ont permis, les obstacles et les freins qu’elles rencontrent et les politiques et les stratégies qu’il s’impose à l’université d’adopter par vocation même. Sachant que sa responsabilité sociétale se traduit par l’intégration de toutes les préoccupations culturelles, socio-économiques et environnementales dans les activités de l’université et ses relations avec les composantes du territoire et de la société et son inscription dans la démarche de développement durable.

I Les études de genre au Maroc

État des lieux

Quel que soit le domaine, une société qui veut se construire comme démocratie doit s'appuyer sur un savoir qui lui permet de prendre des décisions et d'accompagner les processus sociaux en toute connaissance de cause. Pour penser de façon novatrice la politique de la santé, la politique économique, la politique de l’éducation, pour prévenir les distorsions possibles de la société, une compréhension préalable de la manière dont les rapports de sexe se construisent et se reproduisent est nécessaire.

Antaut dire que l’université n'a pas d'autres choix que de s'impliquer dans le monde qui l’entoure. Cependant, a-t-elle les moyens matériels et humains pour le faire ? Jusqu'à quel point s'est-elle impliquée et comment ? Qu’a-t-elle déjà entrepris et comment ?

La recherche sur le genre au Maroc reste encore peu visible et fragile, alors qu’elle possède de grandes compétences et que des publications et des événements scientifiques de très bonne facture existent. Son renforcement, sa structuration et son institutionnalisation apparaissent comme cruciaux… La question aussi qui se
pose, avec acuité, est de savoir quels efforts il faut déployer dans le milieu de la recherche pour cela et resserrer le lien recherches/politiques publiques.

C’est dans cet esprit et après ce premier constat que l’Université Hassan 2 de Casablanca, en collaboration étroite avec l’UNESCO et l’IRD, s’est lancée dans l’analyse de la situation de la formation et la recherche sur le genre au Maroc. L’objectif de ces états des lieux a été de faire, dans un premier temps, le point sur l’existant en matière de recherches et formations dans le domaine du genre ; car ce n’est que sur la base d’une connaissance exacte de ce qui a été accompli à l’université, que pouvaient être formulées des propositions pour l’avenir et orienter les recherches et la formation qui puissent répondre à la demande sociale.

Le premier objectif de l’état des lieux fut de dresser un panorama le plus exhaustif possible des filières de formation, cours, modules ou diplômes consacrés à l’étude du genre et de constituer un répertoire des équipes, groupes, laboratoire ayant au moins un axe de recherche affiché et actif sur le genre. Cette première étape de recensement a permis la constitution d’une base de données. Les premiers groupes de recherche sur les femmes ont été créés à partir de la fin des années 70 à l’initiative de Fatima Mernissi. Il a fallu attendre le début des années 90 pour voir apparaître de nouvelles structures de recherche, une vingtaine dont seules une douzaine fonctionne à ce jour. Elles sont renforcées par des structures de formation sur les femmes et le genre à partir de 2006 avec notamment le premier Master, Genre, Sociétés et Cultures. Cette mutation d’études sur les femmes en études sur le genre correspond à celle constatée au niveau international. Entre 2000 et 2010, 7 formations ont été créées, mais depuis 2010, aucune autre n’a été créée. Seuls 3 masters continuent d’accueillir des étudiant-e-s : le Master Women’s and Gender Studies (FLSH Dhar El Mehraz Fès, 2007) le Master Genre et droits des femmes des deux rives de la Méditerranée (FSJES de Tanger, 2008), et le Master Genre, Sociétés et Cultures (FLSH AïnChock Casablanca, 2006).

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1 En particulier l’Equipe de recherche Education Territoire Culture et Genre et l’équipe pédagogique du Master Genre Sociétés et Cultures structures toutes deux coordonnées par Rajaa Nadifi de la FLSH Aïn Chock.

2 Représenté par M. Phinith Chanthalangsy, responsable du Secteur des Sciences Sociales et Humaines à Rabat.

3 Représenté par Gaëlle Gillot (Paris 1- IEDES).


5 A l’époque F. Mernissi parlait de la “chaîne créatrice”, un groupe de chercheur-e-s qui ont uniers compétences pour travailler ensemble sur la question des femmes.

6 Le genre et l’université au Maroc, p.29.

Le second objectif de l’état des lieux, en cours, est de recenser les thématiques de recherche et d’enseignement et de les analyser à l’aune des transformations de la société et de la législation marocaines. Ce travail reste très fastidieux en l’absence de fichier national des thèses. Il a été demandé aux responsables des structures de formation et de recherche de participer à ce recensement.

**Recensement de la FLSH AinChock de Casablanca**


Les données quantitatives montrent que sur un total de 724 mémoires du département de LLF, 87 soit 12,7% traitent les thématiques du genre. Sur les 110 thèses répertoriées, seules 3 répondent aux critères retenus.

Au département de LLA, 73 mémoires sur 350 ont été répertoriées, soit 20,82 % (dont 21 portent la mention « genre »). Sur les 50 thèses, 2 portent sur le genre.

Au département d’EI, sur les 513 mémoires recensés, seuls 8 témoignent d’un intérêt sociologique (thèmes récurrents concentrés sur la vie des théologiens, leurs analyses et celles des textes coraniques). Sur les 96 thèses enregistrées, 5 thèses s’inscrivent dans l’orientation de l’inventaire, soit 5,20%.

En HC, absence de mémoires répertoriés sur les thématiques de genre. Néanmoins sur les 41 thèses enregistrées en HC, 14 d’entre elles, soit 34,14% renvoient à une ouverture du champ à des perspectives sociologiques et anthropologiques.


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1 Il faudrait fréquenter les bibliothèques universitaires au niveau national
2 Lors de *Etats généraux de la formation et la recherchesur le genre au Maroc qui ont eu lieu en avril 2015* à la FLSH Ain Chock de Casablanca
3 Ont été retenus aussi les travaux dans lesquels figurant les termes “femme”, “homme”, “fille”, “garçon”, “famille” et “sexualité”
4 Mené sous la direction de Rajaa Nadifi par des étudiant-e-s du Master GSC : Leila. Benchouikh, Malika Mekouar, Toufik Souabni
5 Histoire, Langue et littérature anglaises (LLA), françaises (LLF), Études islamiques (EI), Histoire et Civilisation (HC).
6 Menée sous la direction de Rajaa Nadifi, par les étudiantes : Hanane Toumi et Ibtissam Ettoumi
7 Celle d’Imane Ennabili sous la direction de Rajaa Nadifi
Enfin une étude\textsuperscript{1} visant à faire l’état des lieux du genre à l’UH2C, a été menée dans 6 établissements, depuis 2014, dans le cadre de cette même thèse et des activités de recherche des doctorants du Laboratoire GELM.

Ces différents recensements, permettent de dresser un premier état des lieux et plus encore donne un paysage exhaustif de la recherche et de la formation sur le genre au Maroc qui sera complété par la thèse en voie de finalisation, sur le genre à l’UH2C.

Dans le cadre d’un partenariat entre l’université Hassan 2 de Casablanca (FLSH AC) et l’IRD/UMR 201 Développement et sociétés, un ouvrage a été publié avec pour objectif de diffuser des travaux de recherche de qualité effectués dans le cadre des mémoires de Master. Ainsi, des articles de synthèse des mémoires sous la double signature de l’étudiant-e qui a réalisé la recherche et de son directeur-trice de mémoire ont été publiés. Ces travaux sont sélectionnés par les enseignant-e-s-chercheurs du Master Genre, Sociétés et Cultures qui constituent également le comité scientifique d’édition. La première publication d’une série est parue sous le titre : \textit{La marche vers l’émancipation ? Travail et éducation des femmes au Maroc}\textsuperscript{2}

Cette publication permet de valoriser et diffuser de nouvelles recherches qui gagneraient à être connues et reconnues et réalisées par les jeunes chercheurs du Master GSC et des doctorants. Un deuxième ouvrage est sous presse.

2- Les états généraux de la formation et de la recherche sur le genre au Maroc

Après cet état des lieux, les trois partenaires (UH2C, UNESCO et IRD) ont décidé (après consultation des acteurs concernés\textsuperscript{3}) de convier à une grande rencontre qui a eu lieu à la FLSH AinChock(où plusieurs structures de formation et de recherche en matière de genre sont en place)\textsuperscript{4}, les \textit{États généraux sur la formation et la recherche sur le genre au Maroc}. Il était vital de faire le point sur l’existant afin d’améliorer la réflexion en matière de genre, la mutualisation, de renforcer la crédibilité et la légitimité du concept dans les Sciences Humaines et Sociales et généraliser son usage dans la formation et la recherche. Cela devait se réaliser avec les autres structures de recherche et de formation, au niveau national, lors d’un grand rassemblement, le premier du genre, sur le genre.

Organisées 16-17 avril 2015, cette rencontre visait à (re)créer une dynamique autour de la recherche en harmonisant les dynamiques éparses qui existent bel et bien au Maroc. Il s’agissait aussi de dépasser un sentiment de piétinement au niveau de l’institutionnalisation qui, malgré la constitution et les diverses actions menées ça et là, ne semblait pas déboucher sur une évolution

\textsuperscript{1} Le genre et l’université au Maroc, ibid p.33
\textsuperscript{2} Sous la direction de Gaëlle Gillot et Rajaa Nadifi, Casablanca, Afrique Orient, 2018
\textsuperscript{3} Représentants universitaires de recherche et la formation en genre au niveau national, ministère de la solidarité, de la femme, de la famille et du développement social, le Haut Commissariat au Plan, les ONG international etc. se sont réunis en atelier à Rabat pour préparer les États généraux du genre.
\textsuperscript{4}Etudes doctorales, Equipes de recherches sur le genre, Laboratoire Genre, Master Genre

Pour la première fois au Maroc, l’ensemble des structures de recherche et l’ensemble des formations se sont retrouvées ensemble à réfléchir, à partager leurs connaissances et construire ensemble des outils pourvoyeurs de traits d’union non seulement entre les différents acteurs académiques de la recherche et des formations sur le genre au Maroc, mais aussi en faisant converger et en articulant les efforts des différents partenaires : universités, ministères, organismes nationaux, organismes internationaux, chercheurs, fondations, associations etc. dans leurs initiatives pour l’égalité.

La très forte mobilisation des différents acteurs à ces Etats Généraux a montré la vitalité des études de genre au Maroc et la volonté ainsi que la conscience de la nécessité de s’organiser pour affirmer l’utilité sociale de la recherche sur le genre dans un contexte où l’égalité des sexes est affichée comme priorité nationale, malgré les résistances.

Les travaux de ces EGG ont été publiés¹ par l’UNESCO et l’UH2C et rendent compte de la dynamique existante mais aussi des difficultés et entraves que connaissent ces structures de formation et de recherche.

Au cours des 4 ateliers organisés qui ont réuni un grand nombre de chercheurs de toutes les universités marocaines et quelques-uns des universités françaises, des cadres du ministère, des organismes internationaux, des associatifs. Voici ce qui s’en dégage de manière très succincte.

Un premier Atelier consacré à la « formation » a posé la question du référentiel comme moyen de consolidation de la formation au genre et à l’égalité et soulevé les questions suivantes : Quels types de formation privilégier et comment insérer le genre dans la formation?

Au cours du deuxième Atelier « Recherche » la recherche sur le genre au Maroc a été présentée comme une des composantes des sciences humaines et sociales, partageant toutes les difficultés « structurelles » communes à l’activité de recherche dans les universités au Maroc.

Lors du troisième atelier sur le « Renforcement des partenariats » réunissant universités, ONG, organisations internationales et de coopération, a été l’occasion pour les différents acteurs de souligner le repli de l’université sur elle-même et son manque de communication avec la société civile, le monde politique et économique.

Le dernier atelier « Genre et développement »

Le genre, en tant que perspective transversale, a été perçu comme lié à l’ensemble des problématiques de développement. Et le rôle de l’université dans les questions de développement a été rappelé quant à l’élaboration de nouveaux concepts et l’analyse critique des actions de développement menées par des grandes ONG et dans processus social de développement en général.

**Conclusions et recommandations des EGG : la « Déclaration commune », une feuille de route**

¹ *Le genre et l’université au Maroc*, cité précédemment
De ces ateliers ont été dégagés les principales recommandations.
Une déclaration, issue des EGG, signée par tous les participants aux EGG, ainsi que le président de l’UH2C, son vice-président à la recherche, le doyen de la FLSH Ain Chock, le président de l’université Moulay Ismaïl, et par près de 200 participants à la rencontre. Elle a été présentée à la presse le 14 novembre 2015 à Casablanca, avec la participation du président du CNDH, des responsables universitaires, des chercheurs…
Nous reprenons ici les grandes recommandations de cette déclaration commune :
« La mise en place de mesures concrètes et urgentes pour mettre fin à des fermetures/suppressions très regrettables de certaines formations… »
« Le déploiement d’efforts d’information, de sensibilisation et de reconnaissance en matière d’études sur le genre… »
« L’institutionnalisation et le cadrage du domaine… »
« L’élaboration d’un référentiel conceptuel commun… »
« La participation de l’université à la diffusion et à la mise en application de l’analyse genre… »
« L’ouverture de l’université sur son environnement social… »
« La création d’une structure nationale fédératrice… »
« La visibilisation et la reconnaissance de la littérature scientifique… »
« Le soutien des programmes de recherche sur des thématiques d’actualité sociale, politique et de développement… »
Le soutien à l’élaboration et à la diffusion de grilles de lecture et de grilles d’observation… »

**Conclusion**
Étant donnée la position privilégiée des universités dans le champ de la production intellectuelle et scientifique, le travail d’analyse et de proposition ne peut se faire sans elles. En la matière, les universités ont donc une forme de responsabilité sociale évidente.
Ceci semble être indispensable pour que les acteurs sociaux et politiques disposent de connaissances scientifiques solides, y compris sur le genre. Les études genre analysent en effet les rapports sociaux de sexe, de manière pluridisciplinaire et dynamique. Cet éclairage scientifique se fait d’autant plus nécessaire que les sociétés évoluent à grande vitesse, et connaissent des mutations profondes qui, si elles sont insuffisamment analysées et pensées, peuvent être la cause de nombreuses violences.
Comment impulser une politique nationale en faveur de l’égalité? Sachant que l’université est en souffrance et qu’on a un gouvernement peu favorable à l’égalité… mutualiser les efforts et travailler en réseau, collaborer scientifiquement au niveau national et international, mettre en place une structure de l’égalité, des inégalités femmes/hommes…? Valoriser les études, enquêtes (publications à mettre en avant) sur les questions les plus cruciales, les problèmes de l’heure… La feuille de route est toute tracée dans la déclaration commune¹.

¹ Voir la déclaration commune in *Le genre et l’université au Maroc*, p.33
Souad Slaoui and Karima Belghiti

The Role of Gender Studies in Instilling Democracy and Gender Equality: The Case of Cultural Studies Master Students at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University

(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco)

Abstract
Since gender equality is viewed as a significant component in the development process and the growth of any country, and since equality between women and men is an essential component for democracy, the main objective of the present paper is to investigate the extent to which the introduction of some gender courses in the Moroccan University can help inculcate the culture of democracy and gender equality among young university students. The paper equally aims to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of Cultural Studies MA students towards gender democracy and equality after being subjected to gender studies courses. The main hypothesis underlying this study suggests that the teaching of gender studies can raise awareness among Moroccan students whether males or females about democracy and gender equality. The Cultural Studies Master Students at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University are taken as a case study. The qualitative approach has been adopted whereby 10 MA students from the Master Programme mentioned, including First year and Second year Master students were interviewed. Added to this, the technique of observation has equally been utilized to elicit everyday life concrete experiences of teaching and dealing with young Master students at the aforementioned Master programme. The paper comes out to the conclusion that the sex and the level of education are very significant variables and factors in the construction of positive or negative attitudes towards gender studies and towards its role in promoting democracy and gender equality. The paper also comes to the conclusion that the concept of gender equality outside academia is not applicable in Moroccans’ daily routine due to the patriarchal mindset deeply rooted in the Moroccan society. Hence, the paper alleges that gender equality must be studied in a more local context - especially, in traditional societies, which are characterized by sharply differentiated gender roles.

Key words: Democracy; Gender Equality; Teaching Gender courses.

Introduction
This paper aims to investigate the extent to which the teaching of different gender courses can help promote gender equality and democracy. The paper particularly targets Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah Cultural Studies Master

students, who have been exposed in a period of four semesters to different gender courses such as Gender and Development, Gender and religion, Gender and Diaspora, Women and Writing, Women’s Movement in Morocco and Gender and Media Analysis. The main objective of these courses is to promote gender equality and democracy in academia by stressing on the experiences and point of views of gender in relation to domains such as religion, diaspora, writing, media, and activism. This is, on the one hand, what these courses are meant for; on the other hand, the paper studies whether this objective of promoting gender equality finds its way inside students’ way of thinking and mentality. The paper argues that “the impacts of taking gender courses can be considered as a process which starts from the initial stage of becoming aware of the issue of gender to the stage of reconsidering one’s beliefs and others, through reconsidering one’s perceptions of the other sex up to the final stage of changing others’ beliefs and deconstructing stereotypes” (Slaoui & Belghiti, 2018). As such, gender courses are not only taught for the sake of teaching, they are a process with different stages that aim at deconstructing gender stereotypes. This deconstructionist approach is done through first raising awareness about the issue of gender inequity; then, reconsidering the gendered assumptions that a specific gender has towards the opposite gender to the stage of changing those assumptions and unraveling and debunking the gender stereotypes—thereby, promoting gender equality.

However, gender equality teaching is a reciprocal stage that involves not only students but also teachers. In the light of this idea, Llorent -Bedmar et. al (2017) argue that “While gender inequity is indubitably a highly important issue, its repercussion and effects among university teaching staff will be even more among students who are the future leaders of their country. For this reason, women in universities are a crucial tool for social change.” As such, gender equality is an essential component that should be taught in all universities not only for students but also teachers so as to eradicate gender inequality. Indubitably, women in universities as argued in the quote should be the agents of change for they are the transmitters of the concept of equality in education. Gender equality implies equal human rights, opportunities and obligations for both women and men. This indicates that both women and men must benefit from all kinds of human rights in the scope of achieving social justice. Equality should be achieved in different fields such as education, the work place, media, business, to mention but a few. In these different fields, all genders should be treated equally with no discriminatory practices nor stereotypical beliefs; this is what gender studies is about. That is to say, the promotion of equality and a social belief that all humans are created equal and should benefit from the rights and responsibilities that guarantee social justice and treat genders fairly with no discrimination or gender segregation. This is a first step towards creating democracy and, consequently, universal peace in the world and towards promoting a culture of coexistence and tolerance.

The present paper is structured as follows: The first section provides definitions of some key concepts such as gender equality and democracy that lay the ground for the discussions in the sections to follow. The second section is concerned with the extent to which gender equality is achieved in Morocco. The
Analysis

2.1. Theoretical Background

2.1.1. Gender Equality and Democracy

Gender equality and democracy are mutually dependent and closely intertwined which means that a democratic society is a society that works towards the empowerment of women who are often politically and economically marginalized and aspires to their inclusion in the democratic institutions. A democracy has also to ensure women full access to their citizenship rights which should allow them to have a say in their society and bring about changes and to reinforce women’s agency as a core concern as Piccone (2017) asserts in his explanation of the correlation between gender and democracy:

Possible explanations behind the relationship between democracy and gender equality are wide-ranging. The most prominent view is that democratic systems tend to strengthen gender equality through increasing civic space for women’s activism, expanding women’s engagement in the political process through voting and or decreasing arbitrary constraints against women’s political representation. Others, however, reverse the link, seeing gender equality as a driver of democratization through increased economic and political empowerment by a broader sector of society.

Here we can also add from the above statement by Piccone that a democratic system is a system that includes women in the political representation be it either formal or informal form of politics without any restrictions or constraints and women have to be part of any democratization process which supposed to be gender-blind in order to succeed. Furthermore, democracy needs women if it is to be an inclusive and representative form the government which takes into account all citizens regardless of any difference otherwise it is certainly not a democracy at all. Most importantly, some societies tend to look at man and women in dichotomous way, which, unfortunately, results in unequal gender relations which treats women as second-class citizens, incompetent and unequal individuals and thus excludes women from any form of participation.

For democracy to be set up, a state has to disallow any form of marginalization or discrimination on the basis of gender or race and treat all its citizens as free and equal citizens providing them with capabilities, equal opportunities and empowerment agency as Ruíz (2017) argues:

Democracy leads towards greater gender equality; one might wonder what the final outcome would resemble. This does not mean that one predicts a determinate future, but that one analyses a possible future scenario in which all the substantive inequalities between men and women are drastically reduced or eradicated completely.

It should also be noted that for a state to be democratic, it has to promote gender equality which is part and parcel of any democracy and endorse women’s inclusion and participation in society, politics and economy so we can have an
equalitarian society where everyone is equal and has the right to aspire to the positions of power and pursue their interests. Furthermore, gender relations in democratic regimes should be equal excluding any forms of marginalization or subordination, which are often culturally and religiously reinforced and normalized.

In the light of all the above we can also add that democracy as an ideal that has to guarantee a kind of parity between genders and equal presence of both genders in politics which is one of the main sources of representation and decision-making as Ruiz and Marín (2008) assert “Democracy and equality require, nonetheless, that each gender have a minimum level of representation and, in fact, that they be comparably represented.”

The conclusion to be drawn from this section on gender and democracy is that gender equality is a prerequisite condition for democracy as women’s participation in politics is central to democratic development. The virtue of democracy should be determined by the political and economic equality between genders.

2.1.2. Gender Studies, Gender Equality and Democracy

Recent studies of gender and political representation emphasize the vital role that the cultural context plays in shaping democratic bodies. Interest in the democracy on the part of gender studies has been slim. In fact, democracy concerns a problem that has been identified as critical to contemporary gender studies. To a large extent, the growth in gender studies can be attributed to a natural diffusion of ideas within a scholarly community that focused on democratic theory and gender equality.

In accordance with gender studies, democracy and gender equality form a mutually reinforcing relationship in which higher levels of liberal democracy are necessary. Higher levels of gender equality are strongly correlated with a nation’s relative state of peace, a healthier domestic security environment, and lower levels of aggression toward other states (Piccone, 2017). Similarly, strategies and efforts of this field aimed at achieving gender equality should emphasize more inclusive societies, including attention to such factors as race, age, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. The need of strategies prioritize policies designed to mainstream gender equality across the board are of crucial importance to emphasize democracy.

Within the context of education, democracy education has surely an essential role to balance gender issues. If properly taught, democratic principles and ideals would saturate the culture in such a way that gender dominance one way or the other would not be tolerated. Ideals of equal opportunity and share of teacher attention would come natural (Chilambo, 2007). For example, while students are thought to practice democratic ideals, it would be tremendously a strong witness of respect for the need of students’ participation in class. Through participatory strategies, students learn to participate and accommodate dissenting views. Moreover, as they are given the opportunity for group work and debate, they will be able to voice their rights and contribute freely in the discussions. It is through such strategies that students experience human dignity, which does not
discriminate on the basis of gender, age or intellectual capacity. They learn how to act, become responsible, and how to make informed decisions through training in decision-making skills. As a result, they will be able to clarify their values through value clarification activities.

Eventually, the political ground and the work place are also no exception for gender studies. Thus, it is encouraging to note that Gender studies aims to counteract gender inequalities in the world of work because one could not talk about democracy when half of a country’s population did not participate in its work. In this essence, strategies for gender equity must create an enabling environment for equal participation of both men and women. Simultaneously, the equal participation of women and men in public affairs is one of the fundamental tenets of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, more than 20 years after the signing, with 165 ratifications by states and at the dawn of the millennium, women in all parts of the world continue to be largely marginalized and underrepresented in politics (op.cit). As a result, women’s participation in politics on equal footing with men is still a challenge for democracy.

In this regard, much efforts in gender studies are made to work very hard to help achieve purposeful democracy education. Gender balanced political participation and representation is essential for the reshape of the decision-making and priority setting that continues to be largely in the hands of men. The most prominent view is that democratic systems tend to strengthen gender equality through increasing civic space for women’s activism. There must be more quality education that promotes gender equality and prepares girls and women for a productive life. The use of quota system is felt to be an important instrument for breaking down barriers and furthering women’s political participation and integration.

In essence, Gender studies tend to explore power relations within gender systems. To this, gender equality is seen as a driver of democratization within increased economic and political empowerment by a broader sector of society drives cultural change. It promotes progressive liberal values, including democracy and gender equality (Maloutas, 2007). Reinforcing mechanism between democracy and gender equality recreates gender relations that are inherently dichotomous. Thus, it reshapes social categories of superior and inferior status. Inglehart et. al (2000) assert that modernization leads to cultural changes that produce both democracy and gender equality.

2.2. Research Design
In this study, it is assumed that the teaching of gender studies can raise awareness among Moroccan students whether males or females about democracy gender equality. Accordingly, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

To what extent are Gender equality and democracy-achieved in Morocco?
Does Gender equality have any role in achieving democracy in Morocco?
How does the teaching of Gender Courses affect Gender Equality and Democracy?
Cultural Studies Master Students at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University were the targeted population for this study. 10 MA students from the First year and Second year were randomly selected to participate in the study.

The research approach adopted for the study is the qualitative one. Data was collected using interviews with 10 Cultural Studies MA students who have been subject to gender courses throughout their two years of study. In addition to interviews, the technique of observation was equally used in order to elicit everyday life concrete experiences of teaching and dealing with young Master students at the aforementioned Master programme.

2.3. Results

2.3.1. Gender Equality in Morocco

The discussion about the extent to which gender equality in Morocco has been achieved was very controversial among the interviewees. No male or female interviewee denies the fact that Morocco has not achieved gender equality at all, yet very interesting variations have been observed, which reflects the heterogeneity of the Moroccan society. The majority of interviewees agree that there is a certain percentage in the achievement of gender equality; no one of them denies the existence of gender equality in the Moroccan society, but most of them provide excuses and arguments for the non-existence of a genuine gender equality in Morocco. While one male interviewee claims that gender equality cannot be claimed to be fully achieved in all domains in Morocco, he at the same time expresses his aspiration that ‘full achievement of gender equality is a long process that needs time, hard work and perseverance’. On the opposite side, other four interviewees claim that there is a certain percentage in the achievement of gender equality in Morocco, but it is yet to be achieved. One male interviewee illustrates this saying that ‘politics is a domain where gender equality has been achieved thanks to the positive discrimination of the Quota System and also human rights projects’. This view does not seem to be approved by a female interviewee who argued that huge strides have been made in gender equality over the last years, but women’s status is still lagging behind in many spheres especially in the cultural and political settings. She debunks the male interviewee’s claim that gender equality has been achieved in the political domain because for her ‘women’s presence in politics [thanks to (sic)] to the quota system is inadequate’. She says that

Women need to reach higher positions where they can have more influence and make decisions of great impact. Their presence should not be limited to fulfilling the quota or to show that there is gender equality in politics. Their presence should bear fruits and bring about change in Morocco.

For her, she conceives of the quota system as a form of discrimination on the grounds that women have to prove their credibility more than men. A view that is corroborated by another interviewee who reiterates this idea as she arrogates that the political sphere is still dominated by males and that women are not encouraged to be political leaders.

Moreover, this interviewee takes over that women resort to jobs where they feel at ease and not scrutinized by their male co-workers and not engaged in
competition with men. Thus, society jobs and work positions are gendered, since we do have some positions where women cannot be trusted in, and some positions that men believe that women are too feminine to enroll in.

The same interviewee points out the field of entrepreneurship where she notices the absence of women. To illustrate, business women, in fact, face legislative challenges, and are often provided with limited access to capital through laws denying their rights. Therefore, women entrepreneurs find great difficulties in accessing credit. This is partially due to a lack of confidence, as well as a gender bias towards women.

In the fields of education and medicine, one female interviewee supports the idea that gender equality has been achieved to a great extent as she states that women participate in all domains, but she highlights women’s particular success in the aforementioned domains saying:

I think that gender equality in Morocco has a higher level of achievement since we find that women are part and partial of every domain now; since they are doctors, they are teachers, they are educators, they are part of every domain.

However, this respondent thinks that women still need to make extra efforts to access other domains, which are exclusive for males such as military forces.

Another male interviewee considers this issue as being problematic to judge. He even avoided answering either because he doesn’t know, or he does not want to fall into ideological issues. All his answers were based on what he has read during his gender courses, emphasizing how the discourses he had been reading give the impression that women are always suffering from problems.

It seems that though the interviewees are aware of a number of projects, reforms and strategies that were put forward in order to promote gender equality, this awareness remains theoretical. He knows about pioneers who defended women’s status and called for gender equality, like Dr. Asmae LAmrabet. He was introduced to her through his course on Gender and religion. Similarly, other interviewees gave the example of constitutional reforms, campaigns in social media, the quota system, Family Code, CEDAW, and the projects of several associations that work for the benefit of women, but as another interview notices that what he means by gender studies is not only reading previous literature of scholars who deal with gender issues, but also looking at our everyday life practices and examining our everyday life consuming behaviors.

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that Moroccan society has known progress as far as Gender equality is concerned as shown through a number of political, legislative reforms, international conventions cited by the last interviewee, but the extent to which those students view the concretization of gender equality remains a matter of controversy depending on the gender variable and the patriarchal mindset of Moroccan society that is deeply conservative despite the apparent openness to modernization and western waves.

Another interesting theme that cropped up while discussing the issue of gender equality has to do with whether the aforementioned reforms done for the sake of promoting gender equality serve men and women equally. Different discourses concerning this issue seem to crop up through the interviews conducted
with the same MA Moroccan Cultural Studies students. On the one hand, some interviewees consider these reforms as serving society as a whole regardless of gender (Feather 2017).

For this category of interviewees, women are not seen as individuals since their rights are usually perceived as family rights. Accordingly, women are serving their family, and their rights can only be associated and identified within their families.

As for another category of students interviewees, the projects and reforms should work for the benefit of both men and women to guarantee the rights for women and exhibit the duties of both. A third category of interviewees argues that these projects and reforms would most likely serve women as a priority since men are believed or assumed to face no gender based-issues, and their status is unequal to women. For this category of interviewees, they see that men have already their rights, they are the responsible for the family and are not in need of any rights. It is women who are subordinate and who are in need to be given their own rights.

A quite different view was revealed by a male interviewee who stresses on the idea that those reforms and projects should target women in rural areas like in Rif and Atlas Mountains more than women in urban areas because these women are suffering in silence and their voice is not heard.

By and large, this issue of gender equality in Morocco is still a debatable question depending on the way gender equality is perceived and the attitudes held towards this concept.

2.3.2. Democracy in Morocco

Before dealing with the role of gender equality and gender issues in achieving democracy, it is worth mentioning that there are many challenges facing genuine achievement of Democracy in Morocco.

The results of the study confirm that democracy in the Moroccan society encounters various obstacles that differ according to gender. For instance, 3 female interviewees claimed that gender segregation is the major challenges that affect the achievement of democracy. In fact, one of the female interviewees asserted saying: “I strongly believe that social stratification and gender segregation are the two key factors challenging the achievement of democracy in Morocco.” Unlike female interviewees, 3 male interviewees provided other challenges such as corruption and the monopoly of powers. One male interviewee says that “the main challenge in my view are the centralization or the monopoly of all the significant powers in the hands of the king and his surroundings. That is, monarchy exercises a kind of monopoly over who rules in Morocco.” However, 2 of the interviewees (one male and one female) reported social stratification as a major challenge that hinders the achievement of democracy in the Moroccan society. These findings represent two view points. Firstly, there are various pressures that threaten the democratic system. In other words, Morocco is far away to be considered a democratic country. Second, females seem to be more concerned with gender segregation as a crucial influence that affects the process of democracy. This premise calls into question the process of gender equality, and it confirms the close
cause-effect relationship between gender issues, gender equality and democracy and the role both gender issues and gender equality have in achieving democracy.

2.3.3. The Role of Gender Issues and Gender equality in Achieving Democracy in Morocco

Concerning the role of gender issues in achieving democracy, 6 interviewees, both males and females, reported that gender issues have an impact on the achievement of democracy. In contrast, 2 male interviewees claimed that gender issues do not have an influence in achieving democracy. These percentages assure that gender issues represent an inherent challenge to democracy. Interestingly, one female interviewee states that: “Gender issues are inherently influential in the achievement of democracy. Focusing on gender roles, activities and responsibilities assigned to men and women nullifies gender equality and democratic values” wherein a male interviewee reports that: “Equality should be given to both genders on the basis of expertise and professionalism.”

As for the role of gender equality in achieving democracy, the findings confirm that gender equality has a fundamental role in attaining democracy. Except for one male interviewee who reported that gender equality does not have any role in fostering democracy, four out of five interviewees indicated that gender equality, indeed, has an inherent role to make progress in terms of democracy. While a male interviewee says that: “I don’t think gender equality can have any role in achieving democracy since there are many societies around the world where women and men are enjoying the same rights, equal opportunities, but their regimes are not democratic,” one female respondent mentioned that: “Gender equality promotes equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women. It is a developmental goal in its own. It is a critical factor for achieving democracy and sustainable development. In fact, societies need equal participation of men and women to initiate social change.” Similarly, another male respondent claims that: “gender equality can benefit the achievement of democracy or a successful democratic system by being fair and just to the population regardless of its genders.” In the broader context of societal transformations, opportunities are often limited based on individual criteria beyond gender; however, these results show that gender equality promotes a higher degree of democracy.

At this point, growing emphasis on gender equality seems to be a central component of the process of democratization. The interviews’ evidences support the conclusion that the process of gender equality drives social change which addresses and encourages equal opportunities of men and women across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally favored and valued. In brief, achieving the goal of shared-decision making between men and women would reflect the composition of society and strengthen the democratic processes of governance.

2.3.4. Gender Studies and the Promotion of Gender Equality and Democracy in Morocco

Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary field of research that dates back to the 60’s. According to Caroline Beer (2009) the field of Gender Studies is responsible
for raising the awareness of women about their rights and, hence, making them aware that no democracy is valid without their full integration in the whole societal fields. In this connection, Caroline Beers questions the validity of democracy before the involvement of women which means that there was never a democracy when women were subjugated. She also claims that the field of gender studies is responsible for raising the awareness of women about their rights and, hence, making them aware that no democracy is valid without their full integration in the whole societal fields. Gender studies helped women to understand the term democracy and then re-describe it to serve their agendas.

The main focus of this section is to highlight the importance of gender studies in promoting gender equality and democracy among university students in general and among the Moroccan Cultural Studies Master Students in particular. Since 1999, which marked the succession to the throne by king Mohammed the sixth, Morocco started its democratization phase through the 2004 family code and the 2011 constitution, which was initialized with the late King Hassan the Second in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Yet, it still needs more time to reach democracy. Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah Ben Abdellah University was among the first universities in Morocco to democratize the academic field by launching almost the First Gender Studies Programme in Morocco, so called Undergraduate Research and Training Unit (referred to as URF), which produced the first PhD cohorts in Gender Studies in Morocco, and created the First Center for Studies and Research on Women (called CERF) in April 1997, by one of the Moroccan pioneer scholars Professor Fatima Sadiqi (Sadiqi 2018), along with Mohamed V University of Rabat who had the first Women Studies Master Programme in Morocco. Relying on data collected via interviews and observation this section focuses on the impact of teaching gender studies on promoting gender equality and democracy among students.

a. Males and Females Interest in Gender Studies

Concerning men and women’s interest in gender studies, interviewees’ responses express different gendered perspectives. Two male and one female interviewees arrogate that men will be interested in gender studies to learn about the other gender and their difficulties and to create new strategies to behave with women as equal agents in the society. However, women, these interviewees further pointed out, would be interested in learning gender studies so as to be aware of the traditional gender roles dictated to them and fight and resist these roles. In this respect, a female interviewee stated that:

For women I think this will help them to be aware of the fact that they are not only made for cleaning, cooking and washing dishes, but they can do more with their lives, they can be good mothers and educators at the same time.

The other interviewees argued that men and women would be interested in learning gender courses to understand and respect each other and thus boost gender equality.

When asked about who would be in favor or not in favor of teaching gender courses, one interviewee stated:
Yeah actually I would say that progressive people who aspire for change will definitely be for teaching gender but people who feel the need to safeguard their interest in a male favored hegemony will be against, but here we should not over generalize.

According to his answer, the interviewee divided people into those having progressive and regressive mindsets and mentalities, but he stressed the fact that such division is not representative of the Moroccan population because it is more complex than this simplistic division. The other interviewees indicate that both genders would be in favor for teaching gender because it is beneficial for both men and women as they can both profit from gender equality courses.

With regard to the introduction of gender courses at an early age, the interviewees’ answers were contradictory because four out of six interviewees were for the introduction of gender course at an early age while one male interviewee was against the early introduction of gender courses arguing that “we should preserve the innocence of childhood”. This argument implies that gender courses would harm the innocence of children. He then suggests that the convenient time is when they reach a postgraduate level since at this time they start to develop a kind of critical thinking. As such, children –according to this interviewee- at an early age do not have the critical tools whereby they would analyze gendered discourses. The other participants, who are for teaching gender courses at an early age, support their allegation by asserting that students’ mentality is fresh and can easily grasp gendered concepts. Others state that the earlier gender courses are implemented in the teaching curriculums, the better it will be. An interviewee supports this idea saying:

Age is a crucial factor when it comes to education and shaping a person’s character and personality. Otherwise, it will be too late to educate them about gender equality, since they will already have other beliefs and ideologies about it.

This interviewee is self-aware of the gender roles that society teaches at an early age to children from the day they are born. She tries to come up with a new approach to fight those gender roles through an early age education. As to the level that would be more adequate to introduce gender courses, three females out of six participants choose primary school. A female participant defended her choice by asserting that it is a great idea to include gender equality as a basic course from primary schools; this way young students would be able to learn how to respect each other; hence, boosting gender equality.

Another female interviewee emphasizes that education starts even before kids go to school. That is to say, gender education should start from home where parents lay down the basics of gender equality so that when kids are introduced to this concept at school, it will not appear to them as being strange. For example, the vocabulary and the topic should be adapted to their age and level, insists this interviewee. Along the same lines, the third female interviewee thinks that introducing gender courses at an early age (i.e. primary school) is important because children are still “in the process of developing and formulating their personalities”, which will give us a generation whose individuals do not discriminate each other.
One male interviewee chose middle school because he thinks that the adequate level to introduce gender courses is middle school, and that student would be mature enough to get a grasp on gender equality, and it will still be early to mold their comprehension around the matter. Another interviewee did not specify the level, but he only accentuated on the early age teaching of gender and early implementation of gender teaching in schools. He equally pointed out that education should not try to convince the students but teach them how to think, introduce new perspectives and ideas, and let them be creative by asking questions. One final interviewee chose the postgraduate level as the convenient time since for him at this time students start to develop critical thinking.

C. Promoting Gender Equality through Teaching Gender Courses

All the interviewees’ answers unanimously agree on the importance of gender course for achieving gender equality. Teaching gender is considered by our interviewees an important source for eradicating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality. All the interviewees expressed their favorable opinions regarding teaching gender because they claim that it is a discipline that will help in understanding gender equality, benefiting from it and sensitizing people about its importance. Teaching gender courses would also tackle gender issues and spread the cultural awareness of equality. Such awareness can only be achieved through teaching and engraving values that are based on justice, freedom, and equal treatment between genders.

D. Promoting Democracy through Teaching Gender Courses

As far as this issue of promoting Democracy through Teaching Gender course, it has been observed that 6 out of 10 students stated that different courses on gender in relation to religion, Diaspora, Media and human rights have all analyzed and discussed the challenges and issues that may influence directly or indirectly the process of democracy. Accordingly, one female interviewee said:

I have learnt that democracy is described as self-government of people…it can be said that democracy is directly associated with human rights because human rights are all about the basic principles of democracy. Teaching gender issues definitely aim to protect and improve students' personality and value in all aspects. In all, democracy is the concretized form of freedom.

However, unlike the elicited positive relationship between gender studies and gender equality, the findings revealed that the interviewees are not convinced that Gender studies would really install democracy in Morocco; they argue that democracy is an ongoing process that needs time, perseverance, and resilience to be genuinely implemented. They also argue that the problem in Morocco concerning democracy is the educational system, and that we always read and study things, but we never practice them. Moreover, according to them -nothing will change in Morocco if dictatorship and injustice are not challenged as being among the reasons why gender equality does not exist in the Moroccan society. For the interviewees, we cannot say that MA courses on gender studies can help increase democracy in Morocco because democracy needs serious determinations and political activism to be enacted; we should move to the practical stage of democracy and not stay restricted to theories in academia. One male interviewee
for whom Gender courses do not have a role in promoting democracy stressed that saying:

When I was an MA I do not think we had any course discussing the relationship between gender issues and democracy, yet in general as I said before, political issues like democracy cannot be easily realized through such courses and the like, but need a serious political will and a determined vision for the future. Also, foreign monopoly and the intervention of the ex-colonized world hinder any real attempts to achieve democracy. The real question is not when or how shall we be democratic or are we going to be democratic, the question for me is ‘is the west ready to have democratic societies in our countries’. I think the question of democracy is a very complex one, and has many nuances that make it necessary to invoke many historical, geopolitical, economic and cultural factors that bear on its meaning and achievement.

Such opinions, however, do not undermine the role gender studies can have in increasing students’ consciousness about different issues in the world and in increasing awareness towards social justice and human rights—both fundamental for achieving democracy. For instance, 9 interviewees claim that courses on Gender studies can have a positive impact on the future generation in Morocco because Gender studies can help improve the values and beliefs of all students.

**e. The Impacts of Studying Gender Courses**

Gender courses were found to generally have a strong impact on students. One female interviewee asserted that studying about gender will have a different impact on each gender as women will be more influenced by it; studying gender courses will give them more power to integrate into more domains and become more successful in their lives since they will assume that they have the same power as men, and they can have the same jobs men have. For men, she thinks this will be beneficial in the sense that they can cooperate with women in order to participate in the development of our society. However, a female and a male interviewee assume that the impact of studying gender courses would be similar as it is beneficial for them both. This actually can be illustrated through the interviewee’s answer when she states that:

When women are studying about gender studies, they would know about the basis of equality between men and women and the same goes for men; hence, they would learn to get to know women’s traits and men’s traits, so through this kind of thought they would try to understand each other. We wouldn’t say a total understanding of one another but at least they would be able to accept each other’s flaws and strengths, and this would make them understand more about how they perform gender roles and also to introduce themselves to new gender roles, that are specified to men and the same for women and also they would know about gender issues that they might not notice.

Consequently, for this interviewee, it is of paramount importance to study gender courses given the fact that they put emphasis on gender issues and help students from different genders to understand each other, and to reflect on the gender differences, norms and roles that were set by society.
Another impact of gender courses is unveiling the unconscious patriarchal mindset, which manifests in several aspects of gender equality, like contesting and changing the perception of women within this traditional society and preventing violence and discrimination against them too. For instance, one female interviewee thinks that the students’ mindsets are highly affected because gender courses change the preset stereotypes bestowed upon women. Moreover the mindset of a person can, to an extent, partly start distinguishing between the real and natural behaviors and the patriarchal society's expectations. That is to say, that gender studies, have the power to alter both men and women's understanding of the treatment of one gender to another.

When asked about whether gender courses affect males and females in a similar way, female and male interviewees reported different opinions. A male interviewee claims that women would learn more than men because of their lived experiences; however, since men are not experiencing discrimination they will learn less. According to him, we need men as well to learn so as to achieve gender peace. Another female participant stressed the idea that the impact would be different saying:

Males and females are already different to begin with. Their situation, attitude towards gender, mindset and interests are very different. So, it would only be fair to say that the way gender courses impact women would be different as well. The impact might even vary from one person to another despite having the same gender. Each individual has her/his own perception and understanding of things.

For this interviewee’s answer, it is clear that one's experience influences one's perceptions. Thus, a person's perception and attitude towards studying gender courses can only be understood in relation to his/her mindset and ideologies; However, it can be said that studying gender courses might cause one’s gender to alter his/her path to accommodate the perceptions of others. The way in which people perceive the world also affects their general emotional state. So, it is not a female’s trait rather it is a general trait. Another male interviewee stressed the fact the people are different in general regardless of their gender, for he assumes that

[...] even people who are from the same gender are different from each other… so I think that it is better to say that people in general, with disregard of gender might be impacted differently[by gender courses]”

3. Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of the paper was to investigate the extent to which the introduction of some gender courses in the Moroccan University can help inculcate the culture of democracy and gender equality among young university students. The paper equally aimed at investigating the perceptions and attitudes of Cultural Studies MA students towards gender equality and democracy after being subjected to gender studies courses, viz., Gender and religion, women in Diaspora, and Gender and development (during their two year Master studies 2015-2017 and 2016-2018) and how the teaching of these courses can promote gender equality and democracy.
One of the major findings this paper has reached is the extent to which gender courses have made students question some beliefs and assumptions linked to gender equality and democracy that were taken for granted for them prior to taking those gender courses. These findings confirmed the hypothesis underlying the study and which suggested that the teaching of gender courses to Moroccan Cultural students can raise both female and male students’ awareness of gender equality and democracy. One conclusion that this paper has come out to is the fact that the two concepts—gender equality and democracy—are closely interconnected as gender equality can positively affect the success of a democratic transition. Another conclusion that can be induced from the paper is the fact that although the concept of gender equality is to a great extent understood by students, outside academia—this concept is not applicable in Moroccans’ daily routine due to the patriarchal mindset deeply rooted. Hence, the paper calls for the study of gender equality in a more local context—especially, in traditional societies which are characterized by sharply differentiated gender roles. The paper also calls for the Moroccan government and its officials to take gender issues and gender equality seriously in their resolutions for a genuine democratic endeavor away from corruption and self-serving tendencies, which will make the impacts of teaching gender courses extend outside the realm of academia and reach our everyday life in the Moroccan society.

References
The present study is intended to identify the challenges faced by university students. For the purpose of the study, the data were collected through a questionnaire that was designed and distributed to a sample of randomly selected 200 students from different departments of Sultan Moulay Slimane University during 2017/2018 educational year. The findings indicated that the challenges faced by the students were classified into four main categories: academic, educational, economic, and psychological problems of a very large degree. The students’ attitudes about the problems are investigated according to the variable of gender. In this regards, some vital coping strategies are recommended to be able to effectively manage these challenges and improve the quality of education.

Keywords: university, university students, challenges, academic problems, educational problems, social problems, psychological problems.

Introduction

The universities are perceived as change leader in the modern world while they play a crucial role in the development of a country. They are supposed to be the home of policy advice and guidance for the political, social and economic progress. However, even though universities are considered as excellent centers for education, some students are unable to obtain its full benefits due to various reasons (Furneaux, 1961). Several educationists and sociologists pointed out that diverse student problems severely affect their learning process (Arlene & Regina, 2004). Within university life, students of today are faced with many pressures and challenges, many actually suffer from both health and emotional issues (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999; Townsend et al., 2013), while others have too much pressure in achieving academic success (Staley, 2009). Some worry because of their low self-esteem and financial problems (Crocketer & Luhtanen, 2003), while others are afraid that they cannot reach their study goals (Malpass, O'Neil, & Hocevar, 1999). It can be said that the complexity of the problems students face nowadays is but increasing.

Going from a familiar environment like high school to the new atmosphere of college poses a lot of striking challenges for students around the world. It is a movement that assimilates a great deal of stress and challenge. These problems students encounter have a negative effect on their performance. They can be
related to the transition process, educational complications, limited financial support and emotional conflicts. Although some students are able to experience transition as a challenge and personal growth, other students are overwhelmed by the changes and experience emotional maladjustment and depression.

This study, then, is conducted to explore the major issues and problems in higher education in the perspective of students of Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal, Morocco. The findings of study may help the management of university to focus on identified areas, upgrade its processes and meet the requirements of its students.

1. Literature review

University is known to bring about emotional issues that represent obstacles in the student’s life while affecting their academic performance. The literature on student learning problems shows that motivational and skill deficits make reading, study, and other coursework effortful and frustrating and those students often give these activities lower priority as a result. By referring to Gillani (2000) it is concluded that constructivist-inspired interventions emphasize re-examining student-centered choices in teaching and learning that "place students' needs at the heart of the design process and take their backgrounds into consideration".

Universities as the highest educational and research institutions have been serving humanity at universal scale as centers where every kind of material and spiritual problems are examined and investigated at the highest level and obtained finding are transferred again through teaching and publication (ortas, 2002). The main functions which universities are supposed to carry out have been listed as follows: 1. Carrying out scientific research studies, 2. Producing solutions to the problems of humanity and a country, 3. Training the human force which a country needs, 4. Teaching information, skills, emotions and intuitions which they obtain to other people, making publications, 5. Setting examples in every area (Sonmez, 2003).

Using Maslow’s need hierarchy, some writers have well described that the needs from the lowest level to the highest and shows how each need ought to be met before the next higher need and thereby it is emphasized that the lowest level of needs i.e. physical needs, are highly important because without fulfilling them an individual cannot go ahead (Arnold & Feldman, 1986). Therefore, it is necessary to provide basic needs for better learning at the university. As Maslow mentioned, without having sufficient basic needs, university students cannot achieve higher education goals.

2. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to identify undergraduate students’ perspectives for the encountered challenges at the university, and to compare the difficulties experienced by the female students to their male counterparts at Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal, Morocco. This study provides an opportunity for university professors, administrators, and policymakers to gain insight into the challenges that threaten the successful completion of university female and male students. For the reasons provided, this article makes a compelling contribution to the literature.
3. Significance of the Study

The word ‘problem’ is defined as an undesirable state in the society or something perplexes or disturbs an individual; a constant dissatisfaction nibbles at one’s peace of mind until one can locate precisely the source of the trouble and find some means of solving it (Deobold:1978).

This study aims at shedding the light on the university students’ problems. These latter could affect their overall learning development. The significance of the study stems from the fact that studying these problems thoroughly is essential because these students would participate in determining the future of the coming generation. Therefore, the results of this study will bring to the attention of the authorities of the university the main problems facing undergraduate students and also help in identifying those problems that are peculiar to only male or female students and those common to both sexes. The results will, therefore, help the university authority in taking significant steps and suggesting lasting solutions to the problems identified and ranked high by the students. The finding will also help students to have a better understanding of the reasons and sources of their problems, confront realistically these problems, and evolve more pragmatic ways of dealing with these problems. Hence, it is hoped that the current study is able to provide various important implications not only to the academic community, but for the society as well. Another important reason for the significance of the study is that it is regarded as an area that needs further research.

4. Research Method

This study covers a stratified random sample of Moroccan first, second and third year university students from different departments of humanities and social sciences. The study adopted a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data of challenges faced by undergraduate students at Sultan Moulay Slimane University. In this study, open-ended questions are used in the questionnaire. The sample population comprised 200 undergraduate students enrolled in different departments during 2017/2018 academic year to investigate into problems that university youth are faced with. In the study, the students’ points of views about problems are analyzed according to the variables of gender. In this context, of the selected students, 50% were female, and 50% were male students.

The questions were simple and the details provided by the respondents were confidential, this led to having sincere opinions from the students. However, there were factors that limited the research; namely, the use of a single site, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, which results in findings that may not be representative of all students. And only a number of 200 respondents of both sexes were used. The study was conducted in only one area/region of Beni Mellal so generalizability of results is limited. It is recommended that future research studies should be conducted with miscellaneous sample (other regions) to increase the credibility of the results of the study. Valuable information was obtained, but at the same time it was less accurate.

5. Analysis of Data

Most of the problems identified are conspicuous in the students. Lack of understanding of learning styles and mismatch between teaching methods and
learning styles is an evident factor. Absence of proper counseling and guidance, lack of goal oriented learning process, financial problems, lack of enough knowledge among students about educational rules are the most serious issues expressed by the students. These students saw their major life problems revolving mainly around their university.

The answers provided by the respondents indicated that there are five main common categories of challenges faced by students at the university; namely, social, educational, academic, personal and financial.

I. Social Issues

An important problem identified by 117 students as affecting their achievements is the problem of accommodation. Accommodation, thus, is the first problem encountered by students leaving their villages and moving to the city to get higher education. A great majority of university youth are left no choice but to leave their families to get education. However, in recent years, due to the increase observed in the number of university students, yet not parallel to this, student dormitories having fallen short of meeting needs make the problem of accommodation more serious for university students (kaya et al, 2005). Similarly, since Sultan Moulay Slimane University does not have adequate accommodation facilities for all its student intakes, students have to find private accommodation closer to their university. However, a large number of students are unable to find suitable accommodation due to economic problems and other reasons.

I.2. Time Management

50% of students pointed out that lack of time management is one of their problems in the questionnaire. Even though this problem was raised by not working students, however, it is more critical among part-time or full-time working students. The latter stated the biggest challenge they encounter was to strike a balance between coursework and their work.

I.3. Orientation

45% of students complain about adjustment to university life and vague uneasiness about the program. And as indicated in the chart, female students represent the majority of those who are affected by the lack of orientation because of shyness and dependence on other family members in their daily life before. In the early days of the university period when students leave their homes and lives
which they have been leading and start a different life, students undergo a process of “adjustment”. During this process, to be able to help them, it is important and necessary to provide them with orientation (adjustment training) services. Orientation services will contribute to their getting information about possibilities and services provided by university and also about university principles and rules. It is guidance services which are to help university students to solve these problems (Kutlu, 2004). As Krause emphasizes

[...] students from disadvantaged backgrounds typically lack the social and cultural capital required to 'talk the talk' and 'walk the walk' at university … They lack the social networks which provide avenues for participating in casual out-of-class conversations. (2005: 9)

Therefore, orientation meetings must be held for first year students explaining to them the rules and regulations for the institutions of university and all other information regarding the system of giving lectures, the student’s role in the class, the system of examination, the way of evaluation, facilities available and resources provided.

1.4. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is another problem that was identified in the research. The study has portrayed that 30% of female respondents reported that they have been victims to sexual abuse or attempted sexual assault by male classmates or administrative staff or teachers. Of the 100 female respondents, 64 reported having experienced one or more sexual harassment behaviors during their university life. And the most frequent type of harassment reported was student-to-student harassment. Female respondents identified "made sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks" as the most frequent type of sexual harassment experienced.

While mentioning the problem of quality education, it is possible to state such matters as qualified educators, qualified students, physical conditions of universities (access to information, crowded classrooms, social possibilities) (Ortas, 2002).

There are many consequences of sexual harassment in universities. When harassment occurs, the large proportion of victims are affected emotionally and often lose their academic self-confidence, experience difficulty concentrating on academic work or suffer lowered self-esteem (Bank and Bank, 1997). Another result of sexual harassment within social institutions may point to a serious social problem of sustained gender stratification. Hoffman (1986) has written: uncritical
tolerance of sexual harassment has perpetuated inequality between men and women, reinforced the sexual objectification of women, and encouraged the privatization of relationships which exploit economic and cultural inequality for sexual gain.

II. Educational Issues

II.1. Crowded Classrooms

The problem of over-crowded classrooms is listed as another factor that affects education as well. 50% of students revealed their non-satisfaction about the lack of physical facilities including seating, density, noise, privacy, air quality, etc. over-crowdedness diminishes the quality and quantity of teaching and learning with serious implication for attainment of education goals. This leads to not paying attention, not participating in activities, unmotivated and indolent learners, and no time for proper lesson presentation and classroom assessment due to unmanageable learners. In this context, some veiled female students revealed that over-crowdedness is difficult for them as they feel uncomfortable when there is no enough space between them and other male classmates. Thus, the university needs to provide more and better classrooms with adequate heating, air conditioning and seating to cater for the numbers of students; more up-to-date computer technology and other equipment are deemed necessary for the students’ achievement.

Today with the increase in the number of students continuing higher education, the populations of universities have become crowded and present physical conditions have fallen short of meeting the demand. For decades studies have shown that there is an explicit relationship between the physical facilities and the students’ academic performance. It has found through different researches that students’ academic performance is greatly affected by the physical characteristics of classroom. According to Earthman, G 2004:18, School building in which students pass considerable time has great influence upon students’ academic performance. However, the learning environment ought to support learners’ motivation to participate in group or individual learning activities. When learners are placed in classes with small numbers, they are more involved and academic achievement increases. The researchers stress that in overcrowded classrooms less attention can be given to individual learners and it is difficult to motivate them. Overcrowded classrooms tend to be teacher-centered. In the same vein, Imtiaz (2014:251) agree that overcrowded classrooms are unsupportive learning environments, and may even affect the learners’ physical health. They point out that overcrowded classrooms are unhygienic, because if one learner has a contagious infection, then others can be easily infected.

Most experts agree that in crowded classrooms fewer students perform well; in contrast students get more benefits in small classes; especially minority group is the most benefiting; students are paid individual attention in small sized class; there is friendly and congenial atmosphere in small classes; discipline problems are reduced to the maximum; individual attention is paid and students are more actively involved in different activities.

II.2. Library Facilities
A university means a place where the knowledge is generated, gathered and disseminated. A library is the place which facilitates such functions. The Library is seen to be an integral part of the academic process, and not a mere appendage or free bookshop. The findings of the study, however, revealed that the majority of university students do not use the library. 50% of students express their annoyance at the lack of resources that they have to use at the Library. This study found that there are some problems in the use of library such as the large number of books available in the main library are old, missing some pages, important maps, and information etc. in books and periodicals. Only a few copies of resources are available compared to the huge numbers of students who have to share them. Many latest and important books are only for reference. But students have lack of opportunities to use them being in the library. Some latest and important books are only in the catalogue as lecturers borrow them and keep with them for a long time. As limited space in study room a higher number of students cannot get a place in the main library during the examination period. Therefore, the university authorities need to be aware that students need to acquire more than the crude factual content set out in the syllabus.

Physical conditions of universities are among the factors affecting quality education as well. To be able to produce information and carry out research studies, there is a need for preliminary information, and therefore sources of information, and institutions to be able to put these sources into service in an efficient way (Celik, 1991). In this respect, university libraries have a role much more important than that of other units on research activities. University libraries should have every kind of update printed or electronic resources to meet all information needs of academic units (Odabas and Polat, 2011).

In this context, John E. Burchard listed the objectives of libraries as: 1. To arouse a continuing and burning curiosity; 2. To suggest the tools which will help to satisfy the curiosity; 3. To establish the notion that personal activities are inconsequential save as they affect others; 4. To develop a sense of morality so that these effects will be aimed in favor of humanity and not against it; 5. To create the beginning of a sense of the first-rate so that what is favorable to humanity may be reasonably clear; 6. To provide some particular skill so that the man or woman may in fact hit the target suggested in the above. This last is specialized or professional or vocational education. Nothing less than all of these can really be called the objectives of a higher education (Burchard, 1967, p. 42). Accordingly, the Victorian Institute of Colleges has published the view that: It is the hallmark of tertiary education that it prepares students not only to think for themselves, but also to acquire the intellectual techniques and practical skills to discover and critically examine the facts on which their thinking must be based. The prime function of the university library is to ensure that the students learn how to find out (Victoria Institute of Colleges, 1971, p. 3).

II.3. Information and Communication Technology Skills

Competence in Information Communication and Technology (ICT) is expected from university students as they have to use ICT frequently as an essential tool of their learning. ICT skills help to enhance students’ subject
knowledge and their analytical skills. Yet, 51% students revealed that the university does not have sufficient physical structures with respect to foreign language education. In order to develop four basic skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) in language education and to get them acquired effectively, using visual and auditory elements is important. However, the technological possibilities of the faculty are very limited in this respect.

Thus, lack of ICT skills creates many problems not only for students’ current academic activities but also for their future in various ways. Therefore, The University as a higher education institution has to face problems in improving quality and the relevance of the degree programs.

III. Personal Issues

![PERSONAL ISSUES](image)

A big number of the problems mentioned by the students fall into the large grouping usually described as "personal problems." These include family worries, loneliness, physical and emotional complaints.

III.1. Emotional Conflicts

As illustrated in the figure above, the most influential issue is found to be emotional conflicts with a percentage of (52%). These emotional issues include: missing family which has the highest impact on students' psyche, and living with new roommate while living in dorms presents a new challenging environment for them after leaving a more stable environment which is home. Eventually, these changes in students' life bring about a depressed psychology and raise the stress level of a student.

Students from rural areas who have to move to the city of Beni Mellal to pursue their higher education stated that they had felt 'significant amounts of loneliness'. In the same vein, Godden discusses, among a number of factors affecting rural participation in higher education, the 'culture shock' of transitioning alone to independent living, the city and the institution, and says that 'every focus group, and 30% of the interviewees, reported that some rural young people experience homesickness and depression' (2008: 5). Woodlands, Makaev and Braham report that 'anxiety' about not having a support network in the city and on campus is a key barrier, among other factors, for rural high school students considering university study (2006: 25-6).

So, emotional conflicts and stress are the most influential issues leading to a decrease in overall performance. However, there were significantly more problems in female students compared to their male counterparts. Gender differences in
psychological distress, however, are evident with females reporting more psychological distress than males. And this might be related to the social structure of the Moroccan society where males are supposed to go out and be independent from the family, unlike girls who are expected to be more attached to home, parents and family most of their time.

**III.2. Recreation**

The study found around that of the students do not engage in any entertainment activity. Students claim that football and basketball are the only sporting activities available. Sports and social facilities also need upgrading and the university should offer a wider choice of sporting activities. Students would also like to see more student union-organized events. They also hope that the professors be more flexible with academic workload during the week and not pressurize the student with several tasks as this will burden the student mentally and physically. They also hope that administration can help the student council in this matter by organizing more events and trips that do not conflict with academic schedules.

Universities all over the world not only give the formal education but also provide facilities for recreation and relaxation which are highly essential to maintain a healthy life. As a result of engaging in recreation and relaxation activities, students can reduce their mental pressure and stress created due to high workload.

**IV. Academic Issues**

![ACADEMIC ISSUES](chart.png)

**IV.1. Teacher and Student Relationship**

The findings of this study show that the majority of students have less or no relationship with their teachers. According to the students’ point of view, the main barrier to build closer relationship with teachers is correlated with some characteristics of teachers’ personality, and the image of the lecturer established among the past students, teachers’ kindness, eagerness to help, teaching skills, subject knowledge, politeness, etc.

The Interaction Theory draws attention to study individuals and how they act within society. Accordingly, Education Sociologists attempt to understand the interactions between groups, peers, teacher, on students’ attitudes and achievements, on students’ values, self-concepts and their effects on aspirations;
and on socio-economic status as it relates to students’ achievements (Ballantine, 1997).

The study revealed that the students in the Department of English do not have confidence in themselves regarding English language. The reason behind this is lack of proficiency in English language which is considered as the basic barrier in students’ academic adjustment process. Interacting with the professors in the department is a challenge for most of them. Also, the educational system in higher institutions is different from students’ expectations about the student-teacher relationship, the classroom behavior, and different styles of teaching-learning process.

**IV.2. University Counseling Service**

As indicated in the figure, students complain about the lack of counselors and advisors at the university. The main objective of establishing a counseling center at the university is to deal with students’ grievances, to identify their problems and help them to solve such problems in its primary stage. However, that objective does not seem be fulfilled due to several reasons. Therefore, the university can consider providing counseling services so that the student can benefit from this opportunity. The student council should give students incentives to join clubs and organizations to allow better socializing among students as this will avoid these problems to occur in the first place.

These factors fostered the problems relating to stress and strain, emotional imbalance, lack of confidence, examination fear, misunderstandings among peers, absence of healthy academic sharing, jealousy and self-centeredness. Most of the students fail to cope up with these problems in the absence of sufficient support from the families and counselors.

**V. Financial Problems**

![Financial issues](image)

Students indicated that financial worries affect their academic performance. The money problems of most students are pressing. Lack of financial support is an important issue itself, while part-time work is almost nonexistent in the city of Beni Mellal. The findings suggest that students from low income families have higher score on financial stress questionnaire. This generates a large amount of pressure on the student in addition to the existing load. Low family income, large family size with more siblings, personal health issues, and bad parental
relationships, death of a parent, peer pressure, new fashion trends, unhealthy coping behaviors and demands of university education pose a high risk regarding whether the student will continue his/her education or drop-out at a certain level. Yet, accommodation, transportation, food, and leisure add up to the life expenses of university. This is likely to jeopardize students’ academic pursuits and tends to dissuade them. In the same context, the students who have scholarship reveal that the latter is still unable to prevent them from facing financial stress.

Based on gender, males and females have different spending patterns. Differences in their financial behavior may be attributed to specific family and individual characteristics. It was indicated that females purchased clothing and make up while males purchased electronics, cigarettes, entertainment, and food away from home. Female students are expected to be less involved in these financial problems of smoking and other activities generally done by men. The financial problem of spending a lot of money for female students is low as expected. Male students on the average have higher financial problems compared to female students. A big difference in percentage of respondents occurred for certain financial problems. There are three financial problems that have large differences between male and female students, spending on cigarette, internet addiction and food. Most of the students agree that financial stress affect negatively on their academic achievement. And consequently, some female students, in their worst cases, resort to prostitution to afford the expenses of education.

Research regarding sources of stress confirms the influential role that personal financial problems play in the lives of college students. Financial difficulties are often cited among college students as sources of stress (Northern, O’Brien, & Goetz, 2010; Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). A report found that four of the top five stressors among college students involved problems related to personal finances (Trombitas, 2012).

**Conclusion**

The paper attempted to investigate and analyze contributing factors of university learning environment on undergraduates’ problems and issues. The results gathered using the survey were quite intriguing. They helped discovering more on the students’ performance and how it is affected by the academic, personal, educational and financial issues they face.

The most important conclusion that emerged from the analysis of data was that students of Sultan Moulay Slimane University encounter myriads of problems. Yet, the problems encountered by female students are significantly different from those experienced by male students. Some female students reported having experienced sexual harassment by both teaching and non-teaching staff, and from male students. The finding supports the claim by Massanja and colleagues (2001) that the problem of sexual harassment of female students in African universities is yet to be addressed.

The study revealed that of students face education institutional related problems particularly accommodation, library facilities, financial issues and teacher-student relationship. As a whole it seems that though the university has
been taking considerable efforts to maintain a favorable environment for higher education, there are certain obstacles to be overcome by students as well as the university authority. Moreover, the university should pay attention to improve these areas, which is basically neglected by the management that is responsible for providing academic support facilities that assist the students in learning and teaching process. The negligence in providing educational support material hinders the quality of education lower the overall learning outcome rate.

References


Mohamed Fadel

Roles of academia in gender equality: the case of Morocco

(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

Abstract
Numerous studies have indicated that education is the most important instrument for human development. Since mid-20th century, education has become not only a universal human right, but also a key constituent of women empowerment. In Morocco, females and males are still treated differently, even in access to education. Despite the state’s support of women’s rights and status as well as apparent increases in women in many sectors that have been man-dominated, gender inequity has persisted. This paper analyzes the situation of women’s schooling in Morocco using statistical data, discusses causes that have been responsible for gender inequality, and displays a set of economic and social advantages as the return upon investment in women’s access to education. The paper also suggests some ways of how women’s empowerment through education can contribute to progressive eradication of gender inequality.

Keywords: Education; Gender equality; Women empowerment; Morocco.

Introduction
Sixty years after the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 insisting on equal access to education by both females and males, the sector of education has continued to perpetuate gender inequality. Gender inequality in both developed and developing countries has been a largely mediatized and researched topic recently. The social expectations of males and females and differences the two sexes emanate from ideologies of some societies, and they manifest in the roles, responsibilities, access to resources and opportunities, perceptions, views, etc. which societies attribute to men and women exclusively. International concerns about the inadequate conditions of women in the world have motivated campaigns and movements to demand a more equitable distribution of resources between men and women.

In almost all nations of the world, women play important roles in the economic and social development. They actively participate in several fields like agriculture, livestock, medicine, education, entrepreneurship, and handicrafts. It is worth noting that women take full charge of family and childcare. Hence, they need proper education that enables them to cater to the well-being of themselves and future generations. Most of studies on gender disparities all over the

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world indicate that women still experience discrimination and marginalization; they are still under-represented in managerial and decision-making levels, have limited access to education and healthcare, become victims of exploitation and violence, and face unemployment and lower pay compared to men. In higher education, for instance, women occupy proportionally fewer positions of responsibility in relation to the number of women qualified for such careers despite the high presence of the women as students and staff. Research has identified the numerous benefits that societies can gain of women’s education; education of females has been recognized for its potential ability to diminish poverty and under-development and generate growth and prosperity. As such, nations around the world promulgate policies that seek to increase opportunities of females’ access to education in rural and urban areas alike.

In Morocco, for the last three decades, the question of gender and women has occupied a great place in public debates. The country still suffers from illiteracy and major disparity between rural and urban areas as well as between men and women. However, women’s literacy levels have increased significantly as a fruit of the state’s policies as well as literacy programs launched and supported by the state’s non-formal education and the civil society’s efforts. For instance, the literacy rate among females aged between 15 and 24 years increased to 87.78 % in 2012. Likewise, females’ enrollment in primary education rose to 107.34 % in 2016; in secondary education the rate was 64.11 % in 2012, and 30.71 % in tertiary education in 2016 (UNESCO, 2018). According to the Ministry of Higher Education, Morocco (2018), the percentage of female students enrolled in higher education has remarkably escalated. As for university teaching staff, 35.81% were female in the 2016-17 academic year (Ministry of Higher Education, Morocco, 2018). This progress is both substantial and relevant if we take into account that females have achieved significant gross enrollment in primary and secondary.

Education is perceived by literate Moroccans as one of the key drivers of social and economic development, with the primary objective being to ensure that female and male citizens receive equal quality education which will empower them to build a society free of gender inequalities. Therefore, it is likely that universities in Morocco are a strategic space for eradicating or at least reducing the traditional gender inequity currently dominating the Moroccan society.

The present paper is divided into five sections: the first section provides a general background to the study. The second section identifies the potential benefits of women’s access to education. The third section sheds light on causes of persistent gender gap. The fourth section is a discussion of the statistics of females and males’ enrollment in education. The last section presents ways of alleviating existing cultures and practices of gender-related discrimination.

**Background**

Gender inequality is a term that prevails in the literature of gender in society. It can be defined as the “discrimination in relation to opportunities, allocation of resources or benefits and access to services for women or men” (Elwer et al., 2012). With this in mind, gender equality in access to education generally means
that both females and males have equal access to economic, social, cultural, and political resources. Similarly, Osongo (2009) defined gender inequality in education as the process that treats people (men and women) unequally in access to education.

Gender inequality pertains to all societies of the world. Gender gaps favoring males in education, employment, leadership, and more are systematically larger in poor countries than in rich countries. In terms of economic gender inequality, women still earn lower pay than men in the job market, are denied opportunity to access education/literacy, are more likely to live in poverty, and do a larger share of unpaid household work. In politics, women are under-represented in elected office and in political appointments. As well, they are mostly excluded from decision-making positions. Socially, women are more likely to be the victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. In some countries, women live in patriarchal structures which favor men to women, create discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes, and engender and reinforce gendered identities (Ridgeway, 2011).

Recent research indicates that the importance of family background in shaping societies’ education and socioeconomic inequalities in that the economic effects of an individual’s educational achievements are moderated by family income. In their study in the United States, Kearney et al., (2016) revealed that there was a strong relationship between low-income family backgrounds and lower education achievements; individuals, especially males, from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school. In addition, recent studies have looked at the relationship between parental education and the educational achievements and economic status of the children. Erola et al., (2016) concluded that the children of family backgrounds with educated parents have more chances to achieve higher levels of education and ultimately take better paid jobs compared to their peers with poorly educated parents. Hence, education is a worth considering resource that pertains strongly to all aspects of life.

It is clearly understood from the above short review of literature that education is the basic requirement and a fundamental resource of which females and males need to take advantage. Education is a powerful tool of reducing inequality and an appropriate key to the development and independence of both men and women. Particularly for women, having long experienced social exclusion and exploitation, education is as an important element of their empowerment; it enables women to face challenges, confront their traditional roles, and change their position in society. Education helps women reduce inequalities and receive the knowledge, learning, and training that are necessary to contribute to change at both personal and social levels. The empowerment of women generally consists of granting them to have access to all resources like education, healthcare, employment, etc. There is scarce research on the content of the education contents directed to the empowerment of women; still, deprivation of women from education is worse for society. When women are not educated, they become vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization. However, if both women and men have access to education, the first outcome is that discriminatory practices of
patriarchal and other traditional structures become challenged; educated females and males are more likely to allow both their female and male children to go to school; they can also contribute to their household organization and ways of increasing income, and they will eventually generate growth for their societies. However, the promotion of gender equality should not be gender bias by offering more power to women and taking it away from men. Empowerment of women and men, therefore, is important to both clans; it allows both men and women to work collectively and participate equally in the social and economic development.

In the last two decades, the Middle East and North Africa region has made substantial achievements towards gender equality. Earlier, the patriarchal system was strong and the public space was male-dominated. Conventionally, the father has been the head of the family and dictate orders to be fulfilled. Today, however, both females and males have access to education and healthcare, and men still outnumber women; accordingly, more females are attending all levels of education, and their enrollment rates are increasing. Morocco, for instance, has set out to reform the family code as a critical step toward promoting gender equality. Recent literature indicated that gender equality is restricted to a particular category of Moroccans, namely the elite like intellectuals, highly educated, and upper-class people (Slaoui et al., 2018). The family code was enacted in the rise of the 21st century in order to protect families through assigning clear responsibilities to men and women. Also important, the widespread of schooling and the increasing enrollment of women in the education system have been a significant achievement, supported by the state’s policies of compulsory education to both sexes up to the age of 15. Yet, the gender phenomenon has persisted. Therefore, women’s access to education is expected to break with the beliefs and practices which reinforce disparity.

In parallel to women’s rising access to education, more women are conquering the job market. Tough they have high academic degrees and qualifications, the glass ceiling prevents them from taking positions of responsibility and leadership; women work in both the private and the public sectors in less favorable work conditions and lower pay. More women are also present in the informal economy. Recently, families in large urban centers, like Casablanca, Agadir, Marrakech, and Tangier, are no longer able to live with the earnings of the father as the lonely breadwinner; the result is that fathers and husbands have to consider their daughters and wives’ employment outside households to increase their income and see for their needs. The hope for gender equality in Morocco lies in the current generation; they are different from their parents in terms of access to more resources, including education, and they mostly come from nuclear families with limited patriarchal authority and gender inequality. This generation is likely to have the potential to build a Moroccan society where men and women are treated equally (Desrues et al., 2009).

Potential benefits
Researchers have identified many benefits of women’s education that mainly concern poor countries. First, providing women with education is
likely to contribute to the reduction of women fertility rate; women who obtain formal education are much more likely to use reliable family planning methods, delay marriage and child bearing, and have fewer and healthier babies. Child marriages have continued to take place in Morocco despite the fact that the legal age of marriage was raised from 16 to 18 in 2004, and the judges of the family law still receive requests to authorize marriage before the age of 18. Second, education enables women to lower infancy and child mortality rates; educated women develop knowledge of necessary suitable medical care, ensure their children are well treated and protected, and follows efficient healthcare practices. Third, women’s education reduces maternal mortality rates; women with formal education tend to have better knowledge about health care practices and avoid pregnancy at a very younger age. Fourth, women’s education is an effective investment in the next generation; educating women has a greater impact on children’s schooling, especially daughters. Fifth, also related to women’s health, women’s education is likely to protect them from HIV/AIDS infection; education ranks among the most powerful tools for reducing girls’ vulnerability and raising their awareness of the disease and how to prevent it. Sixth and last, women’s education contributes to women’s participation in socio-economic and political participation; women’s education enables them to participate in the growth of their countries as well as build democracies that guarantee rights for both females and male equally. It is a surprise that women’s education and the state’s efforts have reduced child mortality from 63 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 23 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018).

Main causes
Now that we have displayed some advantages of women’s education, it is important to look at the main causes and challenges to women’s education. The first cause is poverty; there is a strong relationship between unequal access to education and poverty; poor and low-income families prefer to send their children to work instead of school because they cannot afford the fees, books, and transportation. The second cause is the inadequacy of school infrastructure; that is, children, females and males, cannot pursue education if boarding schools are not available in remote primary and secondary schools. The consequence is the high rates of dropout. The third cause is parents’ lack of education; especially in poor families, parents with no education tend to perpetuate gender discrimination and refuse to send girls to school; they keep them to work in the household. The fourth cause is linked safety issues; most families in remote and rural areas prefer to keep their female children and adolescents in households fearing that they may victims of sexual harassment from strangers, and even from some teachers. The fifth cause has to do with socio-cultural practices; numerous studies show that society often treats boys and girls differently; females usually, compared to males, experience underage and forced marriages as well family responsibilities as children. The sixth cause is child labor; poor families in both rural and urban areas are likely to keep their female children to serve in the household or assist in agriculture, or serve as house cleaners for small wages. These are the main causes of gender
inequality for women in Morocco, and these causes are challenges to women’s empowerment. Dropouts may also materialize from these factors.

**Suggested solutions**

Education has been a key factor in the development of countries all over the world. Education can play a significant role in combating gender inequality. In this paper, we present some suggestions of how the academia can exert its impact on gender inequality. They are the following:

1) Traditional gender roles causing gender inequality should be removed by education contents and media programs (e.g. literacy programs for adults; educating parents, etc.). Recent research has looked at the links between paternal education and positive child development outcomes; such traditional practices are expected to raise their awareness of gender parity and awareness of the importance of their children’s access to education.

2) Observation of the equal rights/ civil rights and education of females and males through simplified enrollment policies and similar teaching methods oriented to both females and males.

3) Teacher training should include guidelines of respect for both females and males on equal basis.

4) Free-tuition education should be offered by the state in primary and secondary education levels to both females and males.

5) Females should be encouraged to go to school and continue education, benefitting from empowerment programs, scholarships, and facilities such as dorms, transportation, and distance education programs, mainly for females in remote and rural areas.

6) Education and literacy can also be provided by voluntary organizations engaged in programs of education for females, using any suitable methods and media.

7) Counseling is also a key factor towards gender equality. It is important that schools have counselors who can provide constant guidance and counseling to both females and males to increase females’ enrollment in education, retention, and achievement. This way, both sexes will have access to accurate information and find answers to the questions which parents may not be able to answer. Some expected outcomes are the reduction of dropout and the increase of performance of both sexes.

8) Offering equal access to quality education for both females and males can contribute directly to the construction of a more equal society. Favoring females in education and empowerment programs may not bring positive outcomes; males’ low performance in education and high dropout rates are likely to retain and develop discriminatory gender views and physical violence against females in the household and outside.

9) Course books should be suitable for both sexes and void of gender-based contents that imply discrimination against any gender community. Gender studies need to be introduced at elementary and secondary education levels as well.

10) The quality of education in Morocco is criticized (Salehi-Isfahani et al., 2014). Specialists of education need to concentrate on this issue to come up with
practical scenarios that will enable both females and males to obtain equal solid knowledge.

11) Increased employment of females in education and administration jobs may serve not only as a driver of reducing gender discrimination and stereotypes, but as a catalyst of female enrollment in primary and secondary levels as well.

12) Finally, public traditional media are called to participate in the efforts of raising awareness of gender inequality and the cost of the social phenomenon. Also the youth, females and males, mainly intellectuals, can also conquer commonly used social media platforms to explain, discuss, and defend gender equality.

These are just a few ideas of how education can contribute to the foundation of a Moroccan society enjoying gender equality.

Statistics and Discussion
In the last couple of decades, Morocco has achieved significant progress at the levels of literacy. Like its neighbors in the MENA region, Morocco's commitment and policies of ensuring access to literacy and education for both genders have been unprecedented. Still, these efforts have remained insufficient in the strategy of reducing the gender gap. Figure 1 shows the total rate of literacy of Moroccans during a period of four decades, starting from 1980 to 2015 (UNESCO, 2018). Both females and males benefited from the literacy programs. For the 15-24 age community, the rate of females was 87.78% and males 94.63% while for the age of 15 and older, females represented 59.13 % and males 80.38%. Despite the positive developments during the period between 1980 and 2015 for both sexes, the phenomenon of illiteracy is still significant for women. Table 1 summaries the recent literacy rates in Morocco based on statistical data issued by UNESCO (2018).

Figure 1: Morocco – Literacy rate among the population aged 15 and older (Unesco, 2018).
Figure 2: Morocco - Literacy rate among the population aged 15-24 years (Unesco, 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Females %</th>
<th>Males %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24 years</td>
<td>87.78</td>
<td>94.63</td>
<td>91.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years and older</td>
<td>59.13</td>
<td>80.38</td>
<td>69.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Morocco – Literacy rate – Summary (UNESCO, 2018).

Enrollment in primary education

Table 2: Gross enrollment in primary education (Ministry of National education, Morocco, 2017).
As for education, we have relied on the statistics provided by the Ministry of National education, Morocco (2017), covering the period between 2008 and 2016. The data are classified by gender and location and it becomes easy to trace the rates of each sex. The number of females enrolled in the primary education increased from 1,647,604 in 2008 to reach 1,636,293 in 2016; with 64,784, almost 33% of them, coming from rural areas. The private sector has had its share in the schooling efforts, with 163,294 females enrolling in primary education in 2008 and this number almost doubled to reach 310,878 girls in 2016, all of whom live in urban areas. During the same period, the net enrollment in primary education was 3,532,061 in 2008 and rose to 3,447,639 children. The improvement was particularly observed in the increasing number of rural enrolled females. It is apparent that the number of enrolled females in elementary education both in public and private schools constitutes around 51% to 52% of the number of enrolled males (See Table 2).

**Enrollment in secondary education**

Similarly, as Table 3 indicates, enrollment in the secondary education has remarkably improved between 2008 and 2012. This level includes both the junior and senior secondary education in line with the current education system in Morocco. Out of a net enrollment in junior secondary education, the Ministry of National Education, Morocco, registered the enrollment of 617,064 girls in 2008 and 677,832 in 2016, with 201,417 of them coming from rural areas. In the private sector, 27,089 enrolled in junior education in 2008 and the number almost tripled to become 70,226 in 2016. The senior secondary education witnessed a slight increase. In 2008, 329,240 females enrolled in public schools and the number rose to 435,103 in 2016, some 62,555 girls are in rural areas. In addition, 17,316
females enrolled in senior secondary education in private schools in 2008. This number doubled to become 41,879 in 2016. It is worth noting that the enrolled female population has developed over the years from 2008 to 2016. However, the enrollment rate seems to be lower regarding the population rate of the aged between 15-19 years, representing 8.3% of the total population.

**Morocco – Enrollment in tertiary education**

Tertiary education has also gained its share of state’s efforts. Looking at Table 4 provided by the Ministry of Higher education, Morocco (2018), the total number of females enrolled in higher education is 376,713 out of 781,505, representing the total enrollment in this education level; that is, female students enrolled in higher education in Morocco represent 48.2% of the gross student population in the academic year 2016-2017. Females are enrolled in all disciplines, but legal studies and social sciences have the lion’s share. As for the teaching staff, there are 1,397 instructors covering almost disciplines and aging between 30 and 64. They represent around 22% of the total teaching community in tertiary education. Despite the fact that the rates of female enrollment and employment in tertiary education in Morocco, they reflect a slow and steady progress to reach similar or high enrollment compared to males. Gender inequality, therefore, persists in this sector that is supposed to have the potential to change mentalities and erase disparities in access to resources between sexes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domaine d'étude</th>
<th>2015-2016</th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>Var en %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global (1)</td>
<td>Orléans</td>
<td>Don (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences Juridiques, Economiques et Sociales</td>
<td>326,264</td>
<td>345,194</td>
<td>101,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettres et Sc Humaines</td>
<td>227,101</td>
<td>230,911</td>
<td>64,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>120,806</td>
<td>119,403</td>
<td>27,788</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Gross enrollment in tertiary education (Ministry of Higher Education, Morocco, 2018).**

**Morocco – School dropouts**

Although enrollment rates have increased in primary and secondary education levels, school dropout has continued. The statistics found on this phenomenon indicated that the number of dropout females in primary education fell from 197,214 to 101,425 in 2016 compared to 155,625 males in 2008 to 100
313 in 2016. It can be noted from these statistical data that dropout rates have been very low in the primary education. In the two levels of the secondary education, dropouts among females went down from 319,206 in 2008 to 169,883 in 2012; the rate has become 53.22%. During the same period, 223,381 males also dropped to 88,815, with a rate of 39.75% which was much lower compared to the rates of females. The low dropout rate of females in the secondary education was expected to have a positive impact on females’ enrollment in tertiary education. In the absence of dropout statistics concerning tertiary education, it is plausible to resort to the statistics of females enrolled in higher education. In the 2016-2017 academic year, females represented 48.2% of the gross student population; so, it can be understood that the dropout rate would be low among females. Therefore, the rate of enrollment among females in tertiary education, though still modest, would enhance gender equality in the higher education environment and society at large.

![Figure 5: Dropouts among children by gender in Morocco (Berahab et al., 2017).](image1)

![Figure 6: Dropouts among young adults by gender in Morocco (Berahab et al., 2017).](image2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>No Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>52,83</td>
<td>66,52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>65,62</td>
<td>35,59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>63,13</td>
<td>15,08</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>39,25</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>01,73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2016</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Gender inequality has been a central debate in all countries for several decades, and Morocco is not an exception. This paper has shed light on gender inequality, identified the benefits and causes of gender inequality, and suggested some solutions that the academia can adopt to contribute to the eradication of gender inequality in Morocco and elsewhere.

It is clear from the rate of the gross enrollment in both primary and secondary education levels that Morocco has made a substantial progress in schooling of children under 15. The policies issued and implemented by the state have led to the promotion of citizens’ access to education on the basis that education is the key factor to the development. Yet, females’ rate of enrollment in the tertiary education are too low to initiate changes in perceptions towards gender inequality. Females are either denied access to education or they drop out to fulfill
gender role expectations, such as assisting in the household or engaging in forced marriages. Several of the causes discussed above are pertinent to the Moroccan society, especially parental educational backgrounds, families’ social status (income), and school infrastructure. This implies that the state and specialists are called to determine the anomalies that are inherent in primary and secondary education and plan necessary reforms that promise higher enrollment in primary and secondary education, the outcomes of which will inflate access to tertiary education for both females and males.

To conclude, this analysis indicated the positive impacts of educational public policies on the significant rates of access to education in elementary and secondary levels even in remote and rural areas. Still, more public policies are needed in the direction of generalizing education by increasing basic facilities for the benefit of rural children (both females and males) and poor children in urban centers. The private sector, the civil society, traditional media, and social media are also invited to assist public efforts in generalizing education and building solid grounds for gender equality.

References

Abstract
Proverbs, popular sayings transmitted from one generation to another, are believed to manifest the social values, practices, and beliefs of a specific community. Viewed as a cultural tool, and a source of identity, proverbs should be preserved from eradication. Previous studies, Ennaji (2008), Rasul (2015), Belfatmi (2013) to name a few, reveal the biased and discriminatory messages proverbs perpetuate about men and women. The current study attempts to investigate 75 Moroccan proverbs collected from four different internet websites to determine how men and women are depicted in these Moroccan proverbs. The findings confirm the dominance and power of men at the expense of women who are, unfairly, relegated to secondary positions. It seems that proverbs disseminate and promote these patriarchal ideologies and make them legitimate.

Keywords: bias, folk culture, gender, men, proverbs, women.

Introduction
Proverbs are short, catchy and popular sayings that are meant to advise or teach a lesson. They address different aspects of life, including work, education, family, economy, politics and so forth. They usually reflect the cultural values, practices, experiences, and beliefs of a particular society. They stem from people’s mentality and ways of thinking at a particular time; that is why they are considered “mirrors of culture’ Ennaji (2008). They are also characterized by their rhyme, meter and/ or rhetorical features. These mnemonic features make them attractive and memorable that is how they are easily handed down from one generation to another.

Proverbs may contain humor as Kerschen (2012) argues “usually, proverbs contain humor, but that humor, particularly when the subject is women, can be bitter, satirical, even macabre” p 63. She adds that "proverbs more accurately represent a people's rules and ideals than their religious or ethical systems. Thus, proverbs are not just humorous retorts but are an important medium for teaching and learning" p63.

Many people may think that proverbs are outdated and old fashioned; however, detailed scrutiny of popular songs, sitcoms, and movies reveal that they still make use of this folk heritage. We should also admit that they are no longer widely used. The issue that we will tackle in this article is whether proverbs,

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regardless of the social and technological challenges we have been through, still reflect our beliefs and values.

**Significance of the study**

Previous research conducted in this field focused primarily on the biased representation of women in Moroccan proverbs. However, they overlooked the portrayal of men. To fill this research gap, this current investigation tries to compare between the representation of men and women in Moroccan proverbs, with the hope of raising awareness of people in general and the youth in particular of gender inequality and bias in proverbs.

**Objective of the Study**

The purpose of this investigation is twofold. Firstly, this study aims at analyzing the representation of men and women in the Moroccan proverbs. Secondly, proverbs are believed to convey wisdom that people should abide by; however, a close look at the proverbs can easily reveal that they also carry misconceptions and stereotypes that are socially held in high esteem, especially in a society like Morocco where the rate of illiteracy is high. Hence, the objective is to raise awareness about these biased misrepresentations that should be altered in the twenty-first century.

**Research question**

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Are there more proverbs about men than women?
- What are the roles associated with men and women in Moroccan proverbs?
- What are attributes associated with men and women in proverbs?

**Definition of Proverbs**

Different scholars have provided different tentative definitions on proverbs which remain controversial. To achieve the purpose of this investigation and to provide a more reliable and comprehensive definition, we relied on Whiting’s definition (1994) quoted from Rasul (2015):

> A proverb is an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth – that is, a truism, – in homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with every literature, where the material at our disposal is complete. (p.53)

**Previous Studies**

Previous studies (Rasul (2015), Hussein (2009), Lee (2015), Dorn (1986) about gendered proverbs are replete with bitter satire and sarcasm since the
construction of gender in proverbs reflects the negative portrayal of women. Hussein (2009) conducted a comparative study in Eastern Africa and found out that women are often described as weak, frivolous, dependent and foolish. They are even blamed for failing to meet the standards laid down by men. Blaming the victim is one way of justifying and strengthening inequality between men and women. The same findings are echoed in Dorn (1986) who studied Turkish proverbs. He argues that the sole duty of women is to maintain the household and bring up children.

Previous research carried on Moroccan proverbs echoed the same results to the previously mentioned studies (Belfatmi (2013), Ennaji (2008)). However, they overlooked how males are described. One of the recent studies of Moroccan proverbs was conducted by Belfatmi (2013). Her investigation provides an analytical comparison of the representation of women in Moroccan proverbs, with the aim of highlighting people’s cultural beliefs and attitudes. According to Belfatmi (2013), “Women in most cases are represented as weak, vulnerable, stupid and mainly victims of an ideology that is maintained by men.” p 20. In fact, men are believed to be at the origin of this deeply rooted biased and derogatory ideology against women, which explains the negative image associated with women in folk culture in general and proverbs in particular. According to Kerschen, (2012), historically, men are the primary producers of literary heritage.

Theoretical Framework

Walby’s (1990) theory of patriarchy provides a useful theoretical framework for our research question stated below. It takes into consideration six interrelated social parameters (paid-work, violence, household production, sexuality, culture, and the state). This theory works better on European societies because the dichotomy between public and private is not clearly divided in the Moroccan culture. According to Walby (1990), paid work is more important than the household. In Morocco, it is quite the opposite. To broaden the theoretical framework of the study, Connell’s (1987) hegemonic masculinity has also been taken into consideration which elucidates beliefs and practices that relegate men to dominant positions and demote women to subordinate and inferior social positions.

No investigation of gender portrayal in proverbs can be complete without a focus on the theory of intersection which takes into account such variables as age, class, sexuality, ethnic group, religion, and race.

Methodology

To achieve the aim of the present investigation, the data (75 proverbs) was collected from four Moroccan websites specialized in Moroccan folk culture. The relevant proverbs were identified and classified in relation to their themes. However, eight proverbs belong to more than one category that is why the total number of proverbs is not always similar to 75 proverbs, which is the case for the following examples:

1-  $abba zina w mate3ref lle3jina

   She is beautiful, but she cannot make bread.

This proverb is about beauty as a physical attribute and the importance of cooking.
2- $uf bitu we7teb bentu

*Have a look at his house first, and then you can get engaged with his daughter*

Similarly, this proverb can be calculated as related to two different variables, mainly marriage and the role of the woman as a housewife.

**Analysis**

The statistics about the number of proverbs about women outnumber those about men as the following table reveals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>rrabl belhemma amma lleHy a rh3a Hetta 3enD l3etruS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The man should be charismatic because even the goat has a beard.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>llef lebnat mamat He who has daughters has not died</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7ud lebnat men SDur l3emmat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ask a paternal aunt about the girl you want to marry</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>hbil tzewwej hbila wethennat leqbila</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men and women</td>
<td>lli Teybou lme3funa yaklu rajelha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: The Number of Proverbs about Men and Women.*

The table above shows that the vast majority (65) of proverbs depict women; whereas, only 9 portray men. The number of proverbs that can be attributed to both men and women is minimal as the statistics demonstrate. The apparent discrepancy between the number of proverbs about men and those about women is huge which reflects the importance attributed to women and how they should be in society. This explains why previous research neglected the portrayal of men in Moroccan proverbs.

**Types of proverbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of proverbs</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men and Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Traits</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Care</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Classification of proverbs into themes

The statistics in table 2 determine the different themes discussed below: physical appearance, obedience, family care, marriage among other things. The vast majority of proverbs deal with marriage (33%), which reflects the importance accorded to this theme in the Moroccan society. In the collected data, obedience (2%) is the least represented theme in the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both men and women</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: How men and women are depicted

Unexpectedly, it seems that both men and women can be described negatively or positively in proverbs, depending on the cultural context. Table 3 shows that there are more negative proverbs about women (72%) than about men (32%). Out of 65 proverbs about women, 72% of them negatively portray women. Also visible is that only one-third of proverbs about men (32%) are negative. Accordingly, these statistics reflect the roles and characteristics associated with each gender in the Moroccan society where men are described mostly positively and women negatively.

Physical appearance

Twelve proverbs are depicting the physical appearance of women, compared to only one proverb describing the main feature that a man should have. While men’s beauty is associated with ‘hemma’ charisma (example 6); women’s beauty lies in their physical attributes: youth (example 4) and body parts (examples 4 and 5), as the following examples show:

3- zzin f bnatna slala men l3emma l7ala
   Girls are beautiful, like their maternal and paternal aunts.

4- lla m$a zzin bqaw Hrufu
   If beauty fades away, its traces dwell forever

5- lli mertu qsira yefreH wiqul S&ira.
   He who has a short wife should be happy she will remain young

6- rrajel belhemma ?amma lleHya raha Hetta 3end l3etrus
   The man should be charismatic because even the goat has a beard.

This finding is echoed in Lee (2015) who “maintains that femininity is equated with glamour and physical charm.” p. 577.

Obedience

Traditionally, women are expected to obey all the males of the family (father, brother, husband and even their sons when they reach adulthood). It is even believed that a woman should be beaten once a week so that she will not revolt against her husband (example 7).

7- lemra Drebha men lHedd lHedd wella tgul magedha Hedd.
If you don’t beat your wife once a week, she will revolt

8- Dreb lehra tertaH

Beat your wife/woman to relax

This last proverb is an explicit example of the patriarchal authority exercised by man; it highlights the inferiority of women and the power of men. Traditionally, women were beaten by men of the family, and it was considered a natural phenomenon, commonly used to keep women within certain limits and to control their behavior. Proverb 7 encourages men to beat women at least once a week; otherwise, she will be the source of problems; women are equated with animals and violence against them is accepted. The last proverb (8) reiterates the same idea of the necessity of beating women as if man's satisfaction and women's beating are two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. Women are viewed as a source of problems. It is deemed essential to mention that there are no proverbs about violence against men in the data, which is not surprising since proverbs are man-made (Belfatmi (2013)). In a patriarchal system, it is impossible to describe men with such attributes as humiliation, shame, and inferiority that are tightly linked with violence. Besides, violence against women, a common practice in traditional societies, Morocco included, is a manifestation of masculinity (Walby (1990) and Connell (1987)), which is evident in my data as well.

Family care

Boys and girls are brought up differently in Morocco: Unlike boys, girls are always associated with the private sphere where they can learn the role of the ‘perfect’ housewives and maintain the role of future mothers.

The traditional roles of men and women are highlighted in the collected data. Nine proverbs associate women with the domestic sphere. Priority is given to housework which is deemed more essential than beauty (example 9, 10, and 11); the success of a marriage relationship lies in the women’s housework as examples 10 and 11 indicate. Example 12, the woman is equated with an animal (the donkey), which confirms her subordination and subservience. Although the comparison is very humiliating to women, this proverb is still considered positive, for the woman is described as the key to good family life.

9- "$abba zina w mate3refa$ lle3jina

She is beautiful, but she cannot make bread.

10- $uf bitu w7teb bentu

Have a look at his house first and before you get engaged with his daughter

11- ila b&iti te7teb bentha d7ul t$uf bitha

Have a look at her house first, and then you can get engaged with her daughter

12- mulat eddar 3mara wa77a tkun Hmara

A housewife is a better even if she looks like a donkey

13- bflusk bent sselTan 3rusek

If you’re wealthy, you can marry the king’s daughter

14- lli b&a Tamu yHell bezTamu.

The man who wants to get married should have money.
The last two examples foreground the role of men as breadwinners. Money here is a metaphor for work and wealth, two qualities required for men to get married.

The examples above indicate that men and women are associated with the public and private spheres respectively. Women are confined to their houses where they should be perfect housewives; otherwise, they are valueless. It is noteworthy that there are no corresponding proverbs that associate men with domestic tasks. Men, on the other hand, should work and have a job to provide for their families. Home is not their responsibility. Therefore, there are clear cut boundaries of each sphere. No one is allowed to transgress the sphere of the other at least in proverbs. Generally, proverbs aim to legitimize and naturalize their discourse; thus, women are the natural and legitimate homemakers, and men are naturally responsible for providing for the household.

15- qleb lberma 3la femmha teTle3 lbent lemmha

_The girl will necessarily become similar to her mother_

16- 7demt buk layghelbuk

Choose your father’s job.

Girls and boys are socialized to do the same duties and to shoulder the same responsibilities as their parents. Girls are supposed to be housekeepers like their mothers and boys are expected to be breadwinners, an essential condition of masculinity. Indirectly, proverbs (15) and (16) naturalize the association between men and the public productive sphere and women and the private sphere. The complete omission of women from the public sphere is a transgression to women’s rights and a way to downgrade their contributions in the economy of the household (Walby's (1990)). In a nutshell, Moroccan proverbs seem to highlight the gendered division of labor where men and women are linked respectively to paid productive work and unpaid household work.

17- makaynessi lbent femm ha &ir hemmha

_No daughter forgets her mother unless she has problems_

18- lli 7ellef lbnat mamat.

_He who has daughters has not died_

19- llimat BBah ywessed rrekba lli mat mmu ywessed l3etba

_When the father dies, the mother takes care of her children; when the mother dies, the children are thrown away._

20- zewwej bentek w be33ed darha mayjik &ir 7barha

_Marry your daughter and make her house far away so that you get only her news._

The woman, in the first three examples is considered a virtue since she takes care of her family (parents (17 and 18) and children (19)) and never let them down even after her marriage; the man, on the other hand, should get rid of his daughter (20) because she is the source of problems. Once again, this last set of examples demonstrate that women’ role is to take heed of their families, which seems to be the last concern of men.

_Marriage_
Marriage is the most prevalent theme in the data. Once again women are portrayed in a very negative way; they are depicted as useless human beings if they do not get married. Examples 21, and 22 reflect explicit bias and inequality against women. Marriage is the only institution where a woman can have value; otherwise, she becomes “3ar” a shame that only ‘qberha’ her grave can repair. Example 24 depict women in a very humiliating way since the father has to pay if he wants his daughter to remain married. All these proverbs exaggerate the humiliation and inferiority of women but, no need to mention, exaggeration is one of the well-known features of ideological discourses. Nevertheless, men are depicted differently; they should get married with girls from well-grounded families (26) or with their cousins who are always willing to endure problems so that marriage would succeed (25). Example 23 discern two highly appreciated feminine traits of girls in general and brides in particular: shyness and silence,

21- l3ateq feddar 3ar
   A single girl in her father’s house becomes a shame
22- lmimma rajelha ?imma qberha
   The daughter should be in her husband’s house or in her grave.
23- ssukut 3alamat RiDa
   The bride’s silence is a sign of her consent
24- 3Ti bentek wzid 3Sida
   Marry your daughter and pay for her
25- 7ud bent 3emmek teSber 3la hemmek.
   Get married to your cousin, and she will bear all your imperfections.
26- 3lik bbnat l?uSul rah zman iTul.
   Get married to a high birth girl since marriage is life long.
27- ila gulti Sbi Sbi yefreH llah wennbi.
   It’s better to give birth to a son.

Producing male offspring is highly valued by traditional families because the male is going to perpetuate the family name. On the other hand, the birth of a female in the family is considered a curse due to the parents’ concern about her future marriage and the honor of the family. This idea is consistent with example 26.

Negative traits
Throughout history, women were often stigmatized with stupidity, evil, and many other negative traits. The aim is to relegate them to secondary and inferior positions.

Women are often described in proverbs as:
28- lemra sewwelha u maddir$ breyha
   Don’t follow your wife’s opinion.
29- zzin zina u le3qel ne$rih lik
   She is beautiful, but she needs a brain.
30- Dreb Hlima Hetta tbul lli ferasha mayzul”/
   Even if you beat Hlima till she urinates, she will never forget what she has in her mind.
31- lemra neSS 3qel
   Women have got half brains
32- ttellab itleb umertu tseddeq
   The beggar asks for alms and his wife donates.

It is evident that the binary opposition between beauty and intelligence are correlated with men and women respectively, as examples 28 and 29 demonstrate. It is a common stereotype that a woman cannot be beautiful and at the same time intelligent. This idea is consistent with example 28 which depicts the man as the intelligent and wise decision maker; he should not follow his wife’s ideas and opinions. Proverb 29 reflects the corrupt nature of women; the woman, Hlima is described as stubborn; she never changes her mind even if the man beats her. Again, these proverbs corroborate women’s subordination and inferiority. Both proverbs 31 and 32 depict women as stupid.

33- lli kay3emlu yeblis f3am t3emlu le3guza fsa3a
   What the devil does in one year, the mother in law can do it in an hour
34- lemra lef3a u mHezma b-ibliss
   A woman is a snake, and the devil is her companion.
35- Hmati wejh ddlu hiya Harra uweldha hlu
   My mother in law is evil like, but her son is kind.

The first two examples (33 and 34) compare women to the devil and snake. As sources of threat to people, these vicious creatures should be avoided. They are likely to bring about disasters around them. The last example explains (35) the eternal conflict between the wife and her mother in law where the latter is considered bitter while the son is sweet. The binary opposition between the characteristics of the former and the latter are highlighted. In the same line Belfatmi (2013) argues that “woman, especially wives, have the power of destructive practices and wreaking havoc. They are accused of taking revenge from those who cause harm to them, especially, their husbands…… Women are sought out as an agent of destruction. They are accused of bewitching out of an innate capacity and are depicted as a threat to society.” p 19-20.

Discussion
No doubt, proverbs are held in high esteem in the Moroccan society where they are still used in newspaper articles, media texts, and popular songs. They still have an impact on the Moroccan society which is based mainly on traditional values and beliefs. The analysis of the data collected from the internet demonstrates that proverbs legitimize male chauvinism and stigmatized female image. Moreover, proverbs disseminate the patriarchal ideologies which are handed down from one generation to another. In fact, they confirm the striking disparity between males as powerful, dominant and superior and females as weak, dominated and inferior.
According to Ennaji (2008, 169), “Moroccan culture perpetuates gender discrimination and relations through oral modes such as proverbs. The latter reminds us of the roles women have played, and still play, as guardians of orality. Proverbs do not simply reflect the social reality of women, but help construct it." Additionally, it is generally believed that proverbs are loaded with wisdom and truth; therefore, they should not be questioned. They are part of the collective norms taken for granted. What makes the situation worse is the shelter they provide for anyone who wants to criticize or insult women. Besides, the data analysis also shows that proverbs rely on the use of binary oppositions to highlight the unfair discrimination between the sexes: they favor the male and degrade the female. In a nutshell, the Moroccan proverbs are replete with a hegemonic discourse which outlines the traditional norms of what is a man and what is a woman. In other words, the discourse of proverbs determines what adequate behavior is expected from a man and a woman.

It is generally believed that proverbs reflect collective wisdom and culture-related truth, so they are transferred from one generation to another. Along with this transfer, messages about men and women are also maintained and transmitted, which leads to the creation of attitudes towards gender. However, “truthfulness is quite challenging … because it is not the absolute truth rather it is the societal interpretation of the truth” (Rasul, 2015, p54).

Conclusion

The analysis of the data demonstrates the evident stereotypical representation of women who are praised for their housework and physical beauty, but they are also described as submissive and dependent on men. On the other hand, men are valued for their hard work, money, and independence.

The analysis of Moroccan proverbs displays the negative portrayal of women, which provides evidence of their discrimination and underestimation in a society where women are still perceived as inferior. That is why these false stereotypical images should be altered. Proverbs about men and women do not pass on truth and wisdom; on the contrary, they indoctrinate future generations and make them accept unquestioned and ready-made values.

Raising awareness of the future generations, providing education for all, and cutting illiteracy can be solutions to bias and partiality manifested in Moroccan proverbs. The aim is to create a democratic society where men and women enjoy equality and democracy.

References


Moroccan travelers to Europe had the chance to discover new people and cultures which opened their eyes on a new world beyond theirs. Their journeys were educational in the sense that they were exposed to new information and knowledge which they felt the obligation to transfer in their accounts that documented their impressions and interactions. Among these travelers is Mohammed ben al-Hassan Al-Hajjoui who was fascinated by European advancements and kept comparing them to what lacked in his own country. However, this fascination was interrupted by the status of women which formed a challenge to him despite his liberal views.

Al-Hajjoui was a member of an ambassadorial delegation headed by minister Hajj Mohammed al-Maqari sent by Sultan Youssef ben al-Hassan to France in 1919 to participate in the French National Day which coincided with the celebration of their win in the First World War. As for England, al-Hajjoui chose to extend his visit to London and Manchester to visit some family friends who settled there and worked as merchants and also to see the wonders he heard about those cities. Al-Hajjoui wrote a travel account entitled Ar-Rihla al-Orouibia 1919 which portrays an image of early 20th century France and England and the rapid modern shift that had affected different facets of life in both countries. He provided a modernist approach towards Europe in which he realized the huge gap that was forming between the two worlds. He witnessed how powerful, developed and advanced Europe was becoming through science and education. He produced a discourse of amazement and confusion at how fast the outer world was rapidly developing while Morocco was still struggling from internal conflicts over power that diminished the resources of the country and the European powers that were trying to expand in Africa, starting from Morocco which was a strategic country that represented a crossover to other African countries.

About the decision to write the account, al-Hajjoui says:

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3 Ibid., pp, 190-110.

I thought that I should write what I saw during this journey which will benefit the people of al-Maghreb who have never traveled and did not know anything about the conditions of Europe. I chose not to lengthen my account by speaking about the geographies and the old and modern histories of those countries because enough has been written in these two sciences. I decided to limit my writing to what I saw and I summarized a lot of what I went through.

From the beginning of the account, we notice that he committed himself to writing what he would see and be selective in documenting what he thought would benefit people who have never travelled before. Unlike other travelers who dwelled in the histories and geographies of the countries they visited, he decided to limit himself to what was happening during that period in Europe and to be as precise and brief as he can.

The travel accounts written in 19th and early 20th centuries were filled with fascination and surprise at the sudden and fast development of the West. While Orientalists of that period who traveled to the Orient felt that they were going back in time and living in state of “belatedness”, as Ali Behdad notes: “Traveling in the Orient at a time when the European colonial power structure and the rise of tourism had transformed the exotic referent into the familiar sign of Western hegemony, these orientalists could not help but experience a sense of displacement in time and space.” Since the Orientalists went into a state of “belatedness” and felt like going back in time, the 19th and early 20th century Moroccan travelers felt like they were going forward in time. They were astonished at the advancements in all fields which they could not fathom nor explain. They did not even find the right vocabulary in Arabic to describe what was going on around them. They were also displaced in time as they were experiencing a state of “acceleration” which transported them to an advanced “futuristic” space that bewildered them and confused them at the same time. He was amazed by the industrial development in both countries and he tried to document as much information as possible in the hope that there might reforms in Morocco that would elevate it to Europe’s modernity. He referred to London and Paris as “the sources of wisdom in Europe”. On the one hand, al-Hajjoui admired and was fascinated by the power of science and education in Europe but on the other hand, he was disappointed by the liberated status of women which allowed them a certain amount of freedom which he saw as excessive and destructive.

Al-Hajjoui was impressed by the system of organization in every field in Europe as he was fascinated by the importance that was given to education and science. He considered education to be the stepping stone which explains the rapid development of the West.

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1 Ibid., p. 31. Translation is mine.
development in Europe. They cherished education and invested in schools and in people to learn either in schools or in the industry fields. He stated:

Education is compulsory in France for men and women. Every child who reaches a certain age must be enrolled in primary school. After primary school, if the person wishes not to continue their studies then they are obliged to learn a skill in one of the industries. Education is a must for every male and female, whether wealthy or poor, which made the country rise up from rock bottom in which many underdeveloped countries have fallen; they are countries where most of its people do not know anything about writing, literature, calculation and others…like the people of al-Maghreb al-Aqsa/Morocco.”

He was adamant in his insistence on the issue of education and its importance for the development of any nation. Education at that time was a privilege in Morocco where only an elite knew how to read and write, mainly men. He was impressed to see women involved in the educational system and the field work which fastened the pace of development in different fields. After his return from his journey, he gave a lecture in Rabat which he entitled “Teaching Women a Primary Arabic Education” about the importance of education for women in which he insisted that women must study for a certain period of time until they reach puberty and then they must stay home, continue their studies there preferably, and not compete with men for work outside the confines of the house. If they were to work then they should work as teachers to female students in schools designed specifically for them.

Though he was open to the idea of teaching girls, he was limited by his cultural and religious beliefs. He called for an imitation of the West only in things that do not touch cultural and religious borders.

Al-Hajjoui’s stance towards women’s education can be considered revolutionary at that time despite the restrictions that he made but it can be considered a step forward towards women’s right for education. His account was an indirect call for reforms in Morocco by following the footsteps of those countries which will make him the target of the indignation of the Sultan and religious men of the country who considered him a “follower of the West” and thus of the “colonizer”. His views about the reforms were too liberal and progressive for the Moroccan monarchy to even take them into consideration. In his book Oropa fi Miraat ar-Rihla / Europe in the Mirror of Rihla, Said Bensaid Al-Alaoui

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1 Ibid., pp. 52-53. Translation is mine.
3 Translation is mine.
4 Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, Ar-Rihla al-Ouroupia 1919. p, 163.
5 Ibid., p. 15.
6 Translation is mine.
states that through his travel account, al-Hajjoui tried to produce an intellectual, social and economic project which is both reform and restoration. It is a vision that would have flourished without his travel and firsthand observations of the changes he witnessed in Europe.\(^1\) About the things he wished he had in his country, he said:

We took the train from Bordeaux’s train station [...] whether you look left or right, there is not a land that is neglected. Their agriculture is developed and based on many modern machines. Every roads to any of their villages is well-organized, even the forests are well-taken care of. Every river has a bridge and every road is constructed well until we reached Paris.”\(^2\)

He was basically impressed by everything he saw in Europe which was the opposite of what was going on in Morocco. He tried to make his demands for reforms subtle and made them in the form of an indirect call for the notables in Morocco to see that they too can achieve that degree of development if only they adopted science and education as primary pillars in the road for reforms. According to Abderrahim El-Moudden: “The traveler travels to learn. When he returns home, he produces knowledge in different forms.”\(^3\) The traveler becomes a learner of anything new in the host country and when he returned back home, he becomes, in a way or another, a reformist and this is exactly what happened to al-Hajjoui whose entire perspective about development was changed by this one trip to Europe.

The Moroccan travelers who visited more than one European country during their journey had the chance to visit different “Europes” and accumulate different experiences about a heterogeneous cultural Other that changed according to the visited country. They paid attention to all the details and incidents that seemed surprising and wondrous to the Muslim Arabic thought. Despite his outspoken fascination with the West, al-Hajjoui criticized French women’s behaviors and demeanor. Though he was impressed by the development that France reached in terms of infrastructure and education, he still was not pleased with the amount of the “morally destructive” liberation of the French society, especially when it comes to women. After visiting the theaters, going on mixed dinners and attending several mixed gatherings which were an opportunity for cultural exchange of ideas, al-Hajjoui was struck by what he calls “the decadence of the French society as well their lack of morals”.\(^4\) Both men and women behaved in a nonchalant way whether in private or in public which made al-Hajjoui re-assess his impression about France. The France he was fascinated about started to crumble in front of his eyes once he came to the realization that it lacked the global morals of chastity,

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\(^3\) Abderrahim El-Moudden, *Adabiyat ar-Rihla*. p, 30. Translation is mine.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 74.
respect, modesty…etc, especially when it comes to the women. According to al-Hajjoui:

[…] That is the result of excessive welfare, total freedom and being detached from religion, especially for the women who abandoned modesty and shyness and adorned themselves in the worst unbelievable way that only sexual intercourse among animals publically in the streets can be worse than that. They have gone this far or closer which corrupted the morals and cannot be accepted neither in character, mind nor in any religious law.¹

He attributed the vulgarity that he witnessed among people, especially women, in France to the excessive entertainment and luxury, absolute freedom, and their non-adherence to the teachings of religion. In other words, the more they indulged in the earthly world and its distracting matters, the more corrupt and decayed they became. He considered them a nation that lost its morals and ethics in opulence and self-indulgence that they follow their desires without any constraints or restrictions. He showed us a world about which he had an ambivalent point of view. As much developed as it was in economy, trade, technology, and infrastructure, as much as they were “decadent” and “immoral”. In this instance, we can clearly notice that a traveler usually travels carrying not only his physical luggage but also what Behdad calls “the cultural baggage” which consists of the traveler’s religion, culture, character, profession, social status…In short, anything that constitutes his identity interferes with the way he perceives the world. Moroccan travelers as travelling identities to Europe could not see and document their experiences with the same neutrality which they promised at the beginning of their accounts when they stated that they would only document what they saw. In the case of al-Hajjoui, his cultural and religious lens became a filter through which we detect how his identity affected his impressions which became mostly apparent when he spoke about the women.

Al-Hajjoui was completely fascinated by the French development in politics, social justice, education, architecture, cleanliness, organization…etc, but he was disappointed to witness the moral decadence in such a developed society. The excessive extravagance and luxury and love for money and showing off had turned France into a country of “amusement and indulgence”.³ His perceptions of Western women were hostile and degrading. He saw European women through the lenses of his own culture as “ill-mannered”, “corrupt” and “shameless” leading a life of extravagance and unnecessary splendor. Though he was a reformist, his views and impressions were different than other travelers who were amazed by women’s liberation and rights. He attacked French women for their immoral behaviors and the way they revealed themselves and how they were in a constant competition to wear the latest and most expensive dresses.⁴ Al-Hajjoui believed that moral

¹ Ibid.. p. 74.
⁴ Ibid., p. 74.
decadence was the result of achieving the at most civilization and welfare and granting women too much freedom. Al-Hajjoui summed up his criticism in one sentence “Every nation that increases in excessive luxury, increases in excessive extravagance.” Every nation that achieves the extreme in one thing, must fall into the extreme of its opposite. France was one the leading powers in the world yet the freedom and money had “corrupted” society. He believed that the lack of jealousy and chastity had destroyed the morals society in general and women in particular.

While in Europe, Moroccan travelers retained and preserved their cultural identity through their language, for those who did not speak European languages, their appearances and clothes. This preservation of identity had often put them in the spot light for European people’s attention. As al-Hajjoui mentioned: “A woman came to us surprised by our clothes: are you Jews? And another one said: Do you play in the theater? which means the entertainment houses, that some of the members in our delegation got bored of the dullness of the question and the excessive observation at us.”

They wore their traditional clothes wherever they went which made them attract the attention of the people who were curious about them and wanted to know who they are. Their cultural identity traveled with them reflecting their background that was not understood to the opposing identity that they encountered. The confusion that this “travelling identity” created made them get defined with associations that had nothing to do with their real identity that was thought of as in disguise.

The Moroccan ambassadorial members were observant of the European people who in turn put the Moroccans under their gaze and tried to project their Orientalist fantacizations on them. This encounter between the Orient and Occident in Europe marked a contact zone in which both parts negotiated their stereotypical perceptions of each other. The Moroccans were uncomfortable by the constant staring and questioning but what they did not realize is that they were cultural facilitators who were either mending or breaking stereotypes which were forged for centuries through Orientalist depictions of the Orient. They were unable to understand or contain this curiosity of the European. In Britain, al-Hajjoui explained this curiosity as fanaticism and entitled one section of his books as “English fanaticism” in which he said:

And I found there [London] many men, women and children. While we were looking at the sculpture above the obelisk to know who he is, they gathered around us astonished at our clothes as if a person was born only to wear European clothes and if he did not then he must have changed God’s making and creation. They are of extreme fanaticism and intolerance. […] This has stopped us from inspecting the sculpture so we left right away.

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1 Ibid., 74. Translation is mine.
2 Ibid., p. 333. Translation is mine.
The men, women and children flocked around them on every occasion to see their Moorish clothes and exotic appearances which fed their imaginative characters of what a Moor looked like. They were astonished about the travelers’ appearances and attires as much as they were astonished by theirs. They were moments of mutual exoticization which confused the travelers who did not know how to explain nor how to deal with it. They seemed to forget that they were the “strange”, the “wonder”, and the “new” in the host countries and that it is normal to attract such attention and arouse such curiosity.

Al-Hajjoui’s travel account about early 20th century Europe was full of both amazement and admiration for all the developments and achievements in various fields but at the same time, it was full of confusion about the status of women in the European society which only revealed the “cultural baggage” of the traveler. Though he wished that his account was going to help scholars who had never been to the West to change their negative stereotypes about it, he failed to absorb the curiosity and interest in them as “exotic travelers”.

**Bibliography**

Nourdine El Khiyati

Against the Current: A Western Female Writer Celebrating Moroccan Women’s Agency¹

(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

This article is a postcolonial reading of the representation of Moroccan women in contemporary American novel. The depiction of Arab and Muslim women in Western literature takes place within an Orientalist framework. Arab and Muslim women have always been portrayed in Western writings in very negative ways. In fact, “when it comes to writing about Arab women”, Suha Sabbagh writes, “stereotypical, distorted imaging has continued unabated since the early days of Orientalist writings” (Sabbagh, 2003, p. xiii). For centuries, Western writers have described Arab and Muslim women not only as being uneducated and lacking agency, but also as being weak, submissive and subordinated to their husbands. They have been represented as victims of patriarchal society, who have no identity, no freedom, and no independence. Moreover, they have been reduced to sexual objects performing oriental dances and existing only for sensual pleasure in the harem. “Through Western eyes,” Sabbagh argues, “Arab women are perceived in popular culture as docile, male dominated, speechless, veiled, secluded, subdued, and unidentifiable beings” (Sabbagh, 2003, p. xi).

In his seminal book, Orientalism, Edward Said homogenizes Western representation of Otherness, arguing that there is “one West, one text.” Said studies Orientalism “as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires—British, French, American—in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced” (Said, 1978, pp. 14-15). This means that Said approaches Orientalism as a homogeneous discourse shared and reproduced by British, French and American empires. He disregards all the differences among Western colonial texts and unifies them under one text. Said, Denis Porter writes, “ignores in both Western scholarly and creative writing all manifestations of counter-hegemonic thought” (Porter, 1983, p. 153).

Nevertheless, other theorists like Denis Porter, Lisa Lowe, and Sara Mills criticize Said’s homogeneity and argue that Western representation of Otherness is heterogeneous. Sara Mills attributes the heterogeneity of the colonial texts to gender. She argues that, unlike male writers, female travel writers sympathize with the natives and criticize the colonizers; therefore, they allow conflicting discourses to appear in the text. For Mills, Khalid Bekkaoui writes, it is gender rather than

genre which is responsible for heterogeneity. Colonialist ideology is upset by the fact that the female narrator ... consistently criticizes the colonizer and expresses her sympathy for the Africans and, at times, she even identifies with them in what looks like a ‘going native’ attitude. (Bekkaoui, 1998, p.45)

Unlike male-written texts, female writings, for Mills, can destabilize the colonial discourse. The sympathy, identification and fear of the female travel writers disrupt colonial authority and allow conflicting voices to appear in the text. In this sense, Orientalism, according to Mills, is not a homogeneous discourse, as Said argues, “but is rather made up of diverse elements which both contest and affirm the dominant discourses and other discourses of which it is composed” (Mills, 1991, p. 55). Colonial texts can confirm as well as challenge colonial discourse.

This article applies Sara Mills’ theory on a contemporary American novel, *The Free Woman* (2002), by Carol Malt to demonstrate that gender is responsible about the heterogeneity of the text. Against the Orientalist tradition, the American writer celebrates the memory of an unprecedented Muslim woman, who governed the city of Tetouan during the beginning of the sixteenth century. Malt commemorates the life of Sayyida al-Hurra, which destabilizes the Orientalist discourse about Otherness, Moroccan women in particular, and demonstrates that Arab women have agency.

Malt’s novel, *The Free Woman*, reveals many instances where Hura challenges Western prejudices about Arab women and confirms her power. She proves that she is powerful enough to penetrate men’s world and impose herself as a powerful woman. Not only does she help her husband in governing Tetouan while still alive, but she also takes his position after his death. She governs the city and resists the colonizers.

Hura’s power begins to appear when Mandari, her husband and the governor of Tetouan, asks her to attend the trial of the Beni Hassan who stole her dowry the day she arrived in Tetouan. During that trial, Mandari discovers that she is smart and helpful; therefore, he allows her to attend more trials and help as a translator for the Berbers. The “Hall of Justice became Hura’s second home” (Malt, 2002, p. 65). Mandari “relied on her memory of names and faces, bending towards her so she could whisper them in his ear” (Malt, 2002, p. 65). Hura demonstrated that she is very intelligent and has a good memory, and, consequently, made her husband proud of her.

In a brutal Portuguese attack on Tetouan, Hura heroically defends her city. As the Portuguese marines penetrate the city killing and maiming civilians and destroying and burning buildings, Hura has been alerting everybody in the Kasbah about the attack. When the Portuguese reach the Kasbah and a Lieutenant called Pacheco starts fighting Mandari, Hura has only been watching them as long as Mandari is predominating the fight. However, as soon as “the tip of Pacheco’s cutlass sliced Mandari across his right eyebrow and down his cheek” and “Blood from the gash streamed into his eyes” and he screams “I can’t see!”, Hura bravely interferes as Pacheco is about to kill Mandari. She tells Kleinatz, the Dutch teacher, to hit Pacheco with “the chains by the wall. The shackles” (Malt, 2002, p.
Kleinatz hits him on his head and he falls on the floor. Hura then “grabbed the Lieutenant’s fallen sword from the floor. Leaning over the Lieutenant, who was struggling to get up, she drove it into his stomach” (Malt, 2002, p. 83). She bravely kills the Portuguese Lieutenant Pacheco and saves her husband’s life as well her city from being colonized.

Hura’s killing of Pacheco is a reenactment of the violence of colonialism itself and a reflection of Western savagery. Hura’s reaction is a reflection of the Portuguese brutality, since it is the Portuguese who start the slaughtering. In addition to the fact that this Portuguese Lieutenant and his fellow soldiers have killed several innocent Tetouani civilians, destroyed buildings and have been about to massacre Hura’s family during this attack, Mandari loses his sight, his first wife Fatima dies, and Hura, who is pregnant in her fifth month, has a miscarriage. Thus, Hura heroically defends her family, her people and her city.

After her heroic triumph over the Portuguese marines, Hura proves to be powerful and able to manage critical situations. Since he loses his sight in the invasion, Mandari decides to let Hura participate in the governance of the city. He informs her “You will join us in the mornings for Council meetings” (Malt, 2002, p. 91). Hura again proves her agency.

Accordingly, Hura “realized that her husband had not recovered, and might never. She worried if he could govern decisively now … She must do something. And she must begin now” (Malt, 2002, p. 92). Hura demonstrates that she is intelligent and aware of what is going on in the city. She “tried to become her husband’s eyes” (Malt, 2002, p. 92). She proves that she is capable of helping Mandari in the governance of Tetouan and taking the right decisions. When Mandari becomes totally blind, Hura tells him “I will bring news back to you – news you know you can trust. I will be your eyes in the city. I am not afraid” (Malt, 2002, p. 96). She proves that she is powerful and can impose herself on men’s world. She is not afraid to ride Mandari’s horse throughout the city and encourage the citizens that though their governor is blind, there is a powerful woman who is taking care of everything. Hura rode through the old and the new neighborhoods. She walked with her escort through souks and public places. As she has hoped, her presence, wrapped in the symbols of authority seemed to encourage the populace. Some even cheered her as she nodded to them in passage. (Malt, 2002, p. 97)

Hura confirms that she is powerful enough to govern Tetouan. She rides and walks through the streets of Tetouan talking to people, consoling those who have lost relatives during the Portuguese invasion, asking about their needs, assuming the reformations that should be done, and reporting everything to Mandari. She affirms that she is able to take care of the city. As Mandari retreats in his room in the Kasbah and no longer goes out, Hura takes care of everything, even the most complicated matters. She manages to make Tetouan flourish again after the terrible destruction that the Portuguese caused during the invasion.

Historically speaking, Abu Sohayb Mohamed Athar explains that al-Hurra participated along with her husband al-Mandri in the governing of the city and took care of the citizens’ welfare. Her husband used to consult her about governing
problems and she always provided advice and proved to be helpful. During her husband’s successive absences when he went for jihad against the Portuguese, she became the governor of the city (Athar, 2008, p. 50).

Hura also defies illiteracy. She asks Mandari’s permission to let Kleinatz teach her to read and write and in no time she becomes very fluent in reading and understanding books. Kleinatz says that she was also a diligent reader with a bright mind and a thoughtful and inquiring side to her nature … She had read and absorbed almost all of the Arabic manuscripts in his library, including several which were written by him; astrological scrolls on the names and natures of all the heavenly bodies, and even his manuals on archery and horticulture. She could even argue with him on his own principles of aesthetics. Yes, she was articulate with an enchanting voice. (Malt, 2002, p. 120)

Because of her intelligence, Hura has quickly learned to read and write. She reads even complicated books, discusses them with Kleinatz, and even argues with him about their content.

What also proves Hura’s intelligence and intellectual reasoning is her answer to Kleinatz’ stereotypes about the harem of the Sultan. When Kleinatz, tells her all those Orientalist stereotypes about the huge number of women within the Sultan’s harem and the Sultan’s lasciviousness, Hura interrupts him asking about the source of his information. She is aware that Westerners cannot have access to the harem; therefore, she asks him “Where did you read all this?” (Malt, 2002, p. 126) Kleinatz’ answer reveals the incredibility of his information, and which can also be read as Malt’s counter discourse to the credibility of the early Orientalist stereotypes about Arab women within the Harem. Klientatz says “A document written by a French woman who escaped. Of course, she may not have been truthful. But no man has ever been inside that harem and lived to tell about it” (Malt, 2002, p. 126). Klienatz’ answer demonstrates that his stereotypes about the harem cannot be taken for real. He himself admits that this French woman “may not have been truthful” and that no man can enter the harem and leaves it. By asking about the source of Kleintaz’ information, Hura challenges the authenticity of Western representation of the harem and proves their fragility and incredibility. She also proves that she is intelligent and aware of the Orientalist stereotypes about Oriental women.

Furthermore, as the Portuguese threats to invade Tetouan again continue, Hura again proves her power and decides to take the nine days journey to Fez to ask for the Sultan’s help to protect Tetouan from the Portuguese. Accompanied only by the old, but brave, Captain Tarek, Hura promises “I will get the Sultan to send troops to our defense. I mustn’t fail. [Italics in origin]” (Malt, 2002, p. 137).

Nevertheless, when Hura reaches Fez and the Sultan’s palace, the corrupt Wazir Walid gives his instructions to his Chamberlain to assassinate her. When Hura and Tarek are going back to the fondouk, they are attacked by “two figures clad all in black” (Malt, 2002, p. 148) when they reach the tanneries. Tarek kills the first assassin while

Hura drew her dagger and scanned the courtyard for movement … The assassin’s back was to her. Holding the dagger while crawling on hands and knees,
she stabbed him in the thigh. He lost his balance, wavered and fell into the pit. Hura watched his black turban disappear into the slime. (Malt, 2002, p. 149)

Hura and Tarek manage to kill the two assassins who have tried to kill them. However, later on that night while they are in the fondouk, six more assassins will attack them again. There were some traders that night in the fondouk and their camels were tied in the courtyard. Hura tells Tarek to untie the animals and push them to run away in order to veer the assassins’ attention and to meet her outside. Hura scissored her legs around the sides of her horse in front of the saddle, hung upside down on its neck and pulled Tarek’s horse behind her by the reins … If anyone was looking, all they could see would be two riderless horses and a mule moving slowly toward the door. (Malt, 2002, pp. 150-151)

Thanks to her wits, Hura manages again to escape from the assassins. She is always alert to danger.

Although the Wazir Walid disappoints Hura and refuses to send troops to save Tetouan from the Portuguese, Hura does not give up her determination to save Tetouan. While in Rabat, she meets a pirate called Nabil who tells her “I’m legal. I got a Commission. A Marque from the Pasha. I got the right to clear our waters of infidel shipping – Portuguese, Spaniard, Dutch, all of ‘em” (Malt, 2002, p. 163). Listening to Nabil, Hura immediately thinks about an idea to save Tetouan. She thinks of hiring pirates to attack Christian ships in the Mediterranean and use the money to hire mercenaries to protect Tetouan. She tells Nabil “I came here to learn about piracy” (Malt, 2002, p. 162). Tarek interferes to explain “That’s what Lady Hura wants to know. How privateers work. She’s wantin’ to … give letters of Marque to privateers in Martil” (Malt, 2002, p. 163). Hura intends to gain money from piracy. She says “Money is what I need to hire mercenaries. I’ll get it from the pirates who use our ports” (Malt, 2002, p. 171).

In fact, Hura even intends to become a pirate herself and raid Christian ships. She thinks Martil “could easily become a pirate haven. She had learnt much from Nabil. If that donkey could succeed as a pirate, surely she could too. She would learn sailing from Tarek” (Malt, 2002, p. 176). Hura does her best to provide protection to her city. She jeopardizes her own life in order to save the lives of the inhabitants of Tetouan. She is a very brave, smart, and powerful woman.

Al-Hurra’s piracy against the Christian ships in the Mediterranean is also documented in history. Athar explains that al-Hurra had a fleet of ships specialized in piracy (Athar, 2008, p. 66). ElWahhabi also writes that al-Hurra’s fleet of ships allied with the Turkish Barbarossa’s fleet and together they struck fear in the hearts of Europeans, especially after they raided on Gibraltar in 1540 and returned loaded with booties and captives (ElWahhabi, 2004, p. 30).

Another example which demonstrates Hura’s power is when Kleinatz warns her against the Barbarossa pirates. He says “I thought you should know about the biggest pirates of all, maybe the biggest threat we have here … The European Kings quake before these terrors of the Mediterranean – the Barbarossa brothers” (Malt, 2002, p. 220). He warns her that Suleiman the Magnificent “vowed to make Spain Muslim again, and Tetouan, um, Martil, is the best launching port.
He gave those pirates – the Barbarossa brothers – Letters of Marque” (Malt, 2002, p. 247). He also informs her that they “are coming. They are very close and raiding villages all along the coast. It’s likely they want Tetouan” (Malt, 2002, p. 247). Hura’s remarkable response demonstrates her powerful character. She declares “I’m not going to sit here like a dove. I’m going to the hunter, to Barbarossa in Algiers. I’ll join with this Khair” (Malt, 2002, p. 248). She is very brave. She is not afraid about herself. She is afraid about her city. She decides to join the Barbarossa in their piracy against the Christian ships in order to protect her city. She is a remarkable woman.

Accompanied only by Tarek and Habib, she goes to Algiers to meet Khair Barbarossa. When they reach Algiers, Hura tells Khair “It is I who give you the Marque of Privateer to the Berbers. I also promise that you will have a tenth of all the Spanish and Portuguese booty you capture. From Algiers west to the Pillars of Hercules” (Malt, 2002, p. 254). They both bargain the percentage of the booty and Khair declares “We’ll go to this port … I will see if it suits me” (Malt, 2002, p. 255). With her wits, Hura manages to convince the famous Khair Barbarossa to work for her. She is very courageous, intelligent, and powerful.

Hura’s agency also appears in her final meeting with the Sultan of Fez. When Hura arrives in Fez, the Sultan invites her to his palace. When they meet, the Sultan tries to provoke her by undermining the importance of women and telling her that women belong to the harem. However, Hura’s answer is very clever. It shows that she is well educated and very smart. She says

Surely, you honor women highly in Fes. I heard that your great Karawiyyin Mosque was founded some seven hundred years ago by Fatima, bint Mohammed ibn Feheri, a wealthy woman from Tunisia. All Fes must be proud of her … And her sister, Miriem, founded the Mosque of the Andalous, isn’t that so? (Malt, 2002, p. 283)

Being confounded, the Sultan switches the topic. He has not expected such an answer from her. He tells her

Yes, I’ve heard of you and your exploits. You’re the Pirate Queen. Your city does a good business in piracy. Getting rich, no doubt … I’ve heard how you cut off the head of one Portuguese officer, escaped from prison, and then killed that Portuguese Captain, Dias. How did you escape from the prison? Was the jailer blind? How did you get Barbarossa and his men to fight for you? Have you some special power over men? (Malt, 2002, pp. 283-284)

The Sultan surprises Hura because he seems to know a lot about her. Very modestly, she answers him “If I have any talents, they are dedicated to the service of Tetouan and to my family” (Malt, 2002, p. 284). When she asks him about the reason he invited her, the Sultan informs her “I invited you because you interest me. There are no other women like you … You will marry me. And of course, your gift to me is Tetouan” (Malt, 2002, p. 284). Admiring Hura’s strong character, her intelligence, and her achievements, the Sultan of Fez decides to marry her. Nevertheless, Hura’s reaction is remarkable. Although she is aware of his supreme power and she is inside his palace, she is not afraid of him. She violently shouts in his face “I am a free woman, I will not be ordered to marry” (Malt, 2002, p. 284).
Hura appears very powerful. She challenges the King of Morocco and proves that she is not a powerless or submissive woman. She is a free woman and no one can impose anything on her, even if he is the King of Morocco.

To sum up, against the recurrent Orientalist representations of Arab women in Western literature, Carol Malt’s novel provides another discourse, which disrupts the Orientalist tradition. In fact, gender creates contradictions within the text and destabilizes the colonial discourse. It seems that, as a female writer, Malt has been fascinated by the story of this remarkable Moroccan woman. That is why, she has allowed Hura to prove her agency and, consequently, her novel is not tainted with the recurrent prejudices about Arab women. Hura manages to penetrate men’s world and prove that she is not powerless or docile. She challenges Western stereotypes about Arab women and confirms that Moroccan women have agency. Hura’s powerful character also shows the limitations of Said’s theory. The natives are not silent and powerless as Said describes them in Orientalism. They have a voice, they speak, and they defend themselves.

References:
Chemlal Said

Negotiating Gendered Spaces in Zakia Tahiri’s Film Number One (2008)¹

(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

Abstract

This article questions how gendered spaces are (re)presented in Zakia Tahiri’s debut feature film Number One (2008). It deconstructs the private-female/public-male dichotomy from a feminist approach, which endeavours to disrupt spatial divisions. The film introduces a comic narrative whereby it negotiates the socio-cultural perceptions that associate women with home and men with the workplace. I argue that Number One aspires to disturb the private/public spatial duality, which still exists in the contemporary Moroccan society, yet it does not manage to offer its female characters solid alternatives that can help them out. Tahiri’s light comedy gives the spectators the impression that the narrative is not imbued with a true feminist agenda. The film will be closely analysed from a gender approach, showing how gender roles are simply regenerated, but not really disoriented though the film director’s intention might be the converse.

Key terms: Moroccan women’s cinema; gendered spaces; gendered identity; patriarchy; workplace.

Introduction

Towards the end of the nineties in the last millennium, there were only four female filmmakers in Morocco when it comes to directing feature films. The list included Farida Bourquia, Farida Benlyazid, Izza Génini and Fatima Jebli Ouazzani. Towards the end of the second decade in the twenty-first century, the number is around twenty women directors, including overseas ones. With a considerable rise in the number of women film directors and the remarkable imprint their films left on the sector as a whole, Moroccan women’s cinema has nowadays gained a strong foothold in the cinematic scene. Added to the pioneers, many newcomers, including Zakia Tahiri, are playing a key role in redefining women’s issues from a feminist perspective.

Of a Moroccan father and a French mother, Zakia Tahiri was born in Lille, France, in 1963. After passing her adolescence in Casablanca, she went back to France in order to hone her talent as an actress, attending the Cours Florent and the famous school of the Rue Blanche. During the eighties, she carried out different

cinematographic tasks alongside her original career as an actress. In 1982, she worked as an assistant director with the French filmmaker Claude Lelouch while shooting *Edith et Marcel*. Later on, she worked as a casting director with the renowned Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci in his *The Sheltering Sky* (1990), an adaptation of Paul Bowles’ 1949 novel. She also worked as a casting director with the French filmmaker Nicolas Klotz in *La Nuit sacrée* (1993), an adaptation of Taher Ben Jelloun’s 1987 novel. Though Tahiri carried out various cinematic tasks, she was mainly known, mainly at her beginnings, as an actress.

Tahiri’s acting career came to the fore in the eighties when she played one of the principal roles alongside the well-known French actress Catherine Deneuve in Alain Corneau’s *Fort Saggane* (1984). While her previous experiences were marked by technical and acting mastery, her recent cinematic life has been known for being a film director. This newly job has been a culmination of the various posts she had been taking up since the eighties, which allowed her to gain considerable expertise in the field. Her first step in filmmaking was *Origine controlee*, a 2001 comedy co-directed with Ahmed Bouchaala, a co-direction that culminated in filming some other various telefilms for French and Moroccan channels. In 2008, Tahiri solely directed her debut feature film *Number One*, a comedy about the social perceptions of the 2004 Family Code version. Seven years later, she made her tele-documentary *Chabab! (Youth, 2015)*, which unveils how some Moroccan youths think of some contemporary issues, such as freedom, religion, sexual harassment, gender, and so on.

**The home versus the workplace**

After the enactment of the Family Code in 2004, widely known in Morocco as the *Mudawwana*, Tahiri, as a diasporic filmmaker, released her debut feature film *Number One*(2008), which can be read as her own reflection on the gender dynamics animating the country in the recent decades. Set in Casablanca, the film focuses on the daily routine of a middle class couple. While the husband, Aziz (acted by Aziz Saadallah), works as a manager in a textile plant, his wife, Soraya (Nezha Rahil), is a housewife. If his everyday life is characterized by liveliness and vivacity, hers is marked by monotony as she keeps doing domestic chores on a daily basis. Being illiterate, she usually spends her time between “the four walls,” to borrow Amina’s words in Farida Benlyazid’s *Women’s Wiles* (1999). Doing the housework, watching television, or flipping through fashion magazines are merely her daily feats. Her function can be outlined in serving her husband and meeting his expectations; whenever he comes back from work, he must find everything is kept neat and tidy.

In contrast to his wife, whose time is usually spent inside the home, Aziz is most of the time outside. He is all the time busy and joins his friends in a café in the evenings after a hectic day at work. He seems to be more ‘humane’, cheering up, smiling and chatting with his mates when in the café, yet he relentlessly and badly behaves towards the females, be they at home or work. He does not hesitate to bare his teeth on his wife’s face for trivial reasons. Continuous tensions mark the couple’s relationship.
Tahiri examines the gender dynamics and relations animating today’s Morocco. In a comic way, her film negotiates the private-female/public-male dualities. Interestingly, the opening scenes introduce the distinct types of the lives Aziz and Soraya are leading. In a contrasting manner, the filmmaker explores the sort of gender roles socially attributed to each one of them. To do so, she makes use of the cross-cutting editing technique. The camera keeps cutting between Aziz rushing to drive his car to work and his wife simply doing the dishes. Their movements are telling in the sense that they reflect the gendered positions they assume within the society. She is nearly motionless, standing up almost still in the kitchen while he is active, hurrying up and driving fast. The presence of the car in this scene goes hand in hand with Susanne Cowan’s (2000) view that it serves as a means to “access the public sphere, and a tool with which to gain power” (p. 314). Aziz’s car allows him access to the public space and displays his social class as it is the only vehicle that enters the Maroc Star, the plant he runs.

The film attempts to re-present the Moroccan social realities, as not all women have advanced to equal status with men yet. While males are playing the ‘Number One roles’, being the leaders of both the private and public spaces, females are lagging behind at work and at home alike. Aziz runs Mr Laraki’s factory, where women are simply oppressed employees, construed as machines with no souls or identities. In a tellingly symbolic scene, Aziz introduces them to Mademoiselle Morel, a French client, not by their names, but by the number tags on their smocks. The use of numbers instead of names suggests that they are like prisoners, whose freedom and dignity are denied (el-Bazi, 2011, p. 60). Working in bad conditions, women (including also Soraya at home) are exposed to all feelings of humiliation and inhumane treatments.

If Aziz aspires to be promoted to ‘number one’ by his boss, Soraya does not dream to attain any promotion whatsoever apart from making her husband lenient with her. Away from leading a happy marital life, each one of the couple tends to keep him/herself aloof from the other to the extent that lack of communication is the prevailing atmosphere at home. In a scene, even if Aziz greets her as he comes back home from work, Soraya does not greet him back. When he opens the door, she hides the fashion magazine she is flicking through and rushes to get dinner ready. Before saying good night, the only conversation that they have is when she informs him about her intention to go to the hammam, a traditional Turkish bath, the next day. Aziz promptly turns her request down claiming that she usually does so. Although “the only public spaces accessible to women in some places are the hammam (public bath) and the siyyid (the tomb of a dead saint) (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006, p. 88),” Aziz breaks the patriarchal norms by not allowing his wife to gain access to the hammam. He suggests having a shower at home, instead. For Soraya, the hudud (borders) are whatever her husband forbids. From his phallocentric point of view, her ‘natural’ place is home and she has not to trespass it. He trammels her movements within the house and considers her merely an “object de désir,” an object of desire (Gallaoui, 2002, p. 72).

Fed up with Aziz’s repressive behaviour, Soraya, ushered and encouraged by a friend of hers, decides to visit Chama, a sorceress, in order to put an end to his
ill-treatment. Dinia & Oumlil (2016) claim that Tahiri’s film shows how women are conscious of their oppression (p. 50). Though her hudud are demarcated by her husband, the wife manages to pass from the interior to the exterior space without his own permission. Having eaten a magic potion in dinner, however, a key change occurs in his discipline towards women in general. “While poking fun at the enduring superstitious beliefs in twenty-first century Morocco,” Boutouba (2014) points out, “the witchcraft episode is comic and can be viewed as a metaphor for change” (p. 32). Yet, this is unconvincing how witchcraft can be a catalyst for change as far as women’s situations are concerned.

Overnight, Aziz becomes caring and affectionate, friendly behaving towards his wife and the female employees. In a hallucination, he imagines a social situation where gender roles are totally reversed as men’s movement is trammelled within the private space while women are freely moving in the public. The males are doing menial chores, whereas the females go out for work and enjoy their time in cafés. Through this reversal, the film director proposes that a change in the males’ mindsets should take place vis-à-vis the subordinate positions attributed to women. Thanks to this mirage, Aziz imaginatively, at least, reconsiders the daily life his wife and her counterparts are routinely leading. Having regretted what she did, Soraya puts in dinner another potion so as to overturn the first one, but her husband has not even eaten a bite of it. He, however, finally resumes “his former life, but with a new personality” (Armes, 2015, p. 135).

Number One champions a change in the males’ behaviour towards women, who are not the ‘managers’ of their own lives yet. While they are still lagging behind, men are playing the ‘number one roles’ not only in the public space, but also in the domestic life. Aziz is the manager of both the plant and the house. When at home, Soraya is under his total control and should conform to his dos and don’ts. Similarly, the female employees cannot utter a word in his presence. He and his wife are representatives of the private and the public spaces in the film. Sadiqi & Ennaji (2006) view that the private space is culturally associated with powerless people (women and children) and is subordinated to the public space, which is culturally associated with men – who dictate the law, lead business, manage the state, and control the economy, both national and domestic (p. 88).

Powerless, Soraya is associated with the domestic life while her husband leads business and controls even the private space. “Although the home is traditionally thought of as the feminine realm,” Cowan (2000) maintains, “the father controls this space” (pp. 308-309). It is culturally assumed to be ‘a space of her own’, yet the wife cannot act in a relaxed way inside when Aziz is present.

While having dinner in a scene, she cannot even continue watching a TV programme about the newly enacted Family Code that really captures her interest. When noticing this, Aziz rushes to turn the TV off. Despite the fact that the dinner table is “the hearth that the family gathers around” (Cowan, 2000, p. 308), it becomes here a moment of contestation. In her husband’s presence, Soraya does not control the home. “In one sense a woman controls the whole house,” Katherine White (quoted in Cowan, 2000) contends, “but in another she may feel she owns nothing personally but her side of the wardrobe” (p. 307). For Aziz, the wife is
dependent on him and thus he ought to protect and look after her. Linda McDowell (2003) believes that women, in contrast to men, “were dependents, to be protected and kept close. They were to provide sustenance and nurture to their menfolk and children through the construction of a place of leisure and domestic calm” (p. 12). If Aziz is busy with the business life, his wife is occupied with providing sustenance to him and their children.

Unlike the males, whose success is portrayed in the public sphere, the females manifest theirs in the domestic life. The home for a woman “is a facade, which she must maintain to portray success to the other” (Cowan, 2000, p. 307). Whenever back home from work, Soraya gets dinner ready as quickly as possible in order to show her successfulness before her husband’s eyes. Women, Josephine Little (quoted in Cowan, 2000) states, are “judged and valued for abilities in the domestic sphere” (p. 308). While Aziz’s success is measured by his successful running of the factory in general and convincing Morel to sign the contract in particular, his wife’s is measured by her housework management. At the film’s ending, he is going to advance to Number One, but she is already so when it comes to doing the domestic chores on a daily, non-stop basis. If the world of business is characterised by movement and flux, the realm of the house is marked by slow pace and stagnation.

 Whenever filming Soraya or her apartment, Boutouba (2014) observes, Tahiri repetitively uses the brown, beige and grey colours, which “echo the arid emotional landscape that she inhabits” (p. 31). Because of the sort of the relationship that signalises the couple’s life, the domestic space for her becomes a space of confinement in which “communication and emotions are suppressed and where violence could erupt at any time” (Boutouba, 2014, p. 32). Domineering, Aziz shifts the function of home from a place of emotional ties to that of contentious and tense clashes. His wife feels like a prisoner inside her home, where silence is, for the most part, her utmost option.

 *Number One* aptly deals with the gendered division of space. It successfully re-presents the partition of home and workplace; the first is associated with women, whereas the second is ‘reserved’ for men. The home is regarded, Chris Barker (2004) points out, “as the domain of the ‘private’ and the feminine whereas sites of paid work have been coded masculine within the public sphere. Homes have been cast as the unpaid domain of mothers and children, connoting the secondary values of caring, love, tenderness and domesticity” (p. 187). The females are attached to the domestic space as it is thought to be a place of reproduction, not production. Jane Rendell (2000) stresses the idea that the ideology behind the division of “city from home, public from private, production from reproduction, and men from women is both patriarchal and capitalist” (p. 103). This ideology justifies, in a sense, why the males’ work in the public space, unlike the females’ at home, is paid. Some feminists, say, Dolores Hayden (quoted in Cowan, 2000), however, argue against the grain of this assumption as they call for re-considering the home as women’s workplace. “Society defines the ideal home as a warm and supportive place for men and children,” she contends, “but for women it has always been a workplace, where a woman’s work is never done” (p.
307). If Aziz’s work is paid, Soraya’s is unpaid though it is seems to be more arduous.

The home is not only a pure place of reproduction, but a “site of multiple activities, including production, consumption and reproduction, a place of waged and unwaged work, of inequality and pain as well as pleasure and security” (McDowell, 2003, p. 17). In contrast to the domestic space’s unwaged work, “places of paid work have been regarded as the domain of men, connoting the primary values of toughness (either physically or mentally), hardness, comradeship and reality” (Barker, 2004, p. 187). *Number One* introduces a narrative that aspires to aptly unveil the gendered norms predominant in Morocco, yet it does not disrupt these norms. Instead, it tries to show us how a present-day but gendered society is in the twenty-first century. Tahiri does not succeed in subverting the phallocentric agenda, but in uncovering how this agenda works by negotiating its construction of gendered spaces.

**An attempt to disorient the gendered spaces**

Even if its narrative focuses mainly on how male-centred mindsets (re)generate gendered spatial divisions, *Number One*, if read in its entirety, does not offer its female characters any possible alternatives through which they can relocate their agencies and voice themselves. The film can be construed as a simple attempt to diagnose how males and females are defined in their relations to the home and the workplace. Although Soraya aspires at some occasions to subvert the physical and symbolic *hudud* demarcated by her husband’s phallocentric mentality, she at the end of the day keeps the status quo.

In his attempt to convince Mademoiselle Morel, described as a radical French feminist by Mr Laraki, to sign the contract with Maroc Star, Aziz, carrying out his boss’s instructions, invites her to dine out together. Her condition that his wife should join them caught him by surprise. He is embarrassed, but forced to agree to her request. On their way to the restaurant, Aziz asks Soraya to follow his tips on how to behave in a respectful but attractive manner. She has to take her cues from the clients in such an upmarket restaurant. She who is so timid at the outset ends up being talkative, seizing the opportunity that she cannot be humiliated or interrupted by her husband in such a sensitive deal. Playing on her husband’s dire need to win the contract, she turns the situation to her own advantage. She acts as she likes and does things she has not been able even to think of in his absence, let alone in his presence. Through smoking, drinking, chatting and laughing with the French visitor, Boutouba (2014) argues, Soraya “reverts gender roles and recasts her husband as the powerless and voiceless spectator” (p. 36). She succeeds in managing the public space in her own way, not in her husband’s. Indulging in long but friendly chats with each other, Morel and her comrade pay no heed to Aziz’s presence. Being ignored by them is intensified by the camera’s focus on them, cutting to him just to display his unsatisfying and rude gestures. By overusing the close-up technique when filming the females, Tahiri tries to focus only on their perspectives.

*Number One* highlights Soraya’s standpoint to the detriment of Aziz’s. When having dinner, she seizes the chance to show him what a ‘modern woman’
would be like: free in her movements and ways of speaking and behaving. She urges him to adjust his perception of gender roles to a more equitable and Western one as well. Though she has never smoked before, she asks Aziz, while mimicking a couple sitting beside them, to light up a cigarette provided to her by Morel. Her interest does not lie in smoking at all, but in subverting his androcentric conception of her femininity. Instead of imitating the restaurant’s customers, as Aziz instructs her before to do so, she cleverly turns the tables on him by forcing him to mimic them. Instead of being submissive as usual, she turns out to be smart enough to dismantle the patriarchal conventions from within the males’ space(s).

Sorayamanages to unsettle not only her husband’s prescriptive teachings, but also the males’ appropriation of the public sphere in general. Her performance represents an “instance of subversive mimicry” (Boutouba, 2014, p. 36) through which she mutes her husband and manipulates the French client. Utilising her own disruptive methods, she proves to him and to the spectators alike that she can play an essential role in business. She becomes the key to her husband’s success in winning Morel’s signature of the contract. Tahiri suggests that females can do well if they are given access to the public space, and that the patriarchal orders do harm to both women and men. Without their help, the film implies, men cannot succeed. Aziz is ultimately promoted to Number One only by the female employees’ support, as they go on strike demanding his return after Mr Laraki had fired him.

If the home is almost a silencing ‘prison’ for Soraya and her female neighbours, the only place available for them to feel at ease and break their silences, then, remainthe rooftops. They can freely occupy them and render them spaces of their own. To please themselves, they usually gather there for chatting. As the males are most of the time in the public space, females get a grip on the rooftops. In urban areas, Mounira Charrad (2001) asserts, “there is a quasi-public female space where much informal socializing takes place. Women get together on rooftops” (p. 66). She goes on arguing that if streets are primarily associated with men, the roof terraces are parexcellence feminine.

While Soraya shows her neighbours some women’s photos in a magazine on the rooftop, her friend, Fatehia, comments: “The woman abroad, you see, is always elegant and good-looking even if she happens to work in the fields; it’s amazing!” Comparingwomen here and there, Rachida replies: “The difference between her and us is that when she intends to have a baby, she decides when, how and why to do so.” As they burst out laughing, Fatna joins them and utters: “May God pardon us?” Unlike in the English language, the last sentence in the Moroccan Arabic can connote another meaning, which is something like: “May God change our status?” Unconscious of the changes taking place in contemporary Morocco, mainly the 2004 Mudawwana, the females are still fervently aspiring to a social transformation of their situations. The rooftop, for them, becomes a space of daydreaming about a better future in which freedom is the utmost principle, akin to the one enjoyed by European women. Instead of contextualising their feminine subjectivities within their own culture, as is the case of Nadia in Farida Benlyazid’s Bab Sma Maftouh (A Door to the Sky, 1988), Tahiri’s female protagonists model their social identities on Western culture.
Conclusion

In her debut feature film *Number One*, Zakia Tahiri has made an effort to expose women’s femininity on screen through a story whereby the private-public spatial division is re-presented from a feminine point of view. Her aim is apparently to contribute to the process of voicing women that Moroccan women’s cinema had already initiated. Yet, her narrative has not been tailored in accordance with her aspirations. What on the surface seems a social-realist text is actually a non-feminist film since it perpetuates “the sustained belief that women are obliged to wait on men, relying on the will of the masculine to transform the status quo.” Consequently, “men are advanced to “number one,” while women are left behind preparing their dinners” (Orlando, 2011, p. 152).

The film does not manage to introduce a disruptive paradigm in which females succeed in deconstructing the gendered spatial partitions. At the ending of the film, Aziz advances to Number One while women resume their daily routines as downtrodden employees and housewives. They are not advanced to such position; that is why Orlando (2011) accuses *Number One* of not being a “feminist film, socially transformative film” as Tahiri “never insists that women must find the strength to stand up for themselves” (p. 152). Instead of redefining their social identities and relocating their agencies, they simply cheer up when men climb up the social and business ladders. Finally, the female workers in the factory resume their work without any change whatsoever in their working conditions while Soraya goes on preparing dinner for Aziz, and manifesting her success in keeping the house tidy. Tahiri’s women prove to be submissive and amenable, waiting a change to be brought about by males. Soraya is kept at home while Aziz is chosen to be ‘Man of the Year’ by a women’s magazine.

**Note on translation:**
All translations from *Darija* or standard Arabic are mine; otherwise it is indicated.

**Notes:**

2. Cross-cutting editing is “limited as a term to the linking-up of two sets of action that are running concurrently and which are interdependent within the narrative” (Hayward, 2006, p. 110).
3. I adopted this sentence from Fatima Mernissi’s autobiography: “The hudud was whatever the teacher forbade” (1994, p. 3).
4. In an analogous argument, Elizabeth Wilson claims that “the private space was – and is – a masculine domain; although the Victorians classified it as feminine it was organized for the convenience, rest, and recreation of men, not women” (quoted in Cowan, 2000, p. 309).
5. Cowan (2000) notes that “[s]ome women feel like prisoners in their own homes, having no private space within their house, yet no method of accessing the outside world” (p. 303).
6. The film’s French subtitles translate “the woman abroad” (from *Darija*) as “la femme Européenne” (the European woman).
7. In a similar argument, Armes (2015) argues that “Aziz’s story represents that of a country undergoing change, but the fact that the film’s plot turns on magic rather than on the emerging self-awareness of a new generation of women limits its relevance as a social document” (p. 135). In another corresponding view, Housni (2015) notes that *Number One* has not left its own imprint on the Moroccan cinematic repertoire as it introduces a light narrative (p. 89).
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2. Benlyazid, F. (1988). Dir. Bab Sma Maftouh (Une Porte sur le ciel/A Door to the Sky). France-Média (France), SATPEC (Tunisie), and Interfilm (Morocco).
17. Tahiri, Z. (2008). Dir. Number One. Made in Morocco, the Moroccan first (SNRT) and second (2M SOREAD) channels, the Moroccan Cinematographic Centre (CCM), Fonds Francophone de Production Audiovisuelle du Sud, and the Moroccan BMCE Bank.
Abstract
The question of gender has constituted a critical concern for experts in all domains of academia including social sciences, linguistics, politics and education. Due to the controversial debates it has evoked in regard to the discourses of representation, gender studies critics have transformed the subject to the cinematic realm. Visual portrayals of male-female dichotomies, patriarchal culture, and women’s resistance have become crucial motives in postcolonial feminist film literature. The image of woman in cinema today poses a lot of problematic questions; she is either depicted as a potential subject of the male gaze, a victim of patriarchal and colonial oppressions or a freedom seeker who is in constant search for her agency. Thus, Moroccan contemporary cinema in its treatment of lived reality is greatly influenced by the mainstream culture, yet it could not keep pace with the socio-economic transition that women are undergoing in today’s Morocco. To this, the image of Moroccan woman on screen is still frustrating and pathetic reflecting the gender inequities that are determined by family, society, and cultural mores. By examining the representation of woman in contemporary Moroccan cinema, the present paper argues that film discourse constructs and maintains fixed stereotypes on gender role and women in particular. To back up this argument, a critical film analysis will be applied to explore the socio-cultural determents that influence the portrayal of woman on screen turning her into a subaltern other. The length-feature film that will be tackled in this paper is: Erraged 2004 (the Sleeping Child) by Yassmine Kassari.

Keywords: Gender roles, Moroccan cinema, women, stereotypes, patriarchal oppression, subalternity, film discourse.

Women’s status in Morocco is still facing a lot of problematic challenges that are mainly attributed to a gendered distribution of social and legal rights, and also to some inherently rigid patriarchal practices. These challenges among various others stand as a hurdle towards the quest for gender equity, and thus influence women’s representation at all walks of life. To understand how gender roles along with the image of woman are reshaped in the Moroccan social context, reference should be made to the realm of film discourse. Said so, the representation of

gender issue in Moroccan contemporary cinema has taken different dimensions; however, it remained homogeneous and unchanging in its portrayal of woman as a subaltern other. For example, in social drama films, woman is either depicted as a victim of domestic violence, or a subservient object of patriarchal or colonial oppression.¹

As a controversial socio-cultural issue, patriarchy has had an immense impact on films produced by male filmmakers of the past eras. Films such as: *Lalla Chaftia* (1982) by Tazi Mohamed Ben Abdelouahed, *Chergui* (1975) by Moumen Smihi, and Souheil Ben Barka’s *Blood Wedding* (1980) have featured women characters suffering from the weight of ill cultural norms or struggling against abusive treatment exerted by their male oppressors. For instance, Ben Barka’s *Blood Wedding* screens the tragic fate of a young woman kidnapped by a man during her wedding just because he wants her for himself only. In the end, the wicked woman becomes a mark of dishonor in the eyes of her family and tribe.¹ In *Lalla Chaftia*, an innocent daughter Fatima is subjugated by her adamant patriarchal father who vehemently assaults her for refusing to abide by social norms, and out of greed, he gets her marry an old rich farmer to assure his own profit at the expense of this unwanted marriage.¹

Criticizing the role of the female figure in the Moroccan film scenes, Gayle, S. (2009, p.309) writes:

Most Moroccan films reflected a more pessimistic viewpoint about the changes available to women. If not death, then divorce, insanity, abject misery, despair, or prostitution seemed to be the primary options offered to film women by male filmmakers.¹

In the same connection, Orlando (2009) argues, in her critical remark on the cinematic representation of women in Morocco, that “women’s roles in Moroccan male filmmakers’ works tend to be pessimistic, casting them often as victims of socio cultural mores, misery, and poverty.”¹ Getting the image of woman tied exclusively to such subordinate film subjects have made filmmakers blind towards portraying her as a dynamic social actor in her community. Even worse, their cameras have turned the female body into a major cinematic element to cater for the voyeuristic desires of the male spectators.¹ Cinema, in this respect, displays a range of visual preferences that serve to quench the pleasure of the male gaze; it is also seen as an influential discourse that- according Mulvey (1999, p.58) organizes “ways of seeing and pleasure in looking.”¹

The Moroccan cinema critique and film-director Idriss Chuika believes that gender issue should be corrected and treated rationally in cinema. For him, woman should not be seen as a mere subservient or a “subaltern” other, but she should be represented as a visible active agent and, a real founder of social relations inside society. Chuika adds that in many Moroccan movies, woman has often remained dominated by and subject to patriarchal hegemony.¹ To clarify his critical argument, Chuika makes reference to Mohammed Abdurrahman Tazi’s recent movie *Ibayra* (the Spinster) that was released in 2013. The film’s title stands for a social stigma marked upon girls who are not yet married in Moroccan society. For Chuika, this film did not succeed in subverting the stereotypical judgments made
on single women as victims of cultural disgrace, and hence it failed in constructing a self-liberating space for women to retrieve their agency.\(^1\)

Gender role on screen is constructed following the mainstream culture; therefore, the audience expects the female character to play roles that are determined by man.\(^1\) In this context, Gayle (2009) criticizes the film themes that limit woman’s role and leave no room for her emancipation; she explains: “while Moroccan films show women in more traditional roles and even adapting to more modern social requirements, no film shows a true liberation for women in Morocco.”\(^1\)

A relevant case in point to analyze in this regard is Yassmine Kassari’s feature-length movie *Raged* (2004) or (*The Sleeping Child*). The film was shot in a remote rural area situated in the Atlas Mountain in the north-east of Morocco. In this tribal community, there begins the story of the film protagonist Zeinab. Soon after her marriage, the husband will leave her for illegal migration to Europe. As the case of Zeinab, almost all women in the village are destined to stay alone bearing the hardships of their lives; just as Orlando, V . (2011, p.124) puts it “Women are left to fend for themselves, to preserve and endure silently while their men go off to Spain to find work.”\(^1\)

The young women are also supposed to stay in one fixed space, and be subject to the eye watching of their mothers and in-laws. Men, unlike, are the present-absent in the village, however their patriarchal hegemony reshapes gender role over daily lives within the village.\(^1\)

![Fig. 1 Zeinab and Halima watching their husbands leaving the village](image)

As shown in the caption above, both Zeinab and her friend Halima stand in sorrow watching their husbands heading for Spain. Implicitly, these women speak on the behalf of all the other female voices in the village, but they remain unable to convince their husbands to stay with them. This explains that women in the film are doomed to be obedient in male-dominated communities. Therefore, they cannot negotiate nor express objections over the decisions made by men. According to Spivak (1996) these women fall within the scope of subalternity which is a reference to the oppressed female subjects who are denied history and cultural identity, and hence their attempt to speak is met with negligence.

For Spivak (1996, p.117) “the subaltern as a female is even more deeply in shadow”\(^1\) just as is the case of Zeinab and Halima in this movie. In regard to their marginality in both real life and in cinema, the filmmaker wanted to produce this film to speak for a fringe of countryside women who are deserted by their husbands for clandestine labor in Europe.\(^1\) Theoretically, Kassari’s cinematic representation of the women in the village can be situated within the narratives of
colonial otherness. In feminist colonial discourse, for instance, woman has been dealt with as an inferior “other” that lacks the power to negotiate or resist male domination. In this context, Mohanty (1991) argues that colonialism has discursively constructed a body of “knowledge” or “scholarship” about third world women depicting them as passive irrational and voiceless bodies who need the white civilized “self” to represent them. Therefore, this essentialist form of knowledge has reconstructed gender dichotomies that turned third world women into mere subordinate objects of patriarchal and colonial appropriation.¹

Throughout the film, patriarchal power seems to be passed down by men to old women who, in their turn, perpetuate the male-constructed norms of conservatism dominating the tribe. From a Foucauldian standpoint, the old women play a panoptical role in their surveillance over their daughters’ acts. In so doing, the women internalize man’s power of control even when they are not physically present.¹ In this connection, Fanon’s theory of ‘Inferiority Complex’¹ sounds more convenient in its approach to these women because they accept to remain controlled by their male patriarchs. An example on this from the film is when Halima goes to meet her fiancé on the other side of the valley to avoid people’s eye watching; she cannot dare go for a date with him inside the village, because this may cause disgrace to herself and her family.

In this film scene, Halima tries to contest the dominant patriarchal and traditional norms in her community, yet, she is caught by male relatives who assault her because their customs do not allow her the right to date a male stranger secretly. In part, it seems that Kassari has adopted a feminist postcolonial discourse to open a margin of liberation for the women in the village in the example of Halima. Kassari could have made the women in the film more emancipated and less governed by their men. In this context, the postcolonial feminist film critic Shohat (1994) has put emphasis on the salient role cinema can do in re-establishing a feminist discourse that can empower women in subaltern positions by deconstructing patriarchal and western stereotypes about gender and womanhood in third world nations.¹

![Fig.2 Halima meeting Hassan in the forest](image)

However, the filmmaker does unconsciously contradict the discourse of resistance in several scenes in the movie. She has made the women more
dependent on their husbands as if they could not continue to live in their absence. For instance, to inquire about the condition of their husbands abroad, the women have to move frequently outside the village to watch them on videotapes. The way how the women communicate with the husbands is asymmetrical and mono-directional; in other words, man’s power and monopoly of the speech makes the woman a passive listener just as shown in the caption below. Zeinab has to consult her husband—who is located far away—to give her permission to go out of the village knowing that she engages in daily activities along with the other women which men themselves can’t handle out. By engaging the women in such gendered power relations, the filmmaker does empower masculine hegemony and minimize the females’ will to be free objects.

In defense of their rights, the film director has associated women’s resistance with the unseen world of superstition and magic without providing a rational alternative that could help the oppressed women break the chains of traditions. Zeinab is advised to see a white magician in the village that will perform a superstitious ritual to make the fetus sleep in her womb until the return of his father. The fqih or white magician handles an amulet to Zeinab and asks her to keep it so as to stop the further growth of the baby. Women’s resistance to masculine oppression in Moroccan film discourse has always been associated with the world of magic as if it was the only solution available to take hold of power. For instance in El Chergui by Moumen Smihi, Aicha resorts to magic to prevent her husband from marrying another younger spouse; while the poor woman comes to perform the eccentric ritual as is ordained by fqih, she lost her life. In fact, associating such irrational practices with gender resistance distorts the image of woman and denies her the ability to use her mind wisely to outwit the man.
To conclude, this article has attempted to shed light on the status quo of woman in Moroccan contemporary cinema with strong focus on her subalternity. The critical analysis of Kassari’s “the Sleeping Child” has disclosed the role of traditions and patriarchy in constructing a subordinate female other that can’t seek freedom or speak her voice. Despite the fact that the film tried to make the male characters physically invisible in the village, their patriarchal presence has been strongly maintained by the old mothers turning the hope for real gender equity and woman’s liberation far-fetched.

References:
El Ouardi Fettah

Destabilizing Patriarchal Paradigms in Saudi Arabian Society Rajaa AlSanea’s Girls of Riyadh (2008) As a Case Study
(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

Abstract

The last few decades witnessed the emergence of a very considerable American writers of an Arab origin who have been able through their narratives and cultural texts, to forge a new body of literature in the American mainstream culture that focuses mainly on the immigrants experiences in the hosting countries vis-a-vis their lived past in their homelands. Laila El Alami, Mohja Kahf, Diana Abu Jabir, Rajaa AlSanea, to name just a few, are typical examples of an increasing Arab-American voices who have been able through their works to occupy very significant positions in the contemporary American literature. The purpose of the present paper is, therefore, to delve into Rajaa Al Sanea’s pioneering novel, Girls of Riyadh with regard to the socio-cultural and historical context of women’s status in Saudi Arabia. Employing an analytical textual methodology, and drawing on a feminist and postcolonial feminist perspectives, the following article will be accordingly devoted not only to illuminate the socio-cultural and historical background of Saudi women’s status, but also to examine the gender bias they have experienced in their patriarchal society. Then, it will further go deeply to explore how Rajaa Al Sanae, speaking from diaspora context and taking the advantage of the ‘new discourse’ of third space, destabilizes and directs severe criticism to the patriarchal paradigms that are deeply rooted in Saudi Arabian cultural mind-sets.

Key words: Arab women’s writers in diaspora, postcolonial feminism, Saudi Arabian Society, Rajaa Al Sanea

Introduction

Historically speaking, the USA, Europe, along with Canada is undoubtedly known for hosting such a large number of immigrants from Arab descent. The USA, for example, remains to a great extent the destination of many Arab migrants, who were driven by many forces to leave their homelands and settle in different parts of the States in the hope of seeking a better life. Hence, the few last decades witnessed the emergence of a very considerable American writers of an Arab origin who have been able through their cultural narratives and texts, to forge a new body of literature in the American mainstream culture that focuses mainly on the immigrants experiences in the hosting countries vis-as-vis their lived...

past in their homelands. Laila El Alami, Mohja Kahf, Diana Abu Jabir, Laila Ahmed, Zainab Salbi, Rajaa AL Sanea, to name just a few, are typical examples of an increasing Arab-American voices who have been able through their works to occupy very significant positions in the contemporary American literature. Interestingly, this paper will closely examine Rajaa AL Sanea’s pioneering novel, Girls of Riyadh with regard to the historical context of women’s status in Saudi Arabia. That said, employing an analytical textual methodology, and drawing on a feminist and postcolonial feminist perspectives, the following paper will be accordingly devoted to illuminate the historical background of the women’s status in Saudi Arabian society. Then, it will further go deeply to explore how Rajaa Al Sanea, speaking from the diaspora context and taking the advantage of the third space, manages to destabilize patriarchy by criticizing severely a number of social traditions and cultural mind-sets that place women as a second citizen in Saudi society.

**Saudi Women: Historical Background**

To better understand Saudi women’s status, I find it appealing as well as of a great interest to start this section by approaching Saudi Arabian women’s conditions with regard to socio-cultural, religious, and political backgrounds of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Geographically speaking, Saudi Arabia is an Arab country which is situated in the region of the Arabian Peninsula, which basically includes the six Gulf countries together with Yemen. Politically, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a number of families and diverse ethnic and religious groups who have been ruling Saudi Arabia since the conquest carried out by Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud during the first quarter of the 20th century.

In brief, Saudi Arabia is ruled by a king who draws his power from the Islamic religion. In different words, the Saudi Arabian political system is an absolute religious monarchy whose laws are tremendously derived from Islamic Shari’a (the laws of Islamic teachings). Hence, it is no surprise that women’s status in Saudi Arabia is accordingly based on these Islamic beliefs, which have been often misinterpreted and ideologically decoded to establish gender biased structures in Saudi Arabia. Thus, Saudi women are deemed as merely a second citizen after men due to the widespread passed fallacy and assumption that their inferiority emanated from the Islamic teachings. That is, it is very important to note that there is growing confusion between religious teachings and cultural practices which mostly serves male’ patriarchal ideology. Some customs, such as the belief that women should not drive cars or practise Law or Engineering are not from Islamic law but have become entrenched in the culture (Hamdan, 2005). Saudi society is built around tribal and Islamic affiliations and it is difficult to differentiate between Islamic laws and Arabic traditional norms (Al Lily, 2011).

As a result to this complex situation, women in Saudi Arabia had been, by law, banned from driving for years, an act which was related to politics and traditions rather than to religion. In fact, the fact that women were not allowed to drive was no surprising till the November 1990 demonstration, during which forty seven veiled women decided to take a daring and rebellious act by driving cars on the King Adu Al Aziz highway in Riyadh. In November 1990, 47 women drove in
a parking lot in Riyadh to protest the driving ban. The traffic police took the women into custody, and would not release them until their male guardians signed statements that they would never drive again (Shmuluvitzn 2011,p.1). As a result, those participants, together with their husbands were severely punished not only by confiscating their passports, but also by suspending them from their jobs. It went even worse as Eleanor Doumato puts it “some of those who participated were subsequently harassed by phone callers, accusing the women of being agents for Western vice” (Doumato, 2007, p31). This incident coincided the Gulf war, which enabled it to gain more political significance on one hand, and it was highly attacked, on the other hand, by male extremists and conservatives who viewed it as a rebel act against traditional and cultural values. Hence, Saudi women ironically had to wait till 2018 to be granted this right after a long struggle and protest led by Saudi Arabian Women in the few last decades.

The veil is another appealing issue in the Saudi Arabian society which exacerbates their status within the Saudi Arabian society. Unlike many other Arab and Islamic countries either in the middle East or somewhere else, Saudi women are rarely- if never seen unveiled when outside their homes or when they are in any public sphere. It is even dictated by law to cover their full bodies and heads with the veil and ‘Abaya’. Women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are legally required to wear the abaya, with the shayla or rectangular head scarf, in public(Lindholme, 2010). If caught unveiled, they will be in real trouble with regard to The Committee of Morals and Virtue police. Hence, Women have little room for manoeuvre when it comes to choose whether to wear on veil or not expect those who happened to immigrate to other countries which grant women more rights and freedom as in the case of Rajaa Al-Sanea, whose work is under analysis. In this context, she maintains that:

Aside from the morals and the Islamic teachings, I didn't have any restrictions. I was brought up by a liberal family. They didn't force me to wear the hijab. I started wearing it two years ago by personal choice because I wanted to do it for God” .When abroad many Saudi women do not veil since, as they put it, “it would attract more attention than modesty”(Yamani,1996).

Saudi women are bound by traditions as well as by policy to put on the veil while in Saudi Arabia to avoid confrontations with The Committee of Morals and Virtue as well as religious scholars who most of them -if not all condemn unveiled women. It is only outside Saudi country that women can sigh with a relief of the very deeply rooted traditions of their homeland. In addition to the issue of the veil, women are not allowed to move outside their homes unless they are accompanied by their male relative always known as ‘Mahram’ along with not being permitted to travel without consent of a male guardian.

Moreover, arranged marriage is one of the most common phenomenon in Saudi Arabian traditions and cultures. Unlike women in some Arab countries which somewhat tolerate and grant more personal freedoms to women in establishing premarital relationships and choosing one’s spouse, Saudi Arabia policy forbids these sorts of relationships between men and women. In this regard, Rakan argues that “unmarried men and women cannot stay or travel together to prevent any
possibility resulting in premarital pregnancy, which is prohibited” (Rakan, 2014). Women are, therefore, not allowed to meet men in public places unless they are married. Rather, it is mostly their parents who decide on their spouses regarding many qualities and aspects of the spouse such as class, race, tribe, and religion to name a few. Rakan goes further to note in this context that the “expectations for marriage are tribally based” in Saudi Arabia (Ibid).

Furthermore, when a potential groom comes and asks for a girl’s hand for marriage, it is almost the parents who arrange a short meeting during the potential bride and groom can only make a very short eye contact and catch sight of each other with a presence of their parents. It is through this short meeting that with the wedding date can be set after the groom and the bride agree on the marriage.

The result of the parents choosing wives or husbands for their sons or daughters according to social considerations reflects itself in divorce which is fairly common in Saudi Arabia. Hence, Saudi women live very miserable social and cultural conditions including arranged marriage, divorce, women’s freedom and many other problems as we shall discuss them more broadly in the light of Girls of Riyadh in the following section.

Destabilizing patriarchal paradigms: A Critique of Social Practices in Girls of Riyadh

*Girls of Riyadh* is a novel written by Rajaa Al Sanea originally in Arabic language and was published in Lebanon by Saqi Books in September 2005. Then, it was translated into English by both Rajaa Al Sanea and Marilyn Booth in 2008. Generally speaking, The novel deals with the lives of four young Saudi university student girls who must live according to the cultural traditions of Saudi society. Rajaa Al-Sanea’s *Girls of Riyadh* is structured as a series of fifty one emails sent anonymously by one of the young woman whose identity is not revealed throughout the novel. That is, Girls of Riyadh is a novel narrated by an unknown young girl who sends weekly e-mails from her internet group, of which is the administrator, to the subscribers in Yahoo. From the very start, she seems to have perceptible intention to reveal the anecdotes of her four girlfriends who are kept behind walls and whose lives and hopes are spoiled in the name of the misuse of religion, rigid conservative beliefs, and traditional practices. In her endeavour to reveal the true lived realities of Saudi women, the narrator quotes Nizar Al Qabani’s poem, as shown in the following passage suggests, not only to give voice to her four girlfriends to articulate their sufferings and struggles, but also to thousands of women whose stories are neglected, buried, and never heard about. The unknown girl/narrator says:

I shall write of my girlfriends, for in each one’s tale I see my story and self-prevail, a tragedy my own life speaks. I shall write of my girlfriends, of inmates ‘lives sucked dry by jail, and magazine pages that consume women’s time, and of the doors that fail to open. Of desires slain in their cradles I’ll write, of the vast great cell, black walls of travail, of thousands, thousands of martyred, all female, buried, stripped of their names in the graveyard of traditions. (Alsanea, 2008, p.3)

Throughout the novel, the unknown narrator seems to be aware of every single detail of the lived realities of her four characters. Hence, she reveals details
about the lives of her four close female friends—who have been friends since schooldays: Lamees, Qamrah, Sadeem, and the half-American Mashael. These four central characters of the novel are attractive female university students in their early 20s, fashionable, bright and from the middle-upper class Saudi Arabian families. The narrator follows their life stories for twelve months seeking and struggling to find settlement either by love marriage or by traditional marriage arranged by their families.

As the story reveals, each one of the four girls experiences constant failures and disappointment except Lamees, who succeeds in both her professional career and her personal life by the person she loves. That is, Lamees succeeds in making a love match, she gets married to Nizar, a man of her choosing and goes with him later to Canada to pursue her Boards in Medicine. Sadeem is engaged to Waleed, but their marriage is never fulfilled. He divorces her after allowing her one night to make love with him before the wedding marriage is set. Sadeem even experiences a second and a much deeper disappointment when she meets a new man called, Faris whom she thinks he loves her more than she loves him. Again, Faris disappoints her by dumping her and marrying a girl whose family has chosen for him. Qamrah, a conventional and traditionally bound girl is married to Rachid in traditional way which results into her trauma after discovering that he has had a lover all along, a Japanese girlfriend whom he cannot marry. Then, Qamrah ends up divorced and pregnant. Michelle, a half–American girl, falls in love with Faisal, but his family namely his mother shows strong objection due to Michelle’s low social status together with her identity as being of an American mother. Hence, akin to Faris, Faisal leaves her and decides to marry a girl of his family choice. To take revenge, Michelle strongly determines to attend Faisal’s wedding to exhibit her beauty and free spirit by dancing in front of the bride and the groom to show that she is more beautiful than the Faisal’s bride. These four middle-upper class girls enjoy expensive cars, first-class flights, spend summer vacations in Western countries, and use all the tools of modern technology, but still subject to arranged marriages, where strict tradition holds sway.

The weekly sent emails spark high debate within Saudi Arabia society and it causes a stir as they spread gradually to reach a larger audience of the internet users. As a reaction to stop her, the narrator notes “I heard that King Abd-Al-Aziz is trying to block my site to dam up the channels of communication and ward off malicious acts, scandalous deeds and all causes of corruption or evil” (Alsanea, 2008, p.84). This may also account for the banning of the novel in reality as it was not allowed to be published in Saudi Arabia when it was first written, it was rather published in Lebanon as we have mentioned above. Moreover, all the 51 chapters in the form of e-mails in the novel starts with a verse from Quran, Hadith, a quotation of a well-known international thinker, a piece of poetry, or lyrics from a famous Arabic song that helps the reader has a deeper insight of the whole chapter.

The novel tackles substantial themes and debatable issues of the lived experiences of Saudi Arabia women in the modern world vis-a-vis their patriarchal society. Challenging her highly conventional and traditionally bound society,
Alsanea’s debut novel daringly reflects the private world of Saudi Arabia’s social and cultural conditions under which both men and women are victimised. At the same time, it uncovers the lives of the most privileged Saudi women who apparently share the same hopes and dreams as their counterparts’ women in Western world. Through the employment of her main four female protagonists: Lamis, Gamra, Michaeelle and Sadeem as well as the mysterious female narrator of the tale, Al-sanea presents a penetrating diagnosis of social realities of Saudi society and its manifestations such as: anxiety, unfulfilled hopes, and growing anger and dissatisfaction of Saudi Arabians as we shall examine in depth in the forthcoming section.

In fact, Rajaa AL Sanea is not against Islamic religion as many Saudi public and religious scholars claim. She is rather against the misuse and the interpretation of the religion that usually leads to the oppression and the endurance of women in Saudi Arabian society. On the contrary, she intends to make of Islam as a source of her inspiration for demanding a woman’s denied rights. Hence, he has sought her sense of power, her sense of identity, her freedom, and her equality with men through the basic teachings of Islam. In this regard, she makes it clear from the beginning of the novel when she starts her novel by quoting a verse from the Qur’an which relates people’s better change to the change of their beliefs and realities: “Verily, Allah does not change a people’s condition until they change what is in themselves.” Quran, The Chapter of Thunder, Verse 11” (9, in the Arabic version).

In writing Girls of Riyadh, Al-Sanea benefits from her knowledge of the Islamic teachings to show how gender roles and the social traditions practiced in Saudi Arabia contradicts the religious instructions which subsequently lead to the oppression and subordination of Muslim women. She even rejects certain elements of traditions, especially with regard to gender, and used her knowledge of Islam to denounce unfavourable traditions. In an interview conducted by Silvia Radan with Rajaa Al Sanea and was held at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair and at Jashanmal book shop, she contends that:

People see Saudi Arabia as a very conservative country regarding Islam, but they do not know that there are traditions not based on religion, which really control our lives. That is why I wanted to talk about different traditions and customs in cities and villages in Saudi Arabia that people don’t really hear about or know about. There are girls who are not very conservative Muslims, yet they are very traditional. I wanted to portray this difference between Saudi traditions and the Islamic religion.1

Rajaa Al Sanea makes it clear here that she is not blaming Islam as a religion, but she is rather pointing the finger at the traditions, the practices, and the misinterpretations of the Islamic religion among Saudi people which is always behind women’s sufferings. This perception is shared by a Saudi Arabian researcher Hamda Amani Al Ghamdi, who argues in her article entitled “Arab Women’s Education and Gender Perceptions” that “cultural traditions governing Arab Muslim societies subordinate women” and she adds:
I draw from my personal experiences as a Muslim Saudi woman who grew up and completed undergraduate studies in a conservative, patriarchal society. My gender has been constructed by my Islamic faith and the Arab culture of Saudi Arabia. I read and memorized the Holy Quran from a very young age. The Quranic text does not contradict scientific discourse, which I found fascinating; indeed the Quran’s teaching to women contradicts the cultural traditions and practices I have experienced and observed. For instance, while I found the Quran supports women’s leadership, powerful male elites in most Arab Muslim societies prevent women from practicing that right (Amani, 2006, p.59).

In the same vein, separating the Islam as a religion and its misinterpretations, Naway El Saadawi alleges in one of her interview entitled “Arab Women and Western Feminism: an Interview with Nawal El Sadaaw” that:

Yes, quite a lot of people in the West think that Islam is the major element in oppressing Arab women, but in fact this is not true. If we study Islamic scientifically, look at its origin, compare it with other religions – Judaism, Christianity, and other Asian religions- we find that almost all these religions have similar attitudes to women. Indeed, sometimes we find attitudes to women much more tolerant or progressive in Islam. So it is not Islam, it is not religion even that oppress women. And Islam is not one Islam. There is the Islam of Saudi Arabia, the Islam of Tunisia, the Islam of Lebanon. What you find is that governments and politicians invariably pick from religion what suits them and use it to justify their position.

Akin to Nawal El Saadawi, Rajaa Al Sanea among others considers herself as a catalyst for changing Saudi women’s social realities and conditions through her literary work .That is, she is strongly determined to critique the Saudi society in the hope of changing it into a better life, though it is not easy regarding the particularities of Saudi society that is strongly bound to traditions and tribal considerations. In this context, she avers:

In fact, I aspire to be the first to signal the beginning of change. These are social changes that are not connected to religion. This is why I am not anxious about discussing them through my writings. Silence is evil. I hate negativity and refuse to wait for others to act on my behalf. It is my duty to me and to my children in the future. I fear I will mellow out with age and lose my motivation and courage, as has happened with others (El Okeily, 2007, interview).

As one starts reading closely the novel under study, she/he can easily notice the writer clear-cut intentions to break the silence that has been long placed on very controversial issues and topics in Saudi patriarchal society .Accordingly; Girls of Riyadh tackles as well as criticizes a wide range of social traditions and practices that are prevailing in the Saudi Arabian society and this section will accordingly reveal these practices through the four different characters of the novel.

From the very beginning of the novel, the writer invites the reader to look at gender roles and relations in Saudi society and how they are regulated by Saudi patriarchal norms. In other words, Rajaa Al-Sanee raises the issue of the arranged marriage as one of the most common social practise in her society along with its
destructive effects on both women and men respectively. Hence, she opens the novel by exposing the story of Qamrah Al-Qusmanji, who is married traditionally to Rachi AlTanbal, an educated young man who is studying his degrees in the USA and they have never met before.

Before the wedding, Qamrah had seen Rashid only once, and that was on the day of the shoufa, the day set for the bridegroom’s lawful viewing of the bride-to-be. The traditions of her family did not permit the man seeking the engagement to see the bride again before the contract-signing. Moreover, in this case there was no more than a two-week gap between the signing and the marriage celebration itself, and Qamrah’s and Rashid’s mothers agreed between themselves that Rashid would not see his bride during that time, so that she would have no interruptions as she prepared for her wedding. (Al-sanea, 2008, p.51)

In the light of this passage, Rajaa Al Sanee reveals how marriage is set between the couple even though they do not know each other enough as they are banned by traditions. As we have mentioned above, the couple are not allowed either to meet together or to speak to each other before the marriage contract is signed. Ironically enough, the merely chance they have to catch glimpse of each other is deeply regulated under the rubric of Shoufa with the presence of their families. Alsanea deeply resents her criticism to the tradition which does not allow men and women see and/or meet to exchange ideas, nurture friendship and develop their social skills before they are married. The perception of marriage within Saudi Arabian society goes in tune with Simone De Beauvoir point when she argues that “for girls, marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage. This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for them.(De Beauvoir, 1989, p.427).

The narrator goes on describing the Saudi Muslim wedding of Gamrah, where weddings in Saudi Arabia are seized and used by older women as it usually gives a space for them to scrutinize the young women who might be possible prospective brides for their sons. In return, young women do their best to show their beauty and great manners at weddings in a way to attract the attention of prospective mother-in-laws. In other words, it is the mothers and fathers who choose the wife for the son, or the husband for the daughter on the basis of social position of the family in the society and the wealth they have. Mothers choose their son’s future wives either through matchmakers or when they meet girls in marriages or any other occasion of gatherings. Therefore, girls interested in marriages have to attract the attention of the mothers by showing good conduct so that they may have a chance to be chosen. Within this context, the narrator says:

The strategy of yaaalla yaaalla, which means ‘get going, but just baarely’, is the most foolproof path to quick marriage proposal in our conservative society. The idea is to be energetic and constrained at the same time. ‘And after that you can be as foolish as you want,’ according to Um Nuwayyir’s counsel. At weddings, receptions and social gatherings where ladies meet, especially the old ladies looking to make a match, you must follow this strategy to the letter: —You barely walk, you barely talk, you barely smile, you barely dance, be mature and wise, you
always think before you act, you measure your words carefully before you speak and you do not behave like a child. (Al-sanea, 2008, p.6)

This passage further suggests that the concept of marriage loses its value, as an institution that should be based on an intellectual match, reciprocal feelings, and love between the couple to the social and cultural expectations of patriarchal societies like Saudi Arabian one. This attitude leads marriage to be regarded particularly as a business where one seeks profits and a shelter to escape social stigmatization especially among women. That is to say, marriage, as we learn through the above passage, haunts and obsesses women’s mind due to the fact that women suffer a lot in case they don’t get a chance to marry a man as early as possible. They fear being called ‘spinsters ‘within their society if they miss the opportunity for marriage as if they are to blame for not having been able to draw men’s attention and this may account for viewing men as their saviour. This obsession is highly asserted in Qamrah’s friend’s rhetoric question as the narrator puts it: “why isn’t me up there?” (Al-sanea, 2008, p.8)

Provided that marriage is almost usually arranged by parents based on a set of social, religious, class, and tribal considerations, Rajaa Al Sanea critically questions the success as well as the growth of a marriage set under these unfair conditions. Hence, she reveals the miserable outcome of this sort of marriage under women and men are both victimized.

In this regard, Rajaa Al Sanea shows these sufferings through Qamrah’s experience within and after marriage when she finds herself living with a man who does not show any affection or caring towards his wife. That said, the marriage failure indications emerge very early during the wedding party when Qamrah’s friends ask Rashid to kiss his wife’s to show affection towards her. His reaction was appalling and not expected as he “sent the girls a scathing stare that sliced them into silence” (Al-sanea, 2008, p.10) says the narrator. Rajaa Al Sanea reveals here that Rachid along with thousands of Saudi men can hardly kiss their wives in front of others as it is an immoral act in their eyes which is largely rejected by their society.

Moreover, after marriage, both Rashid and Gamrah travel to Italy namely to Venice, where they have decided to spend their honeymoon and later they emigrate to Chicago, where Rachid, Qamrah’s husband is doing his Phd. Given that she is imprisoned in her mother’s strict pieces of advice and instructions to show refusal and objection to her husband, Qamrah is unable to enjoy her marriage’s life and interact with her husband as the narrator says:

Her mother’s Golden Rule was spinning in her mind. Don’t be easy. Refusal – it’s the secret to activating a man’s passion. After all, her older sister Nafah and Hessah did not give themselves to their husbands till the fourth night. But she was setting a new record: it had been seven nights and her husband hadn’t touched her. Rachid hadn’t touched her even though she has been quite ready to ditch her mother’s theories after the first night. (Al-sanea, 2008, p.11)

The above extract is very telling as it shows that women’s oppression is not always rendered by male hegemony, yet women themselves sometimes stand behind and are the source of women’s oppression as in the case of Qamrah’s
mother, who does not only choose her daughter’s husband but also, she is charged to teach her daughter ascribed attitudes and traditions she is supposed to do to lead ironically a happy life. By doing so, she is implicitly perpetuating patriarchal structures that limit women’s freedom in terms of sexual freedom. In this context, Cheryl Rubenberg avers that: ‘it is women who teach girls the rightness or the truth of their traditionally defined roles, responsibilities, relations, and restrictions. Mothers provide their daughters with things that are haram, eib, and mamnoua’ (Rubenberg, 2001, p.79). With this in mind, women are driven to undergo very dreadful and deplorable conditions that have subsequently serious consequences on their psychological side and their lives in general.

It is of a paramount importance to note that sexual education in general and sexual freedom in particular is another serious issue raised by Rajaa Al Sanea in this novel to highlight the lack and the total ignorance of sexual knowledge and skills that prevail among both Saudi men and women. Indescribing Qamrah’s experience in bed with her husband Rachid, the narrator says:

…..after a few moments of innocent seduction, he took things into his own hands. She gave herself up to it despite the enormous confusion and anxiety she felt. She closed her eyes, anticipating what was about to happen. And then he surprised her with an act that was never on her list of sexual expectations. Her response, which was shocking to both of them, was to slap him hard on the face then and there! Their eyes met in a stunned moment. Her eyes were filled with fear and bewilderment, while his were full of an anger the likes of which she had never seen. He moved away from her quickly, dressed hurriedly and left the room amid her tears and apologies. (Al-sanea, 2008, p.26-27)

As the passage certifies, both Qamrah and Rachid can hardly extricate themselves from the constructed clichés and social stereotypes they have in mind towards sexuality as being a taboo though they are legally married. Ironically enough, instead of enjoying their special moment and satisfying their sexual desires romantically as a married couple, Rachid and Qamrah find themselves unable to make love and interact pleasingly due to the ignorance of such a matter which ends in sort of tragic experience.

Qamrah’s suffering is aggravated throughout the marriage life with her husband Rachid. In Arab society in general and Saudi Society in particular, a woman impatiently seeks marriage as she thinks that it is source of settlement and happiness towards her life. However, in the case of Qamrah, it goes otherwise as it turns out to be a nightmare and a tragedy. This is highly reflected when Qamrah starts feeling doubt and low self-esteem with her husband and says: “My husband whom I love, hates me. He wants to throw me away”. (Ibid, p.50)

In fact, there are many instances that testify to her suffering and bewilderment with her husband and for instance, Rachid seems to be somewhat influenced by the western culture and therefore he despises her wife with the veil (Hijaab) and says: “Why don’t you wear ordinary clothes like the other women here? It’s as if you are trying to embarrass me in front of my friends with the things you wear! And then you wonder why I don’t take you out with me” (Ibid). By asking her to give up wearing the Hijaab, Rashid here is not promoting her
freedom as other liberal women in the West, but rather he is seeking his own interest and image as Hijab for him becomes a source of irritation and ‘embarrassment’ to him with his Western liberal friends.

To please her husband and seek his praise, she passively and surprisingly takes off her veil and her coat one day after persuading him to take her to the theatre, yet his reaction was as shocking as the usual once he watches her and expresses his blatant disapproval: “Taking them off isn’t making you look any better. So just put them again” (Ibid, p.51). Interestingly, by revealing men’s ambivalent attitude towards the veil, Rajaa Al-Sanea critically calls into question the real motive behind wearing the veil which leads to a rhetoric question: Do women put on the veil as a way to express their obedience to God as it is implied in a Saudi religious discourse? Or is it merely a means by which women show their obedience to the male hegemony?

Not surprisingly, Qamrah is not leading a happy life she has ever wished to live. She is really enduring regarding her husband, Rachid and his constant maltreatment and abuse throughout the marriage life in the USA. Qamrah’s marriage goes worse and her plights are aggravated under these conditions. In short, her constant sufferings and endurance can be painfully reflected in the following questions which obsess her mind:

So why would he marry me if he didn’t want me? Gamrah asked herself time and time again. She asked her mother whether she had heard anything from Rashid’s family to suggest that he had been forced to marry her. But did it make sense that a man - and he was every inch a man, whatever else he turned out to be - would be forced to marry a woman he didn’t want, no matter how compelling the reasons? (Al-sanea, 2008, p.51).

Being aware of the worse consequences of divorced women within her own society especially the disgrace she thinks she might bring to her family if divorced, Qamrah does her best; even at the expense of her own happiness, to save her marriage from loss. In other words, she struggles to keep her husband by mistakenly following her mother’s tactics to give birth to a child as way to preserve a husband. “She had long heard her mother and female relatives repeating the wisdom of previous generations, that if all else fails; pregnancy was the only way to ensure that a marriage continues” (Ibid, p.84). This is, however, not the case with Qamrah, regarding once again Rachid’s reaction when he learns she is pregnant. Instead of being enchanted like every single man receiving such news, Rachid abuses her physically as well psychologically and then he decides to send her back to her homeland after deciding to divorce her. Qamrah’s marriage is doomed failure after being divorced and having had to return to live a life of misery and boredom in her parents’ house.

In a virtual re-enactment of Sadeem’s tragedy, the divorce papers were delivered to Qamrah’s father two weeks after Qamrah landed in Riyadh, effectively blocking all possible maternal machinations. It appeared as though Rashid had just been waiting for the moment in which he felt he could justifiably rid himself of the wife that had been imposed on him (Ibid, p.98).
This passage is a typical example of the dreadful consequences of the arranged marriage in Saudi Arabian society with regard to the case of Rachid and Qamrah, whose marriage was planned and arranged by their families on tribal and family basis. More importantly, Rajaa Al-Sanea raises through this passage the issue of divorce as being one of the most common problems in Saudi patriarchal society under which women’s status is aggravated. Put differently, women, as represented by Qamrah, are passively divorced by their husbands without even having their permission. That is, when a Saudi man decides that his wife is no longer an asset, he can easily desert and divorce her, but yet he can still live and enjoy his life without any restrictions, on the contrary, a woman fear divorce and can hardly divorce her husband with the regard to her vulnerable position as being highly dependent on men in many aspects of life which ultimately leads to bearing a big burden in their society.

According to Nawal El Saadawi, she argues that "the great majority of Arab women are still, terrorized by the mere word, divorce which means hunger, no home, and the unrelenting remarks of those around them"(El Saadawi, 1980, p.205). Hence, when a woman is divorced, she is put under a lot of pressures and her freedom becomes more restricted as she is deemed as “a menace to man and society, and the only way to avoid the harm she could do was to isolate her in the home, where she could have no contact with either one or the other” adds Nawal El Saadawi (El Saadawi, 1980, p.136).

In this context, Rajaa Al Sanea poses a very serious and rhetorical questions which reveal the agony, social stigma, and the endurance women undergo in Saudi society in the marriage circle. Hence, the narrator wonders:

Is divorce a major crime committed by the woman only? Why does not our society harass the divorced man the way it crushes the divorced woman? I know that you readers are always ready to dismiss and make light of these naïve questions of mine, but surely you can see that they are logical questions and they deserve some careful thought. We should defend Um Nuwayyir and Gamrah and other divorcees. Women like them don’t deserve to be looked down on by society, which only condescends from time to time to throw them a few bones and expects them to be happy with that. Meanwhile, divorced men go on to live fulfilling lives without any suffering or blame. (Al-sanea, 2008, p.172)

Having to live under such miserable conditions, especially in a society which lays full blame on women when it comes to divorce, women, according to Rajaa Al-Sanea, become therefore more subject to severe psychological trauma. To summarize these plights, the narrator says:

Gamrah suffered a great deal of pain as a result of her divorce from Rachid….Night times was the worst: Since returning to the family home, she had been unable to sleep for more than three hours a night–she, who had never found it hard to sleep ten- or twenty-hours at a stretch before her marriage and even during it! Now she would wake up tormented in anguish (Al-sanea, 2008, p.100).

In the same vein, the narrator recounts the story of Sadeem, the second character of the novel, as being somewhat similar to that of Gamrah. In brief,
Sadeem’s tragic experience is almost the same as Gamrah though they have a completely different personalities and characters.

Sadeem, as we learn through the novel, is a girl whose mother died since her birth, and therefore she is raised by her father and her eldest aunt, Badriyyah who acts as a mother figure as her mother died at an early age. Sadeem, who is pushed to marry against her wishes as an act of revenge her cousin, Tarik, who senses strong feelings and love towards her after she is disappointed and dumped by her two lovers, Waleed Al-Shariand Firas. Sadeem’s first tragic story begins when she is left by her fiancé Waleed as she allows him one night to have more freedom with her in bed before the wedding party. Provided that Sadeem is now officially married in papers to Waleed, she sees no harm in getting closer and pleases him sexually since he is her legal husband though the weeding party is not set yet. The result is that Waleed disappears and never shows up after that night and he sends her the divorce paper as he thinks she has had many previous sexual experiences with other men.

Once again Rajaa Al Sanea reveals social hypocrisy that is strongly embedded in Saudi society through the experience of Sadeem. In fact, women are doomed to endure and suffer more under the men’s double standard attitude and hypocrisy that are highly pervasive as the case of Waleed suggests. Paradoxically, Waleed is strongly determined to make love with her wife, Sadeem as he seems unable to wait till Eid Al-Fitr after which the weeding party will take place. Since Sadeem had vowed to make her beloved Waleed happy that night, and since she wanted to erase his disappointment over her insistence on delaying the wedding, she allowed him to go further with her than ever before. She did not try to stop him— as she had gotten used to doing— when he attempted to cross the signing of the contract— She was convinced that he wouldn‘t be satisfied unless she offered him a little more of her, —femininity, and she was willing to do anything to please him, the love of her life, even if it meant exceeding the limits she has spent her lifetime guarding (Al-sanea, 2008, p.32).

In the light of this, we come to know that it is Waleed, who pushes Sadeem to make love with him and therefore she decides mistakenly to offer him more of her in the hope to gain his praise and his satisfaction since she is officially his wife; however, his reaction is appalling and paradoxical as “she kept calling through the entire week, at different times of the day and night, desperate to reach him. But his cell phone was always switched off and the private line in his room was always busy” (Ibid, p.33).

It is even worse for Sadeem when Waleed eventually sends her divorce papers claiming that he no longer feels comfortable with her. Being divorced now, Sadeem is a shocked and she blames herself as she does not wait till after the wedding party. Sadeem never tells her family about that night since she knows deeply she will be viewed with suspicion and she will never be understood by her family and society. She believes the reason that Waleed has divorced her is that he thinks she is any easy girl who had previous sexual experiences. Hence, she collapses emotionally onto herself to suffer more as a divorcee.
Had she been wrong to give herself to Waleed before wedding celebration? Did it make any sense at all to believe that that was the cause of him avoiding her? Why, though? Wasn‘t he her legal husband, and hadn‘t he been her legal husband ever since they signed the contract? Or did getting married mean the ballroom, the guests, the live singer and the dinner? And what she had done - did it somehow deserve punishment from him? Hadn‘t he been the one who initiated it? Why had he encouraged her to do the wrong thing and then afterward abandoned her? And anyway, was it wrong; was it a sin, in the first place? Had he been testing her? And if she had failed the test, did that mean she was not worthy of him? He must have thought she was one of those girls who were easy! ...??(Al-sanea, 2008, p.).

Rajaa Al Sanea poses here other rhetoric questions through her character Sadeem, which do not only give deep insight about the hypocrisy of Saudi patriarchal society, but also they show how this hypocrisy causes deep psychological and emotional trauma.

Sadeem's tragedy is further deepened in London, where she goes to recover from the trauma of her previous experience with Waleed. There she meets in a birth’s day party a Saudi young man called Firas Al Sharqawi, who is a diplomat and a well-known politician. After their first contacts, she falls in a love with Firas perhaps stronger than her first lover regarding his special respect and kindness he shows during his encounters with her.…. “Until finally, praying for Waleed’s return turned into praying for Firas’s presence” (Ibid., p.143) . However, Firas turns out to be a traditionally bound man despite his great intellectuality and therefore she is destined to suffer more aggravated depression as their relationship cannot accordingly go forward to marriage. That said, Firas’s social status as a politician does not allow him to marry Sadeem regarding her marital status as a divorced woman. Because of the very negative stereotypes held about divorcee women in his society coupled with his family rejection, Firas is not brave enough to challenge this view as he is afraid of this prospective marriage which may bring social stigma as well it may destroy his image with his family and his position as a politician. With this in mind, Firas is finally engaged to a girl of his family choice which ensues Sadeem’s confusion and causes deep pain inside her heart as the narrator comments in the following passage:

Was it possible for Firas to marry someone other than her? How could such a thing happen? After all this love and the years they had spent together? Did it make any sense that a man of Firas’s strength and resourcefulness was unable to convince his family that he could marry a divorced woman? Or was it just that he was incapable of convincing himself of it? Had she failed, after all of her attempts, to reach the level of perfection befitting a man like Firas? (Al-sanea, 2008, p.).

Alsanea here reflects on two important things. Firstly, she uncovers the social hypocrisy of Saudi men represented by Firas, who is obviously unable to marry a woman of his own choice and give it in to his family family and secondly she shows the plight of divorced women in the Saudi society who are looked down and viewed unfavourably as immoral women especially if they happen to be intellectuals and have a free spirit like the case of Sadeem.
The story of the Michelle is quite different from both Gamrah and Sadeem regarding her disposition and her attitudes towards traditions. Being born to a Saudi father and to an American mother, Mashael, as her real Arabic name or Michelle, as her mother and friends are used to call her is more herself and is more liberal. For that reason, she does not suffer as much pain and suffering as her friends do vis-à-vis her love relations. On the contrary to her friends, she relatively enjoys more freedom. Even though Michelle falls in love Faisal, whom she thinks he is the right person as he loves her infinitely, their relationship is broken up due to the family considerations. Their love relationship does not span more than a year and is ultimately doomed to failure when Michelle asks Faisal to marry her and his reaction does not seem different from Firas, Sadeem’s lover due to Faisal dependency on his family. In this regard, the narrator says:

The family of that girl was not of their sort. They must ask Faisal’s father, since he knew infinitely more about genealogies and families. But from the start, his mother suggested, this line of conversation did not augur well. The girl had tricked him! Aah, the girls of this generation! How awful they were! And aah, for her young, green son- she never would have expected him to fall into the trap of a girl such as this! She asked him who the girl’s maternal uncles were and as soon as she heard that the girl’s mother was American, she decided to bang the door shut for good on this fruitless dialogue around this utterly ridiculous topic. So countless mothers before her, she resorted to the oldest trick in the book: “quick, son! Get up, hurry, get me my blood pressure medicine! My heart, oh, my heart, I think I am dying…” (Al-sanea, 2008, p.94-95).

It can be argued that this passage is very significant as it reveals the extent to which forces such as family belonging, class, race, and religion can play such a very crucial role in judging as well as deciding on the marriages between men and women in Saudi Arabian society. Faisal is not allowed by his family to marry Michelle, the girl he loves, due to the fact that she is, on one hand a half-American, which is highly rejected in Saudi society culture, and on the other hand, she belongs to simple unknown family which is not an asset in the eyes of Faisal’s family.

Hence, Rajaa Al Sanea critically calls into question these unjust practices and beliefs that ban individuals from choosing their right spouse regardless of their family genealogy, and/or their class and cultural backgrounds. These maltreatments and stereotypes are further manifested through Michelle’s rhetorical questions: “why am I forced to act a part in front of others? Why does not this society respect the difference between my family and other Saudi families? Everyone considers me a bad girl just because my mother is American! How can I live in such an unjust society? Tell me how, Faisal!” (Ibid, p.91)

Equally important, Rajaa Al sana also criticizes the contradictions of Saudi people vis-à-vis their behaviours and attitudes. Though Michelle’s father is very liberal, he rejects her marriage to her cousin, Matti due to religious differences as explained in the following:

Michelle discovered that the epidemic of contradictions in her country had got so out of control that it had even infected her parents. Her father, whom she
had regarded as a rare symbol of the freedom of Saudi Arabia, had (himself!) now smashed the pedestal she had put him on, thereby proving the truth of the proverb: anyone who lives with a people becomes one of them!(Ibid, p.83-84).

After Michelle’s disappointment and failure to get married to Faisal as well her family rejection to get engaged with her cousin Matti, she relatively recovers quickly and moves forward to pursue up her studies in Dubai, where she finally works at one of the satellite TV channels owned by the father of her Emirati girlfriend, Jumanah.

Unlike all her other three girlfriends Gamrah, Sadeem, and Michelle who are destined, as we have studied above, to undergo a constant disappointment and failure in their personal and social life, Lamese ,their fourth friend seems, on the other hand, completely different from the rest. That is to say, Lamese has been able to achieve success in both her career and her personal life though her first short-lived experience is not a success. In brief, she seems to be more prudent and wiser than the rest in the sense that she has chosen a man of her own choice whom she loves, not to mention that she moves to Canada with her husband to pursue her studies in Medicine major.

More importantly, Lamesse is deemed to be adequately knowledgeable in different areas and disciplines. For that reason, her three girlfriends keep consulting her and enquiring about their potential relationship matches taking into account her deep knowledge about the horoscope field as well as computer science discipline. Also, she takes the charge of teaching her friend, Gamrah how to have access to the internet by surfing and chatting with internet users. By doing so, she helps her break the routine and recover from the trauma and the plight ensued by her divorce from Rachid. Before she meets Nizar, Lamees first Seems to like Ali a Shiite, the brother of her friend, Fatima. In brief, he studies Medicine with Lamees at the same University, which make their encounters more frequent. However, their relationship does not last long enough as they are caught in a café by the Police of Morals and Virtue ,and are brought to investigation regarding that dating is not sanctioned in Saudi Arabia and it is even deemed as a punishable offense. Here, the narrator says after they catch and start investigating them:

There, they put Lamees and Ali into two separate rooms and began interpolations. Lamees could not bear the hurtful questions put to her. They asked her in detail about her relationship with Ali. They used coarse language and they forced her to hear words that would have embarrassed her even in front of her most intimate girlfriends. After trying for hours to appear self-confident and completely convinced of the rightness of everything she had done, she collapsed in tears. She really did not believe that she had done anything that was cause for shame. In the next room, the interrogator was putting pressure on Ali, who lost his cool completely when the man asserted that Lamees had confessed to everything and that he might as well come clean.(Al-sanea, 2008, p.139).

Not only does Rajaa Al Saneaaddress here the gender segregation policy that is deeply entrenched by the Saudi regime, but she also raises the issue of racism that is based on religious fanaticism among Saudi people and regime itself. Because Ali is a Persian Shiite boy, Lamesse is not even allowed to establish a
casual friendship with Ali, let alone loving or marrying him due to the long constant political, historical, and religious conflict between Shiite and Sunni ideologies. This idea is asserted when Lamees “had heard a policeman whispering into her father’s ear that they had found the boy was ‘from the rejectionist sect’. He was a Shiite from Qatif and so his punishment would certainly be worse than hers”(Al-sanea, 2008, p.140). Hereby, Al-Sanea critically questions the individual’s freedom in general and women’s freedom of choice in particular to be with the person she likes regardless of their religious affiliation, class, race, or otherwise.

**Conclusion**

As a conclusion, it is fair to note that Rajaa Al Sanea has boldly exposed through her four protagonists together with the anonymous narrator myriads of highly debatable issues such as arranged marriage, divorce, women’s freedom, and women’s status in general in Saudi Arabian context. Significantly, Al Sanea has insightfully criticised almost all the social contradictions and cultural practices which usually -if not all the times perpetuate largely gender roles and stereotypes, under which Saudi women are victimised and doomed to go through plight and very traumatic experiences as we have witnessed in this section. In fact, women, as discussed in, in the novel under analysis are still accordingly victims of severe patriarchy, strict traditions, tribal relations and misuse of religion in a very conservative society like Saudi Arabia.

**References**

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Resisting the Double Oppression and the Quest for Home and an Identity the Case Fadia Faqir’s My Name Is Salma (2007).¹
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Abstract
The present paper entitled “Resisting the Double Oppression and the Quest for Home and an Identity the Case of Fadia Faqir’s My Name Is Salma (2007)” offers a critical reading of a selected novel among the Anglophone Arab American and Arab British literature that is fundamentally concerned with confrontation and subversion. Fadia Faqir, Mohja kahf, Najat El hachimi, Zana Mohcine and others have appropriated the diaspora space to subvert the inaccurate narratives of Muslim women and have ventured to construct a space of agency, equality and respect for Arab women in both the homeland and the Western ethnic borderland. Fadia Faqir’s My Name Is Salma typically explores the intersections of Western stereotypical and racial discourses that have intensified in the post-September 11/9 era, and the Oriental gender based discrimination namely honour crime. These issues are analyzed through postcolonial lenses; theories of feminism are used to analyze honour-based violence and patriarchal gender discrimination while Stuart Hall’s conceptualization of identity, and Homi. K Bhabha’s hybridity, ambivalence and Third space are applied to analyze the identity formation in this novel.

Key Words: Anglophone Arab Women’s literature, Resistance, Identity, hybridity, feminism, honour crime.

Introduction
The terrorist attack of the September 2011 and the War on Terror enact dramatic change in the Arab image in the West generally and in American In specific. Agony, hater, scrutiny and violence against Arab and Muslim reached their extreme scale. Many scholars support a similar argument like Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber. They argue in Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11 that the media have framed Muslim and Arab Americans through the process of racialization. This is a unique phenomenon experienced by Arabs, and the 9/11 attacks have played a crucial role in its formation. Jamal and Naber claim that it was not until 9/11 that these minority groups became visible in discussions of race and ethnicity in America (Aneta, 2016). Thus, Arabs were classified as the threatening “other” and depicted as inferior and “white but not quite” who do not fit into the American mainstream. This energize the Arab diaspora writers mainly

women to write premeditated works to define Arab community in the US and correct the stereotypes of Arab in the eye of the west challenging the marginalization of Arab women on basis of their ethnicity and sex.

The Arab diasporas found themselves located in a place of liminality and, as a result, the common make up of their identity are “mimicry”, “hybridity” and “ambivalence”. These peculiarities of identity resonate in most of Arab women diasporic literature in the sense that they portray their female protagonists as hybrid subjects who undergo various experiences in attempt to construct their subjectivity within the overpowering secularism of western culture and rigidity of their original Arab culture. Faqir Faqir’s *My Name is Salma*, for instance, tells us about the precariousness of her female character who flee death of dishonor in her motherland to find herself in a state of in-betweeness. Faqir adopts a non-linear narrative form which is fashioned in mixing the present and the past, English and Arab and cross-cultural journey between Jordan and England. The young Arab Bedouin girl Salma grapes between two different identities and undergoes a life time of journeying and the search of the self.

This article is a critical study of honour crime and the marginalization Arab Muslim women in the British society as portrayed in the Anglo- Arab writer Fadia Faqir's novel *My Name Is Salma*. The article explores the double oppression that the novel’s heroine faces in both her Bedouin society and in the new British society where she seeks refuge from the threats of murder made by her brother in the name of honour as a way of cleansing the family’s honour and reputation. From a feminist perspective, the study analyses honour-based violence with special emphasis on the role of patriarchy and its effects on the protagonist's ultimate tragic death. At the same time, concepts of hybridity, and the third space are employed to analyse the identity formation in the novel.

**Primitivism and Honour Crime through a Feminist Perspective**

Fadia Faqir is one of the Arab feminist and diaspora writers who engage in criticizing the Arab patriarchy and questions the oppression of Arab Muslim women in the name of Islam which is intertwined with Arab tradition and culture. Faqir uses her works to fight against her society’s traditional norms that engender women powerless and voiceless. In her writing either prose or critical, Faqir tries to display that Arab women are oppression and subjugated by the traditional norms of their honour based-societies because of their gender as women. In this novel, the author chooses Bedouin society because it is proud of its old norms and traditions. Bedouin people still have their own way of life in the Arab World and are still "congregated in groups, families, clans, tribes" (Faqir, 2007, p.249), and have their individual culture and laws which are deeply rooted in their behaviour.

Bedouin societies are renowned for their caring about certain cultural and moral norms such as honour, courage, hospitality and fortitude. In this novel, Fadia Faqir exposes patriarchy coercion and the inaccurate interpretation of Islamic teachings which subsidize the violation of Arab women’s human rights. This section is meant to examine, from a postcolonial feminist perspective, honour crime and gender discrimination faced by Arab women in general and Jordan and beyond. Through the dialogic narrative in *My Name is Salma*, Faqir decodes the
persecution of a young woman and the exilic trauma in Britain as a result of honour crimes.

Speaking on the issue of honour killing, it is defined as honour based violence that includes physical harm injury, and killing or psychological harm like threatening, singling out and persecutions. Honour based violence occurs when a female relative is perceived to smear the family honour by having a sexual relationship outside the marriage wedlock. This practice is deeply rooted in most Arab honour based-societies like Jordan. Gill Aisha explains that the concept of honour crimes includes all forms of violence directed towards individuals in the name of honour. It is a punishment that aims at cleansing the dishonour through the use of emotional, social or physical coercion against a female relative whose behavior crossed a fundamental cultural boundary. The punishment involves the killing of the transgressor of the code of honour. Honour killing is in general defined as: “the murder of women for suspected deviation from sexual norms imposed by society”. Perpetrators are not only the husbands or partners of the victim, but other male or female family or community members can carry out the act. (Aisha, 2009)

These definitions are very useful for the purpose of the study since Fadia Faqir’s My Name is Salma, explores the cultural aspects and the social traditions pertaining to the issue. It maps out the general constitutional violence perpetuated against females within the framework of patriarchal structures. Through the protagonist Salma, Faqir displays the different scenarios women, who are engaging in, or being suspected of engaging in, sexual practices before or outside marriage, go through. The character of Salma is the first female to be suspicious of bringing shame and dishonor to her family where her mother anticipated her ultimate tragic death saying “You smeared our name with tar, your brother will shoot you between the eyes” (Faqir 2007, 37).

The novel reports a number of honour killing of female ‘sinner’ in the village of Hima while Salam is the last to be shot between the eyes by her brother Mahmoud whose duty is to purify the family’s dignity and reputation. One should note that the family honour can only be tarnished if a female relative engages in inappropriate sexual behavior as Pitt Rivers notes in his article “Honour and social status” that “the honour of a man is involved therefore sexual purity of his mother, wife and daughters, and not in his own”. He further argues that “The honour of a man and of a woman therefore imply quite different modes of conduct. This is so in any society. A woman is dishonoured, loses her vergüenza, with the tainting of her sexual purity, but a man does not”. (Rivers, 1995) The Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi shares the same stance arguing that "the man's honour is safe as long as the female members of his family keep their hymens intact". (Nawal, 1980)

What this implies in the fact that honour and reputation of the family according the Jordan ‘society is related to women’s sexuality and thus this institutional code is primarily meant to restrict women’s freedom of the body and sexuality. For instance, Salma has always been under the control of her father and brother. Her father imposes on her to wear the traditional “black Bedouin madraga” (15) which cover her whole body. He also observes the development of
her body as she grows into an attractive woman and ordered her “Your breasts are like melons, cover them up! My father haj Ibrahm would said” (Faqir, 2007, 13) last she might seduce male in the village. Salma’s brother, on the other hand, is deemed superior to her whose fundamental duty is to exercise certain vanquish over his sister.

My brother Mahmoud kept an eye on me while brushing his horse. I started hunching my back to hide my breasts, which were the first thing Hamda, noticed about me” (Faqir 2007, 13). The implication that this statement yields is that women’s bodies don’t belong to them but rather to their male guardians. The author shows that freedom of the body and sexuality is censored in Arab Islamic word and in Jordan in particular. Faqir notes “I was forced to wear the veil by my father, a reluctant tyrant. He imposed things on us like praying five times a day, a 7 p.m. curfew... all kinds of things that made me react against institutional religion. Some of my siblings and I felt like we were in a camp, a confined space, an army, and that our father treated us like cadets.‖ (Lindsey, 2011)

In this interview Faqir unveils the fact that her relation to Islamic religion is much more about obligation and imposition rather than a personal choice or out of personal conviction which she reflects in her novel through the character Salma.

To unmask gender based discrimination and the biased nature of Jordan patriarchal society, Salma recounts her love story with Hamdan which is more a master- slave relation rather than love and human interaction. Hamdan, as Salma recounts, perceives her as his own slave, whore and simply a body he uses to please his voyeuristic desires. In the novel, Salma fell in love with a young Bedouin man whose handsome look and gaze makes her heart melts. She follows her grandmother advice to “follow your heart always daughter of mine” (Faqir, 2007, 31). The two young loves arranged meetings under dark and in remote place for fear to be seen together in the village. Despite the rigidity of their community, they ventured to cross the social red lines by practices sex outside marriage contract. However, Hamdan has never reacted to Salma as an equal partner. When arranging to meet, “If I were not waiting for him out there among the vines Hamdan would make a shrill sound as if he were calling his dog back to the barn” (Faqir, 2007, 50) Hamdan used to dehumanizes Salma calling her with shrill, the same manner he used to call his dog. This implies, in simple terms, that Arab women in many Arab societies are value free in Jordon particularly if they give themselves to a man they love.

In the novel, there is no single statement that indicates that Hamdan and Salma are equal, he never uses her name to call but rather Salma is conceived of as a worthless slave and ‘whore’ “My whore is still here! He would say and take me quickly.” (Faqir, 2007, 36). In the opposite, Salma, being born and raised a society that favors men, addressed her lover with glorious attributes “He would tag at my hair and say 'you are my courtesan, my slave. Yes master, I would say” (Faqir, 2007, 50/51).

Salma’s life turns upside down when she discovers that she is pregnant from the man she trusted most and dared to give her life to. She realized that Hamdan’s promises of marriage "our wedding camel caravan crossing the village, carrying us to our own dwelling" (Faqir, 2007, 177) were simply plots to objectify her and please his sexual needs until he knows about her pregnancy. At this particular moment, Hamdan put off the mask to show his tyrannical patriarch face holding
her responsible over the deed. "You are responsible. You have seduced me with
the yearning of your pipe and swaying hips" (Faqir, 2007, 177). What Fadia Faqir
intends to echo is that only women become responsible for the violation of
cultural code of sexuality. Men are set free and reflect the undemocratic basis of
Bedouin society. Many feminist, indeed, get frustrated at this fact. Fatima Daoud
notes that "a woman cannot do what a man can and in case a man and a woman
are partners in the committing of a wrong deed, it is the woman who is to blame
and the man is let almost scot-free and is not held accountable for his wrong deeds.
(Daoud, 2016) In this respect, Salma’s life becomes in real danger as her name put
in the black list of Bedouin honour code. Her father and brother won’t sleep a wink
until they purify their family name with her blood. “I will never hold my head high
as long as she is breathing, said my father.” (Faqir, 2007, 111)

Reading Salma’s situation from a feminist standpoint, the crime against
women committed on the name of honour is, in fact, an instrument and a part of a
broader pattern of patriarchal domination and control of women bodies, sexuality
and life. This brutal penalty is meant to trace the frontiers of an illicit acts deemed
condemned by society. At the same time, it is meant to give a direct or a symbolic
lesson to other member of the community on the consequences of honour code
violation as Gayatri Spivac affirms in her study “The Body and Beyond:
Representation of Body Politics” that “Body politics is conceptualized as the
negotiation of power via the body through processes that may operate either
directly or symbolically”. (Gayatri, 2015). In the case of Salma, she is incriminated
alone for the commitment of adultery while Hamdan, who played a part in the whole
scenario, is actually held free and no one accused or promised to kill him as a
result.

The novel seems to point out that Salma stands for and document Jordanian
women precarious set of life experiences within the patriarchal Honour based-
regime. Through Salma, Faqir could highlight the traumatic experience of
fragmentation, disconnectedness, persecution and numerous honour killing that
Salma had witnessed before she was killed by her chauvinist brother. When her
irresponsible lover deserted her, Salma’s life turns into an endless nightmar. After
her family had discovered about her pregnancy and Salam’s attempts of abortion
were futile, Salam’s name joined the honour black list and was, consequently,
sentenced to death. Salma could never escape a death penalty without the help
of her school teacher Miss Nailah “I rushed in then stood in the middle of room.
Beating my chest with my right hand, ‘I place myself in Allah’s protection and
yours. Miss Nailah. What is it? I am pregnant’. (Faqir 2007, 23)

As a consequence, Salma will be set free from prison after eight years of
suffering and detachment from her family and mainly daughter. Her school teacher
knew that Salma is going to live longer if is remains in Jordan and with the help of
the prison governor and Khairiyya she was shipped to lebanon to start a new life.
Despite the fact that she will leave all her life, friends and family behind, Salma
was delighted to get out of prison. "My mind was kissing everything: the spacious
blue sky, the green plains, and the large trees, even the donkeys and other cars. I
was free" (Faqir 2007, 70). later, because her brother was an insistence persecutor
and follow her footsteps, Salma was obliged to flee to Lavant in Lebanon and later to Britain to avoid her imminent death. Andrew Vic Onyango observes that “Honour” killing is important in the process of Salma’s identity formation in that it is the cause of her flight from the Levant to Britain. After her arrival in Britain, Salma is still haunted by the ghosts of her past in Hima. She keeps imagining that her brother Mahmoud is out on the loose in Britain in an attempt to hunt her down and kill her. She reflects her agony saying “(...) dark figures behind the curtained and said “yalah, tukhni wkhalisni (shot me and let me get it done). It will be my deliverance” (Faqir 2007, 97).

As a fugitive, Salma could never avoid feeling guilty over her past sins and blames herself to let her baby daughter in the hands of her merciless brother and father. In fact, this introduces the reader to another aftermath of honour killing phenomenon mainly psychological violence. The feelings of shame, guilt and humiliation accompanies Salma throughout her entire life in Britain, she reflects this through “When he finally let go of me I was so sad to be still alive. I deserved to be mocked, beaten, even killed. I abandoned her, let them take her away” (Faqir 2007, 41). Layla, the abandoned daughter of Salma is also a victim of honour crime. Her uncle Mahmoud drowns her in the Long Well claiming that Layla has also brought dishonour to the family’s name just like her mother given that she is the product of Salma’s sexual relations.

In many ways, Fadia’s My Name is Salma is first a response to the experiences of pain and sufferings of women in Jordan, it is ought to be read as a resistant literature as it unmask the gendered power relation where decades of patriarchal exploitations and aggression are answered by the author through the character of Salma who rejects the culture on which the men’s supremacy is founded. The novel tackles one of the most internationally controversial issue pertaining to the Arab culture namely honour crime. The later, as Faqir intended to show, is deeply rooted in many Arab societies and it is intertwined with Jardanian collective patriarchal cultural beliefs and it constitutes a strong apparatus of patriarchal domination over Arab women. Dealing with such an issues, in fact, is a courageous gesture of liberation. My Name is Salma represents the life of women who violated their society’s cultural norms and consequently were sentenced to death. None of the females who are suspected of an illicit love affair or dared to crossing the honour codes could escape imminent death including Salma.

From Ambivalence to the recreation of hybrid Identity in British Ethnic Borderland

Being a prominent feminist voice of the Middle East, Fadia Faqir, through My Name is Salma, sensitizes and inflames the public of gender discrimination, misogyny and honour based violence prey upon Arab women in many conservative Arab societies particularly in Jordan community. However, Faqir’s novel goes beyond the exploration of gender-based violence to centralize on the experience of immigration, diaspora, and the marginalization Arab minorities encounter in British ethnic borderland. The most important remarks many critics note on Faqir’s literary works is her attempts to foreground trans-cultural and cross-ethnic identifications. The novel opens original insights of Arab women diaspora
experiences as she highlights the marginalization of a particular category of Arab women immigrants namely the uneducated, and unskilled young female immigrants. Nash notes that the focus on Salma’s experiences in Britain is powerful. He rightly points out that the novel presents a theme that has not been explored adequately by previous Arab British novelists since the eponymous protagonist is an Arab woman refugee rather than an educated middle class Arab woman. (Yousef, 2011). In this regard, the novel appraises the protagonist’s maneuver and procedures to engender cross-ethnic identification and bridge the gap between the West and the East. This section explores the sense of otherness and alienation embodied in Fadia Faqir’s *My Name is Salma* as well as the transitional experience toward a multicultural hybrid identity in a postcolonial Western context.

The experience otherness and alienation resonate throughout the novel since Salma, as a black Arab Boudioun woman was not welcomed into the British social fabric. In fact, the marginalization of Arabs and the uncertainty of their ethnic classification is not current issue but it has a long history until it was resolved in the court in the USA. Yet, in British ethnic and racial discourse, Arabs remain unrecognized racial category and rendered invisible minority in the Britain. In this broader perspective, Fadia Faqir intends to defend Arab minority rights in the diaspora. In her novel, she foregrounds the dilemma of Arab refugees and subalterns who are rendered invisible by virtue of their ethnicity and their social status. The character of Salma dramatizes and rearticulated the double oppression, racism, and cultural alienation women just like her encounter while contemplating self-discovery and self-realization in the UK. As a woman, Salma is not only tormented when she crossed her conservative society’s hounor code and Brokenhearted to have her baby daughter taken from her custody but also her exile to Exeter in England exacerbate her feeling of dislocation. She has to deal with the hardships of living in milieus where the individual is luminal. When Salma inroads the British mise en scène and as veiled Muslim woman she encounters bigotry as happens to be in an unsympathetic culture toward the head scarves and a country where Islam and religious affiliations are generally questioned. Salma is detained by the immigration authorities for two months where she reports racial maltreatment from the Prison guard who asked the Porter where is she from, she answers that Salma is an Arab, he responds “Fucking Arabic! She rode a camel all the way from Arabia to this dump in Exeter, he said and laughed” (Faqir, 2007,15). The Porter also reproduces the same racial discourse and stereotypical attitude vis-à-vis Arab when refuses to share the room with Salma “I am not going to share the room with an Arab’s she spat (Faqir, 2007,15). Moreover, Salma is always obliged to hide her origin and Arab identity in order to be accepted into the British socio-cultural and economic sphere. When she meets an English man (David) who asked about her origin, Salma discards her real belonging and lied that she is Spanish otherwise she is to be rejected. She says in this vein: “If I told him that I was a Muslim Bedouin Arab woman from the desert on the run he would spit out his tea.’I am originally Spanish” (Faqir, 2007,30).
Based on Salma’s disclosure, Arab women refugee in particular are perceived as other who doesn’t fit into the British Western entourage since she faces antipathy from people around her because oriental woman. Obviously, British people perceive Arabs through an orientalist perspective and are deemed inferior to the people from the West. This reminds us again of Edward Said’s conceptualization of the orient. He says in Orientalism that “Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization. Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being”. (Logge, 2000). The way Salma is fantasized and dehumanized reminds of the old-fashioned prejudices that were produced centuries ago and still persist and recycled in the western mainstream media and popular culture mainly after the drastic events of 9/11. It should be noted that the way the Orientals are portrayed in western media aggravate the feeling of estrangement of Salma since she is treated on the based on those stereotypes.

Salma, an Arab refugee, is not acknowledged a full citizen in Britain but rather she is always made invisible. She is not considered a human being who can walk on the same footing with British people. This marginalization is reflected in Salma’s saying “He kept me in the background and never called me to the front of the shop while he had customers around” (Faqir, 2007, 277). The Restaurant owner believes that Salma is a different other whose Arab feature and black skin would impact his business as British people are not ready yet to accept the presence of a traditional Arab woman around them. The Restaurant owner alsoconsiders Salma to be an exotic other and he treated her accordingly by putting her in the shadow.

Fadia Faqir wants the reader to inter Salma’s skin to experience displacement, depreciation and exclusion Arab minorities face in British context. This fact is reinforced through many characters in the novel who fail to recognize Salma as an Arab woman. for instance, neither the Prison guard nor her boss Mr. Max acknowledge her origin as an Arab. When Salma reached England “the guard pointed at my veil and said Turkish (Faqir, 2007, 116). Additionally, Salma’s boss “I fore saw with dread the next few minutes. How many times had I been asked this question since I came to Britain? After years of working in his shop, Max, my boss, still asked, where did you say? Shaaami Hiiimaa?” (Faqir, 2007, 68). These abstracts clearly imply Arab as ethnicity is dismissed and meant to be ignored in British ethnic and racial discourse which makes Salma and a majority of Arab women maximize their feeling of isolation.

Andrew Vic Onyango remarks in his study of Fadia Faqir’s novel My Name is Salma that: “As an Arab immigrant in England, Salma is a subaltern who has been condemned by the society to a life on the fringes. Mainstream English society does not care about her, cannot see her and is therefore oblivious of her presence. For them, she does not exist. This is aptly depicted when Salma writes her university essay for Dr. Robson; her conclusion is about her experience as an alien in England: “They, and I, think I do not live here, but I do, just like all the women
who were ignored in those tales” (Faqir, 2007, 221). The same stance is held by Suaad Muhammad Alqahtani who believes that being Arab, Salma must also suffer marginalisation, racial slurs, and sexual exploitation in England. Salma could not understand why people in England “look at [her] all [the] time as if [she had a] disease” (Faqir, 2007, 102). Her alienation is aggravated by her life in this culture that “enforces the supremacy of everything that is Christian, Western, [and] white” (Muhammad, 2017).

The frequent incidents of marginalization, both in her motherland and in the exile, consequently, increase Salma sense of alienation and disharmony with British people and even with herself. The novel is full of images and scenes that recount the feelings of cultural alienation from the very moment reached Exeter “I had tasted my first fish and chips, but my mountainous Arab stomach could not digest the fat, which floated in my tummy for days.” (Faqir, 2007, 9) The taste of food seem uneasy to swallow for Salma since she is used to different taste in Hima and even different eating habits in the sense that in her village she used to eat with her bare hands but in Lebanon, she is exposed to eating with knife and fork. As far as Salma’s appearance and dressing style is concerned, Salma appears alien even to herself in her black Bedouin madraqa robe. The later, refers to her traditional society but in British society Salma feels that is a different other. For instance, when Salma check out the newspaper for a job, she finds out that she is far away from the requirement of a suitable Sales girl. “I was neither presentable nor able to speak English well. Nothing that would suit a woman like me with no looks, no education, no experience and no letters of recommendation”. (Faqir, 2007, 17) Salma’s awareness of herself as a culturally dislocated object after years of stay in Exeter and being seen as strange and invisible makes her realize how difficult it is to live a an alien traditional woman she says every morning, I was reminded of my alieness” (Faqir, 2007, 37)

The repeated encounters with racism, and bigotry and Salma’s realization “It was not easy living here in England as an ‘alien’” (Faqir, 2007, 37) contributed extensively to the protagonist identity construction since she realized In order for her to fit into her newly adopted society she must adjust her identity with the prerogative of British society at the same time conserve her Arab Muslim roots. Salma realize that “Salma resisted, but Sally must adapt”(Faqir, 2007, 9) and with the help of her Pakistani friend Parvin, she begin her journey of identity formation to adopt to diasporic life. It is worth mentioning that the protagonist is assisted both in her tribe in Hima and in Exeter in England by other women. This reinforces the fact that Faqir called and advocates solidarity between women and transnational sisterhood. The Protagonist subjectivity is transformed from the milieu that salma happen to be and she creates a third space for her hybrid identity to emerge. Following Stuart Hall conceptualization of postcolonial identity that one’s identity is never static and unchanged and that person’s identity construction is greatly influenced by the environment in which one lives. Our protagonist employs different strategies of assimilation and resistance to form her won subjectivity that blurs the East/ West boundaries. Stuart Hall insists in Cultural Identity and Diaspora that cultural identity:
Is a matter ‘becoming as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as
to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time,
history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories, but
like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from
being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to continuous
‘play’ which is history, culture and power. (Ashcroft, 1995).

Stuart Hall’s premise on Cultural Identity which undergoes constant
transformation is of great consistence with and very relevant to analysis of Salma’s
Identity transformation since Salma forms her own individuality based on her past
experiences and future Horizons. The protagonist’s identity is subject to
transformation from the very moment she leaves Hima toward Lebanon and later
to England given that she goes through unique experience in her new adopted
environment. When Salam flees away from her village in which she is sentenced to
death, her adopter, Miss Asher, changes her name from Salma Ibrahim El-Musa to
Sally Asher taking an English name. Having an English name and moving to
England embody very courageous step in process of Salma’s identity formation.
However, Salma was resistant to change but she wants to keep her Arab Islamic
“No I want Arab name” (Faqir, 2007, 184) except for the fact that if she uses her
Arab name she will be considered a foreign students and pay the university fees
and also she may be sent back to her homeland. For this reason and in order to
keep her Arab along with an English name Salma opted for a hybrid name “Sal”.
Nayera El Miniawi contends that “In ‘My Name is Salma’, the heroine is obsessed
of her name. The meaningful quality of the name identifies the individual with the
collective, and it is this communal self that Salma wants to retain. "Salma uses the
diminutive ‘Sal’ to avert confusion over the second part of her name, the encasing
part. Sal is the interstitial person slipping into being Salma or being Sally”. (Miniawi, 2018)

As it has been explore previously, the protagonist seems unfit to her new
environment given that she suffers immense racism and marginalization to the
extent that she is looked at like a ‘disease’ Salma has no option but to reinvent
herself by embracing a hybrid identity. While in Exeter, the protagonist finds it
difficult to integrate in British economic life particularly with her headscarf and
loose clothes that connate her Islamic and Arab origin. This fact is manifested in a
conversation between Salma and her guide friend Pervan. Parvin says: “We have to
look for a job , said Parvin, but I must ask you about the scarf you keep wearing”
(Faqir 2007, 123). At first, Salma could not put off her veil without which she feels
naked. Fadia Faqir say on the situation Salma is put in that Salma “has to take it
off in Britain because her friend Parvin keeps saying —you’ll never get a job with
that on.‖ It is painful for her, taking it off, the hardest thing she has ever done. She
feels as if she were severing herself from her language, culture and clan. (Lindsey,
2011) This reflects the protagonist ambivalence and fluctuation between two
identities and two different opposing cultures in which she is confused whether to
adhere to the culture in which she was born and arise or assimilate the culture that
adopts her.
Despite the fact that the protagonist desires to keep strong ties with her Arab Islamic culture, she decides to take off her veil in view to be integrated and welcomed into British economic fabric. Salma says: “I looked again at my reflection then slowly began untying the knot of my white veil. I slid it off, folded it and placed it on the bed. I pulled my hair out of the elastic band and tossed it out” (Faqir 2007, 129). On the one hand, discarding the veil does not only reflect the protagonist endeavor to sound more British but also it symbolizes a revolutionary act against the traditional patriarchal institution that oppresses women in the Arab world. As matter of fact, the veil was imposed on Salma by her father back in Hima while in England; Salma takes advantage from the liberation the West offers her to rebel against the Patriarchal ‘Islamic’ institutions. In most of Fadia Faqir’s writing, she endeavors to echoed her critiques of the Islam or more precisely the male interpretation of Islamic religion that contributes to the subjugation of Arab women. In the novel, the protagonist is subject to different forms of gender-based discrimination which are legitimated using Islam. The protagonist reflect these notions saying that “They put us in prison, took away our children, killed us and we were supposed to say God was only testing his true believers” (Faqir, 2007, 136). In the same regard, Salma continuous reinventing herself and constructing a life, an identity and a space of her own following her friend’s advice.

Parvin advises Salma that she should “Groom yourself! Beautify yourself! Sell yourself! You are in the West now”. (Lindsey, 2011) So that she can follow the steps of western women and hold a mirror up to modern British society. Salma behaves accordingly throwing away her traditional Bedouin dress “I was ready to go out for a walk. I wore blue jeans, a T-shirt and tried veil under my chin out.” (Faqir, 2007, 129) to become the sophisticated English Sally. Having said that, the protagonist seems revolutionary against religion or rather the biased interpretation of the Islamic teachings. She is no long that devotee Muslim woman as she used to be in Hima. Salma no longer does her five prayers a day and yet she considers herself to be a Muslim given that she does not a boyfriend. Sadiq observes that: “You have even forgotten how to pray to Allah” he said what about you? Praying all the time and selling alcohol to in fedels. Business is business also” (Faqir, 2007, 125) he observes also that Salma has changed considerably in the sense that she seems more British simi-practicing Muslim woman. Sadiq says “Salma, Salma, you are becoming a memsahib. Soon you will be English also.” (Faqir, 2007, 125)

Notwithstanding, one cannot claim that Salma preached from her Islamic identity given that she still believes that she is a Muslim and she does not dare to, for instance drink alcohol or eat pork. Salma’s identity is multi-cultural; she is Salma, the Muslim Bedouin Arab as much as she is Sally, the English rose she becomes upon immigrating to England. Her ambivalence is clear when she says: “I begged myself to follow him, but Salma and Sally refused to budge” (251). This implies that she holds a hybrid identity which she personally acknowledges and articulates.
Conclusion

*My Name is Salma* remains of the ground breaking postcolonial novels that unmasks the realities of Arab women’s oppression, marginalization and invisibility in both Arab counties and western host countries. In many ways, Faqir’s novel is a response to the experiences of pain and sufferings of women in Jordan. It is ought to be read as a resistant literature as it unmasks the gendered power relation where decades of patriarchal exploitations and aggression are answered back through the character of Salma who rejects the culture on which the men’s supremacy is founded. The novel tackles one of the most internationally controversial issue pertaining to the Arab culture namely hounor crime that is deeply rooted in many Arab societies and it is intertwined with Jardanian collective patriarchal cultural beliefs and it constitutes a strong apparatus of patriarchal domination over Arab women. Dealing with such an issues, in fact, is a courageous gesture of liberation. On the other hand, the importance of Fadia Faqir’s debut novel appears in its attempt to give some answers to a couple of significant ontological queries related to the racism, marginalization and bigotry faced by Arab women in Britain mainly after the terrorist’s attack of the 11/9. Interestingly, this new state of being had prompted a new awareness of the subjectivities, ethnic, racial, religious and cultural identities of Arab that they reflect in their literary expressions. Faqir’s novel is more oriented towards, answering back orientalist’s prejudices, reconstructing and affirming hyphenated Arab British identity that combine distinct cultures, languages, and ethnicities. The novel translate a sense of disruption of the dichotomies of private/public, oppressed/liberated; self/other in view to challenge the popular understating that patriarchy is the only sit of oppressed. The novel is actually read a literary resistance text that aims at unthinking the dominant namely Orientalism and sexism.

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   https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313350785_The_Crisis_of_Identity_in_My_Name_is_Salma?enrichId=rgreq-ec820e878ad4af669f31616f528e2c82


Imane Ismaili Alaoui

Feminine Orientalism: Western Female Travelers Journeying across the Land of the Moors

(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

During the early twentieth century, Morocco – the Maghreb or the Land of the Furthest West as some Western travel writers refer to it – constituted an important colonial trope in Western travelogues which were highly masculine, rendering female travel writing deficient from the scene. With this regard, this study analyses the prominent travel narrative My Life Story (1911) by Emily Keen, the Shareefa of Wazzan, whose work was borne out of her cultural involvement in Moorish culture as she was married to the Shereef of Wazzan and spent more than four decades amongst the Moors. Her traveloguedocumentsthе position of the Western female writer vis-à-vis the Moroccan native along with her observations regarding the atavistic and exotic Moorish culture, with tales of her convoluted cross-cultural encounters. Her position as an English writer affiliated to Western hegemony and as the wife of Sidi Al-Hadj Abd al-Salam, the Shareef of Wazzan who typified Moorish cultural elements, sustained her hegemonic position from a double perspective. Within this framework of power relations, Keene tends to reiterate an orientalist discourse which sketches Otherness in a structure compliant with imperialist interests. This rhetoric of differentiation was crucial in sustaining a stable image about the Western world, and travel writing has intensely consolidated this idea. Respectively, Keene discloses an ambivalent discourse in her fascination with Otherness which contrasts with her nationalistic and imperialist adherence. This symbolizes that the colonial rhetoric is weakened by conflicting discursive configurations from which native agency produces an alternative to imperial narratives.

Keywords: Travel writing; orientalism; discourse; ambivalence; agency.

Introduction

Early twentieth century Western travel literature highlighted Morocco, or as often dubbed the Land of the furthest West, as a significant Orientalist locus. It embodies the Orientalist legacy as it constitutes an immensely useful resource in terms of the imagining, re-imagining and representing of the place. First and foremost, the aim of this study is to closely scrutinize and challenge female

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Western travelogues, while engaging in the same endeavor of postcolonial studies which is “rewriting the history of Western imperial and colonial contact with other cultures” (Hulme, 2007, p. 2). This study argues that the colonial discourse established in female Western travel accounts about Morocco is a discourse which, in its various processes of representing and screening this Oriental sphere, becomes rather disoriented and productive of novel spaces of native articulation and visibility.

Since most of Western travelogues about Morocco were recited from a male’s perspective – while its feminine counterpart was absent and largely marginalized from the genre – this leads the course of this paper towards devoting its analysis to Western female travel writers. Accordingly, one of the prominent travel narratives would be examined in this paper is *My Life Story* (1911) by Emily Keene, the Shareefa of Wazan, whose work was borne out of her cultural involvement in Moorish culture as she was married to the Shereef of Wazan and spent more than four decades amongst the Moors. Her account is also considered to be interdisciplinary as it combines anthropological, religious, cultural, historical, political, and societal concerns. Through the lines of her account, one comes across convoluted cross-cultural encounters of Keene vis-à-vis the Moroccan native, as well as meticulous observations regarding the atavistic and exotic Moorish culture. This paper attempts to assess the reactions resulted of her binary position, as an English writer and the wife of Sidi Al-Hadj Abd al-Salam, the Shareef of Wazan who typified Moorish cultural elements. Therefore, it would be convenient to examine the cultural juncture emanated from her position as a representative of the imperialist project while also a Western traveler going native due to her abysmal involvement in Moorish lifestyle. Keene’s feminine in one way or another identifies with the masculine’s Orientalist rhetoric in sketching Otherness in a structure compliant with imperialist interests, but this rhetoric is presented to us in a mild sense from that of Western male travelers before her or pertaining to the same era. This rhetoric of alienating the native was crucial in sustaining a stable image about the Western world, and travel writing has intensely consolidated this idea. Respectively, Keene discloses an ambivalent discourse in her fascination with Otherness which contrasts with her nationalistic and imperialist adherence. Hence, this overlapping framework of power relations symbolizes that the colonial discourse is weakened by conflicting discursive configurations from which native agency produces an alternative to imperial narratives.

**Defining the Genre of Travel Literature**

Travel writing is a literary genre which, due to its interdisciplinary aspect, has become one of the popular and ubiquitous areas of study. It reflects a sense of re-imagining the world through the tradition of exploration and the interaction with other cultures, and it similarly constitutes a prolific source with its far-reaching archival records that traverse other important disciplines and issues. More recently, however, the genre has been considered in terms of power relations as James Duncan in his book *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (1999) plainly states:
In the first place, drawing on the thematic of Raymond Williams and others, travel and its cultural practices have been located within larger formations in which the inscriptions of power and privilege are made clearly visible. We are thus beginning to understand much more about the cultures of natural history, for example, and the complex dialectic between scientific expeditions in the field and the circulation of their knowledges through metropolitan and colonial centres of calculation (p. 2).

Duncan asserts that scholars started to draw attention to travel writing as a literary genre which interrogates societal and cultural relations of power, and travel became hence a dialectical representation of cultural significations which are deeply informed by power formations; it is also a medium of translating scientific explorations by colonial and canonical means. As a matter of fact, Duncan makes an interesting observation as to the subtle evolution of travel writing with colonial history, in other words, how travel writing has been engaged in the scholarly critique of the imperialist enterprise. Notably, postcolonial studies have enticed much of the attention on travel writing due to its significant project of rethinking colonial history vis-à-vis other cultures (Hulme, 2007, p.6), and travel accounts envelop chronicles of cross-cultural encounters between the traveler and the native which rather suggest new modes of reading history.

Western travel narratives, with this regard, disclose the intersection of travel literature with Orientalism as a tradition of representation within the parameters of power relations, or as Edward Said (1978) conveniently puts it, as an ideology which “expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrine, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles”(p. 2). The genre has developed from being a tradition of exploration – encrypted in an objective style which reports and translates the Other as such – to a vehicle of imperialism which consolidates and legitimizes the imperialist structure and presence in the Other’s terrain. Notably, Anglo-American travel accounts on Morocco establish an Orientalist discourse which echoes a paradoxical structure enlisting positive attributes to the West while projecting the Orient in subordinate terms. This is disclosed through the intersection of travel literature with other disciplines such as ethnography or anthropology, and through which certain travel writers legitimize their imperialist texts due to the proclaimed scientific objectivity of the aforementioned disciplines, along with the constant validation of the Orientalist tradition which is employed to both confirm Western dominance and suppress the Other’s voice. Notably, this study particularly addresses the heterogeneity of Western travel literature which reclaims a History from within and reclaims the Other’s agency beyond the borders of colonial discourse. Hence, this article aims at divulging a genealogy of native voices which constitute a form of anti-colonial resistance which is derived from the discursive inconsistencies which impair the authority of colonial discourse.
Western women’s Travel Writing between Post-Victorian Constraints and Imperialism: The Model of Emily Keene’s *My Life Story*.

Albeit the heterogeneity of travel literature in terms of academic and literary genres, it has largely been gendered and regarded as an exclusively masculine scope. Female travelers also were dynamic during the early twentieth century, and were equally involved in the writing process of the Orient – yet their accounts have gained little, if not any attention due to the constraints of the Victorian period viz; which resulted in a masculine British ideology exclusive of women’s productivity. Notably, Sara Mills (1991) argues that female travelers’ literary productions along with their position towards colonialism highly differed from male travelers, in the sense that they did not identify with colonialist rule as comfortably as males did which also served in the marginalization of their writings:

Women travel writers were unable to adopt the imperialist voice with the ease with which male writers did. The writing which they produced tended to be more tentative than male writing, less able to assert the ‘truths’ of British rule without qualification. Because of their oppressive socialization and marginal position in relation to imperialism, despite their generally privileged social position, women writers tended to concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals, rather than on statements about the race as a whole (p. 3).

As Mills asserts, Western female writings relating to their journey within the Orient were downgraded and taken as *amateurish* as they were not insufficiently complicit with imperialism. This was chiefly on account of the foregoing social discrimination they witnessed, and which collapsed their imperialist attachment leading to a different version of Orientalism as depicted from a feminine perspective which this study attempts to uncover. In the same vein, it aims at rethinking Western travel history about the Orient which is generally transmitted in masculinist terms, by exploring the specific elements and aspects of women’s travel narratives along with the similarities which they share with men’s.

Emily Keene was a British national who came to Morocco in 1870, and before her marriage to the Shareef of Wazzan, she worked as a governess to the famous American millionaire, Ion Perdicaris and his wife Ellen. What urged her travel to Morocco is that she wished to escape from the exhausting Victorian way of life, or more specifically the “fin de siècle malaise” which prevailed in the late nineteenth century. Keene was inclined towards seeking the arcane and exotic Moorish style by dwelling within alien places resembling of the Arabian Nights’ tales. She took residence in Tangier where she met the Shareef of Wazzan who was so attracted to her manners and splendid beauty that he made every attempt to wed her and their marriage lasted more than four decades. He was a leader of a sanctuary in Wazzan—a city which appropriated a sacred and spiritual signification and was forbidden for Christians in precolonial Morocco. In this sense, the word “Shareef” alludes to a person who is claimed to be a descent from the prophet, and who is thereby granted a sanctified value. Due to her marriage, Keene was automatically granted the title “Shareefa of Wazzan” and was already a parcel of the Moorish harem. This was the beginning of her 70 years’ journey in
Morocco which she documented later in England, after her husband’s decease, and in which she squeezed her lengthy journey and tales of her personal observations of what she witnessed in her interactions with Moors.

Keene’s feminine Orientalism’s main feature resides in her Western gaze which she generates in her descriptions of the Shareef of Wazzan as stated in her quote below:

Who, then, was this man who has fascinated me? I used to meet him coming from town, or returning to the mountain, where I was staying with friends, and at length I learnt that it was the Grand Shareef of Wazzan, but that did not convey much to me. I made a closer acquaintance at some musical soirées, which he attended. I certainly thought I liked him, he was so different from the few other Moors I had met (p. 4).

The bewitching character of the Shareef of Wazzan captivated Keene’s senses; even she sounds quite surprised at her sudden liking of a Moor, whose character has fascinated her more than his valued position amongst the Moors. As she continues with her description of the Moor who allured her, her Orientalist tone becomes contradictory in the sense that her categorizes Moorish subjectivities in a binary structure—as she distinguishes the Shareef of Wazzan from his Moorish peers. He is depicted in a partial kind of Orientalism which does not thoroughly iterate the repertoire inherent to the barbarian Orientalist ideology, which also resonates with Keene’s authoritative supremacy which sort of constitutes a handicap to her involvement with Moors. This Orientalist categorization is used as a kind of justification of her uncanny infatuation with a Moor, which the Western Orientalist ideology strictly forbids. Such a representation reveals the contradictory style of the colonial discourse vis-à-vis the native; it is hardly a discourse of absolute authority and dominance, or where only a single voice speaks and represents which is that of the Western Self. The process of power reversal is embodied in the character of the Shareef of Wazzan who is presented to the reader outside the boundaries of Orientalism, in a positive structure of desire and obsession.

In the same vein, the Shareef’s European dispositions undermine the Orientalist dogma which disseminates a fixed notion about the Orient as antagonistic to Western cultural elements. Keene showcases her husband’s strong interests in all that was Western to the extent that he divorced his Moorish wives and was determine to marry a Western woman. He was immensely open to the West and held liberal views despite his position as the leader of a very influential area in Morocco; he did not enforce his religious beliefs on his wife but he rather supported her and used to accompany her to do her prayers in the church. With this regard, she relates:

I attended a service at my parish church, St. Mary’s, Newington, to which the Shareef accompanied me, and went into the choir while at my devotions. He uncovered in the church, and did the same on visiting Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s Cathedral. On the whole, the Shareef was glad to have seen London (p. 83).

Given the liberal nature of the Shareef of Wazzan whose position is of religious and spiritual importance, the colonial discourse is constantly destabilized.
The Moor is exposed in a positive fashion and in refined attributes unlike what is generally dictated in the Orientalist logic. Keene’s feminine Orientalism, again, interrupts her Western colonial identification along with the Orientalist discourse established by most of male travel writers. This is largely on account of her uncommon marital life and her interaction within Oriental life for more than four decades. Yet her Western adherence was still maintained in some aspects like Christianity, her house which she later furnished in Western style, and travels to her homeland—the thing which urged her discourse at times to appear authoritative. However, the constant Moorish descriptions, particularly those of El HadjAbdesalam, the Shareef of Wazzan, articulate an alternative to colonial and Orientalist history from an English woman who has long been a part of the Moorish essence.

Conclusion

Women travel writing has long been excluded from the literary scene, yet this does not thoroughly makes their writings bare from discursive ideologies pertaining to the imperialist enterprise. It can be said that their imperialist identification is not as sustained as that of male travel writers due to the double oppression they received from societal masculine conventions and weak ties to colonialism. Markedly, their literary productions have been considered in this study as an alternative to colonialism itself; their convergence and divergence from their colonial background provides a different version of Orientalism. Their feminine Orientalism rather suggests a different venue from which to approach other Orientalist characteristics and discursive features that render the eloquence of the colonialist tone destabilized.

References:
6. Further Readings:
Yassmine Zerrouki

Gendered Spaces Revisited: Femininity Conquers Masculinity in Casanegra and Number One
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Abstract:
This paper explores the representations of gender in cinema and it specifically focuses on the notion of space as a parcel element in determining and shaping gender roles. It departs from the premise that cinematic discourses are constructed within a set of ideologies, agendas, and codes. It endeavors to show how these discourses are interlaced in Moroccan films to produce new imageries and images about gender issues via a diasporic optic. Narrowing down the scale of discussion, this paper examines two top-grossing Moroccan films of the latest years; Number One (2008) by Zakia Tahiri and Casanegra (2008) by Noureddine Lakhmari. It is interesting to note that this category of diasporic filmmakers gives us a chance to probe the representations of gender in more depth, for their diasporic position spurs various dimensions and visions through which gender issues can be discussed and analyzed. Gender roles are being challenged to end up forming complex and imagined cinematic discourses on gender. Diasporic filmmakers, specifically, end up producing images of gender issues in a very intricate way. Deconstructing such complexities in Moroccan films adds interesting dimensions to the understanding of social constructs and ideologies within the Moroccan society.

Key words: Gender Representations, Gendered spaces, Moroccan films, diaspora.

Introduction
There is no doubt that media plays a crucial role in influencing people’s daily lives, views to themselves and to the world. Films, specifically, have a profound impact on how we see social, economic, cultural and political issues. Cinema, as a vital and strong visual medium that is embedded with codes and signs, affects our perception of other cultures and their people. Cultures are being easily exposed through cinematic representations and people’s interest to discover, learn and explore is at its height. This paper, thus, examines gender representations, and more specifically in relation to space in Moroccan films by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers.

Space is a salient component that allows a nuanced understanding of gender identities’ formation. It is one of the mandatory factors in the cinematic sphere. It shapes the story, orients the viewer and contextualizes the process of the

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characters’ development and of the plot as well. It is interesting to note that space differs from one film to another and it affects female and male characters differently. Those representations, however, have a vast impact on the viewer and they convey so much about societies’ structures. This paper endeavors to discuss all these elements for a better understanding of the relationship between gender, space, and cinema.

Place is not transparent and unproblematic as one might think of it. It is full of ambiguity, especially when it is metamorphosed to space. Meanings of space become negotiable and questionable in the process of developing, creating, and constructing implications. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that “the meaning of space often merges with that of place, ‘space’ is more abstract than ‘place’. What becomes undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.” (Yi-Fu Tuan, 2003, p.6).

Accordingly, we assume that the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’ have different implications. Talking about ‘place’ in movies can only refer to a physical environment, which is not the case of ‘space’. Space, in cinema, plays a crucial role in presenting and contextualizing the story of the movie since it refers to the dimensions of lived experiences and characters’ interactions with places. More interestingly, space allows an understanding of gender and cultural identities through filming life practices within different places.

In *Writing Women and Space* (1994), Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose suggest that there are two gendered spaces in society: public and private. They argue that this division of space has a deep hand in determining the roles of both men and women. The private space represents all that is in connection with motherhood and childhood; thus, it is a woman’s space. The public space is all that is in connection with politics, culture and economy, and it is a man’s space (p.p 1-2). I argue that Moroccan filmmakers, as post-colonial subjects, are aware of the social changes taking place in their societies especially regarding the position of women, which consequently affect their vision while dealing with space in relation to gender. Space, in cinema, becomes a negotiable entity where ‘old network voices’ are challenged due to the emergence of filmmakers’ ‘new network’ of consciousness.

Movies can go beyond these binary oppositions in patriarchal societies that construct some spaces as “feminine” and others as “masculine” and thus allocated certain kinds of gendered activities to certain gendered spaces. However, though these movies strive for challenging such discourses, they still perpetuate gendered views in one way or another. Zakia Tahiri’s *Number One* (2008) and Noureddine Lakhmari’s *Casanegra* (2008) show how the cinematic space can be highly male or female conquered; meanwhile, there is a challenge and a counter discourse to such conventions. This paper, hence, examines gender representations within cinematic spaces by both male and female diasporic filmmakers.

**Spaces of Difference: Disciplining and Reordering Gender Spheres in Casanegra**

Space in Lakhmari’s movie is portrayed as entirely masculine where male characters outnumber female ones. Interestingly, it takes more than ten minutes to
see a female character on the screen. And when Nabila, the antique shop’s owner, appears on the screen she is silenced and is only stared at from a distance by Karim. Noureddine Lakhmari’s Casanegra (2008) revolves around two childhood friends—Adil who is 21 years old and Karim who is 22 years old, and they are both put in the margin of society while suffering from all kinds of social and economic problems. They face misery, injustice, unemployment, and violence. They, however, still hope to change their circumstances and help their poor families. Adil suffers from his violent stepfather who always beats his mother and this affects him so badly. He is very pessimist so that he is all the time thinking of leaving his native city which he always refers to as ‘Casanegra’; literally means ‘the black house’. Karim, however, is a bit optimist though his circumstances are not better than Adil’s. He has more responsibilities and duties since he is the only provider for his family. Much space is actually devoted to Adil and Karim in Casanegra. They are empowered and given an opportunity to express themselves and express their untold stories. We see Casablanca city through their eyes and hard circumstances, what probably makes it a black place. Interestingly, most of the scenes are shot in the dark, at night, a technique used by the director to reflect the characters’ interior anxieties.

Women, in the movie, are confined to the domestic sphere and rarely or even never shown outside it, such as the case of Karim’s mother and sister. They are doubly marginalized, because of their “gender” within a patriarchal structure and the “masculine” lens of Noureddine Lakhmari. As for Adil’s mother, the only few seconds we see her beyond the domestic sphere is when she is traveling and is escaping her abusive husband. Obviously, Adil’s mother has a job and works outside her home because we see her husband taking her money. Yet, she is most of the time filmed within the domestic sphere and frequently beaten by her husband. Karim’s mother and sister are also never shown outside home though we are informed that his sister goes to school since we see her working on her homework. Furthermore, Shikha and Nabila are confined to their workplace and their movements are very limited. Shikha in ‘Ou Tout Va Bien’ nightclub is never seen outside it. As for Nabila, the only few scenes that show her away from her shop is when in Karim’s company. Still, these two main characters remain very challenging to gendered spaces.

There are two striking characters in Casanegra: Shikha, a singer/dancer woman, and Nabila, the antique-shop’s owner whom Karim loves. The belly dancing/singing woman (shikha) works in Ou Tout Va Bien (Where everything is allowed) nightclub; an entirely male dominated space. Unlike other previously mentioned female characters, shikha is all the time filmed within a male’s space. She shares male activities inside the nightclub; she smokes, drinks alcohol, and dresses up in Western clothing though shikha is usually thought of as being traditional. However, she defines herself in relation to Zrirek, the owner of the nightclub and her husband-to-be, and she is completely dependent on him.

Spaces in Casanegra are not just gendered; they are even dealt with and viewed differently by female and male characters. This can be illustrated from two striking similar scenes in the movie. In the first, at night, Karim and Adil are
standing in a corner at the top of a very high building at the centre of Casablanca when both scream loudly ‘Casa’. Afterwards, Adil comments that nothing seems to be “white” in this city, but overwhelmed with blackness. For him, it is rather “Casanegra” (figure 1).

Later on in the movie, another scene shows Karim with Nabila at the same high building corner (figure 2). During that short scene, the light is focused on Nabila while Karim remains in a dark spot.

Nabila takes off her jacket and climbs the building even higher, she screams ‘Casablanca’ with a very lurid voice (figure 3), trying to make herself heard in a space that is designed by Lakhmari only for men. Nabila is granted an advantage position resisting all the ‘blackness’ and patriarchal ideologies the filmmaker associated his cinematic space with. It is a counter-discourse to Adil’s scene to show how spaces can be seen differently when they are not experienced in the same way and especially with having gender differences in mind. Another interesting aspect to this scene is the actual confidence that is exhibited by Nabila while she is at the top of the building. The camera angle from below gives a certain authority to the subject, Nabila. It grandifies her image and grants her a position of power, whereas, in Adil’s scene the shot from below puts Karim and Adil in a state of denigration.
It is true that most of the movie events take place at night, but this does not mean that there is no single scene filmed during the day. Even when filming the street of “Casanegra” during the day, there is a total absence of women. The space is entirely male occupied either at night or on the day. In Lakhmari’s vision, the space of the city is hazardous and is full of unexpected events. This vision reminds us of an article by Tovi Fenster in which the writer discusses some reasons behind the divisions of space. She claims that “fear of use of public space, especially in the street, public transportation and urban parks is what prevents women from fulfilling their right to the city” (Tovi Fenster, 2005, p. 242), and here, it is appropriate to suppose that it is the same fear Lakhmari has for not letting women intrude the space of “Casanegra” that is extremely male-controlled and that looks jam-packed with danger. He does rather endow a voice to a male marginalized
category to speak and to be heard at the expense of many other categories, including women whose representations disturb the story of the movie.

**Masculinity Reoriented in Number One: Re-imagined Gendered spaces**

There is no doubt that gender representations are so much affected by who is behind the camera. Women are more underrepresented on-screen by male filmmakers than by female filmmakers. Films produced by female diasporic filmmakers highlight more on gender issues and give more space for women characters in their films. They revisit gender roles, challenge patriarchy and criticize the position of women within society. Diasporic male filmmakers, on the other hand, almost always give small if not to say unimportant roles to female characters such is the case of *Casanegra*. Still, they are presenting some intricate challenging discourses of gender representations influenced by their hybrid position that is made up of two different cultural components. This confirms what Hamid Naficy (2001) talks about when referring to some statistics of the number of Middle Eastern and North African diasporic filmmakers.

The majority of filmmakers were men, reflecting the dominance of patriarchy within the sending nations and the general pattern of migrations worldwide, which have favoured the emigration of men ahead of their families to establish a beachhead for chain migration. This gender imbalance also reflects the belief, common to Middle Eastern and North African societies, that cinema is not a socially acceptable, religiously sanctioned, and economically feasible enterprise for women. The patriarchal ideologies of the receiving countries, too, contributed to women’s underrepresentation. (2001, p. 18)

Space, in *Number One*, is also being reconstructed, loaded with new meanings and dimensions. Though it starts highlighting binary oppositions between men’s and women’s spaces, it later goes to restructure and reshape them. The beginning of the movie emphasizes the division of space in relation to men’s and women’s cultural and societal practices within a patriarchal system. Accordingly, Moghadam argues that in patriarchal societies the ideal woman’s proper role is a housewife and a mother, a position that for her is noneconomic and correctly played out in the privacy of the domestic sphere. She suggests that men appropriately take the position of the breadwinner and operate in the economic realm outside home. Consequently, this distinction maintains a divide between men and women and also leads to separation of private and public: home and business (2007, p.170). *Number One* highlights these gendered divisions through the depiction of a society that is led by patriarchal ideologies. Zakia Tahir’s *Number One* is about Soraya, a Moroccan woman in her thirties, married to Aziz who is the boss in a factory where there are only female workers. The film displays some contradictions between male and female lifestyles. Soraya is restricted to the domestic sphere most of the time, unlike her husband who is given the chance to venture into “free spaces.” She is a woman who is unsatisfied with the itineraries
of her life, as she is humiliated and ill-treated by a husband who embodies patriarchal ideologies. This fact makes Soraya’s image in his mind fragile, easily defeated and even totally controlled. When Soraya’s feelings of oppression are intensified, she starts deeply thinking about a solution. She is fed up with all the frontiers that limit her movements and begins revolting against the kind of life she is leading; she revolts both against her position as an inferior and submissive woman and against her smallest world that the husband dominates.

Soraya holds the position of an educated housewife who lives within a limited space that is home. Therefore, she is completely dependent on her husband who holds the position of the provider of the family. Man’s authority in the family as portrayed in the beginning of the movie, is legitimized by the notion that women are economically dependent, which affects their access to different spaces. As the story develops, gendered spaces are being revisited and rethought in the sense that the public sphere is no longer fully dominated by men. Soraya is allowed by her husband to have a full access to the public sphere freely. Aziz is also violating women’s space and shown in the kitchen cooking and doing women’s role. According to Zakia Tahiri, patriarchy is the major cause behind male’s and female’s space dichotomies. That is why the movie goes further to depict an imaginary view of a society that challenges and overthrows patriarchy.

*Number One*, as a film produced by a woman director, can be looked at as a real challenge to men's hegemonic stand in society as well as an attack on the whole patriarchal system where man is deemed as “number one” and where spaces are highly male-dominated. The movie, explicitly, is a mockery to men's power in the person of the protagonist Aziz Bidaoui. This latter, who considers himself as the most powerful and dominant, will undergo a radical change caused by a woman whom he always considers weak and inferior. However, the techniques the movie director employs are going to undermine and subvert this counter-discourse of the movie.

This image of man's monopoly and the representation of Aziz as the best example of a man who represents patriarchy in all its facets are to soon collapse in the movie. One day, after some women’s gossip, Soraya decides to resort to sorcery hoping to change her husband. Soraya seeks the service of Chama, a female sorcerer, who gives her a potion to add to her husband's dinner. The change happens and Aziz becomes another person. He shifts to behave super kindly with his wife and addresses his female co-workers with so much sympathy. He is no longer the autocrat boss, neither at home nor at his workplace. Aziz becomes sympathetic towards everyone and starts to get closer to the female world. Thus, he is now able to feel their sufferings and understand their problems. More than this, he himself gets deeply involved in their private sphere, (figure 4) this time not as a dictator, (figure 5) but as an active participant. As a result, this radical change brings joyfulness and happiness to his wife Soraya and all his female co-workers.
Aziz is the only exclusive case in the movie of a man who undergoes radical transformations. Hence, he is looked at as a misfit in the Moroccan society. His male friends start to feel worried about him and his neighbours blame him badly. This leads Aziz to get worried and when he starts to think seriously about the new change he is going through, he decides to consult a psychoanalyst. Aziz's concern goes to the extent of explaining his new status as being homosexual.

There are two important points about *Number One* which demonstrates a real challenge to men's hegemonic position and an attack to the patriarchal system of the Moroccan society where man is the core of everything. First, it is a reaction to that prestigious position that is monopolized exclusively and solely by men. The message of the movie is clearly and explicitly expressed; if we, as men and women, share the same world, why don’t we enjoy the same rights, experience the same lifestyle and have access to similar spaces. Second, that man, who embraces dictatorship whenever he goes and whose words are to be heard under whatever circumstances, at home and work, can be controlled and transformed in a complete way from that woman whom he considers all the time as helpless and weak. Aziz has lost his authoritative role and the change has deeply affected him. He finally admits the presence of women as full human beings and he no longer denigrates them. When Aziz consults the doctor, he starts complaining about his inability to talk with any woman in the same authoritative old way.

Through the character of Aziz, Zakia Tahiri draws a new vision of men’s attitude towards women as individuals who should be equally treated as men. For the first time, Aziz views women as full beings and acknowledges their identities. Interestingly, he no longer calls the female workers by numbers but by their own names. In another scene, while talking with el-Iraqi, the manager and owner of the factory, Aziz defends the female employees’ rights stating that “they are also human.”(Boudchaala & Tahiri, 2008). In one significant scene when Aziz is driving back home, he looks around him and finds himself in a world that is full of women. He sees women playing the roles of men and men playing the roles of women. Women are sitting in coffee shops, smoking, reading newspapers, walking in the street; whereas, men beat carpets over balconies and do household tasks. This scene portrays how gender roles can be radically changed if gendered spaces are reversed.
One day when el-Iraqi shows up suddenly in the factory, he finds Aziz among the female employees behaving so kindly. The scene provokes el-Iraqi; so he feels very offended and disappointed. He fires Aziz as an expression of his dissatisfaction. His reaction is coming out of a feeling of danger from such transformation that symbolically threatens men’s patriarchal principles. For el-Iraqi, Aziz has broken the rules of his society and has to be punished. Iraqi states ironically: “Is this number one? You are zero”. (Bouchaala & Tahiri, 2008).

It is noteworthy that el-Iraqi is not the only person who attacks Aziz's new status, but almost all the men who notice the change. When Aziz is with his wife at the bank, the bank director feels flabbergasted from the gentle way Aziz deals with his wife especially that he comes to create a personal bank account for his non-working wife. In doing so, Soraya is no longer dependent on her husband which the male bank director considers as another violation of the patriarchal ideologies. His neighbours, as well, blame him for causing more trouble to them in the sense that he becomes the ideal man to the extent that all women ask their men to follow his steps.

It is significant to mention that, by providing such cinematic discourses, the filmmaker wants to highlight the idea that all men in this society share the same patriarchal views. However, the irony of the movie is that most of them are represented as wearing masks to hide their own realities. They all have to appear in front of other people with a certain picture so as to fit in a society that celebrates patriarchy at its finest. In one particular scene, one of Aziz’s friends confesses that he was married to a French woman and he used to clean, cook, and give his salary to his wife and he was very happy with her. When his family in Morocco knew about his life, they asked him to divorce her and come back to his country. Through this character, Zakia Tahiri wants to claim that society is responsible to a great extent for shaping individuals’ patterns, as she also criticizes the contradictory beliefs they embrace.

Being aware of the changes he is going through, Aziz resists at the very beginning but after losing hope to get back to his old status, he starts to adapt to his new situation. In this respect, Aziz states:

I, unconsciously, have started to show sympathy to the female employees and I even call for their rights. At the end, I have lost my job. I have become another person. My behaviour towards my wife has changed. I have started to feel freer than ever before and happier. I have got closer to Soraya and I do not see her as I used to do.

(Bouchaala & Tahiri, 2008)

Significantly, Aziz's new behaviour is imposed on him. He himself, at the beginning, was not satisfied with his new life, and the proof is his act of searching for a solution that could put an end to his misery. He has consulted doctors and he, after that, has resorted to a Fqih. There is a set of contradictions in Number One that can be raised in one main question: If a feminist man cannot fit in the
Moroccan society and is severely attacked by men, how can the movie serve as a call for men to dispense with the ideologies of patriarchy that celebrate divided spaces?

It is salient to stress that it is a woman who is behind the change Aziz undergoes. Aziz becomes unable to revert to his normal self. He cooks, he cleans, and he does the laundry. At the very beginning, he was unsatisfied and has resorted to many doors to reverse this new situation. Frightened by the changes in his personality, he seeks the advice of the Fqih who admits to be completely powerless in front of the force that has brought in that change in Aziz’s behaviour. This act, in fact, can be interpreted as a very powerful feminist statement. That is to say, women’s power can ultimately overrule even the most tyrannical man, and the form of this power is represented through a female sorcerer. By depicting Aziz's problem as unsolvable, Zakia Tahiri challenges men's hegemony, claiming explicitly and strongly that women are more powerful and their power cannot be defeated.

Women in Number One are bored and even sick of their situations. They know they can fight for their rights, and most importantly, they know that they do not really have to fight against men. Women know that, taking into account the movie, a positive change for women’s interests is possible on men’s side, following the example of Aziz someone who turns into a model which shows the path to a new way of thinking, to an open-eyes stage in which women are now aware enough to continue living that way. Making women completely aware of their conditions is just another technique used to empower the feminist discourse in this movie as Gerda Lerner states in her The Creation of Patriarchy (1986): “The coming into consciousness of women becomes the dialectical force moving them into action to change their conditions and to enter a new relationship to male dominated society.”(p.5)

Number One examines the patriarchal practices and ideologies and depicts them as real obstacles to the progress of society. Androcentrism is represented as a stigma that requires being removed so that society can progress and relations between men and women can work out well. To illustrate, Aziz's androcentric ideas are the main cause behind keeping Soraya at home and depriving her of leading the life she has always dreamed of. The movie clearly shows the mistreatment of women by men and their daily suffering from patriarchal beliefs. All female characters are represented as one homogeneous entity and as undifferentiated individuals. In this regard, Chris Barker states in his Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice (2008) that: “[A] criticism of the concept of patriarchy is its treatment of the category of women as undifferentiated. That is all women are taken to share something fundamental in common in contrast to men.” (p.24). By the same token, it can be claimed that women in patriarchal societies are seen as almost the same. They are all looked at as inferior to men, and thus, consequently mistreated and underrepresented in cinema.

Sorcery, under the light of the movie, is the used weapon against the patriarchal structure of society. When Soraya starts to feel tired of her husband’s
behavior, she resorts to a sorceress as her last option so that change can take place. Indeed, Aziz has changed and the effect of sorcery works out very well, but, in fact, he has changed only when an extra power is manipulated. In this regard, it can be concluded that patriarchy is a mere characteristic of the Moroccan society that is very hard to change or exclude.

I argue that sorcery in the movie serves not to attack and eradicate patriarchy and to consequently challenge gendered spaces, but to also express the irrationality of women who are to be blamed for their way of thinking and the way they seek solutions for their own problems. Consequently, this act of resorting to sorcery presents women as weak, unwise and irrational beings. Here once again, we have another confirmation of one of the stereotyped ideas in which women use their minds only to do evil things. That is to say, a woman's intellect is only used to befall others. When Aziz resorts to the Fqih to get rid of the impact of magic over him, the Fqih expresses his inability and incapability in front of Aziz's case. He could not help him mainly because it is a woman's work. In this respect, he states: “Women are very tough nowadays. The magic they practiced on you is scientifically well studied, and then, I get unable in front of its power now”. (Bouchaala & Tahiri, 2008).

The act of resorting to sorcery, as a magic power, only shows that women can never transcend men's power. Number One, as a movie that attacks androcentrism and calls for change, itself confirms the impossibilities of change. To illustrate, by providing magic or the use of sorcery as a very effective solution to Soraya's problems, a woman who suffers from her husband's patriarchal ideologies, the movie itself excludes any other solutions and change unless an extra magical power is involved. Accordingly, if women want to achieve the same results as Soraya’s, they have to follow the same stream - that is they must all seek the service of a sorceress. It is obviously impossible for all women to solve their problems in the suggested way, as it is impossible, then, for the Moroccan society to change.

Sorcery in the movie has two different implications. First, it could simply show the fortitude of those women to counter attack patriarchal repressions as well as their determination to assert their existence by acting and speaking out. The second implication can, actually, refer to the representation of the weaknesses and irrationality of women as relegated to a secondary position after men. When Soraya tells her friend about her husband's misbehaviour and mistreatment, her friend only suggests the help of a sorceress. They have not argued and discussed the problem and they have not even tried to look for any other logical and reasonable alternative. Sorcery is the first suggestion and only solution they have been able to come up with. Thus, this indicates that sorcery for women is simply just a mode of thinking.

In this regard, women, in the movie, are depicted as very emotional and illogical. Soraya feels very happy at the very beginning because she succeeds in changing her husband but later she starts to pity him and feel sorry for him and she also starts to feel guilty because of what she has done. Though she has got what she has been looking for, she could not get used to the updated way of life. This
shows, to a great extent, a massive set of contradictions that indicate that patriarchy can be celebrated by both men and women. Soraya, then, finds herself unable to enjoy the reality she always aspired for which ultimately leads her to confess the whole story to Aziz.

**Conclusion**

Diasporic filmmakers have problematized gender issues in their movies, for they negotiate two different views of gender representations driven by their hybrid life where entirely different cultures and ways of life intermingle. They, therefore, end up producing contradictory and imagined cinematic discourses. The representations of gendered spaces are complex by both male and female diasporic filmmakers, but they still have different visions which are mainly determined by their gender in the first place. I suggest that there is a solid link between gender representations on-screen and with who is behind and in front of the camera. This, hence, has a deep hand in shaping gendered spaces in films.

Lakhmari’s vision to space is very complex in the sense that he considers Casablanca’s space as extremely dangerous, thus, it should be highly male dominated. Man is still depicted as the most powerful sex despite all the attempts to subvert such discourses. Male filmmakers focus more on male characters who are assigned leading roles in their movies, while women characters are marginalized. Women, have unimportant roles in the movie, but they are still able to violate male’s space and subvert it from within. It is, however, a modest call for reordering gendered spaces and challenging patriarchal divisions where new visions and new networks of consciousness have to emerge. For male diasporic filmmakers, the main concern is to make movies proposing an outlet through which characters can find relief.

Diasporic women filmmakers, too, construct an imagined world in their movies where women set the rules of society and overthrow the patriarchal regime. There is no doubt that there are certain conditions that lie behind such representations, one of which is the cultural and societal interference/influence of Western principles and values on women diasporic filmmakers’ vision. *Number One* calls for redefining gender roles and the expectations of society. This is because in the end of the movie, we see Aziz rewarded by being nominated as ‘the man of the year’ by a leading Moroccan women’s magazine *Femmes du Maroc*. Still, one of the most problematic issues in the movie is the resort to sorcery in order to empower femininity. Gender spaces would not have been revisited until an extra power has been manipulated. It is the power of magic that definitely can never be a solution. Consequently, Aziz becomes and remains an ‘exception’ that represents gender in reverse. The movie, therefore, does not show so much hope in changing gender roles.

Gender roles have a deep impact on male and female cinematic spaces. They determine their performance, attitude, and ways of life. Cinema remains one of the most popular platforms through which gender roles can be discussed in a particular society. Both films’ *Number One* and *Casanegra*, narrative and aesthetic techniques counter attack those patriarchal ideologies, but to only end up forming
disruptive and complex discourses that do not serve the position of women in society.

Space, in cinema, ends up being a vision and a discourse that is highly constructed. It has a great influence on the development of the story and it affects characters so deeply. It limits their movements and launch new discourses to the viewers as Sandra Carter (2009) puts it, “films might be revolutionary, leading audiences toward new attitudes, perspectives and ideas” (p.8) In short, as it has been previously discussed, Moroccan diasporic filmmakers suggest that gender roles can be challenged through disciplining and reordering gendered spaces in cinema, yet, this leads to the construction of complex gender identities in a society that celebrates patriarchal ideologies.

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Islamic Feminist Methodologies of Reading the Sacred Text: Empowering and Apologetic Perspectives

(USMBA, Fes)

Abstract

Islamic Feminists gained access to the religious field through their independent reflections on the sacred text as a space which is well-dominated by men. Unsatisfied with the male-centered interpretations, Islamic feminists devised their own methodologies to subvert the tradition of “single Islam” and to contribute to the Islamic knowledge production from the female perspective. Their methodologies have been inspired by the wave of Muslim liberal thinking which fostered the rational line of Islam. However, while Islamic feminists succeeded in implementing subversive and empowering methodologies, they also resorted to apologetic ones when trying to force their gender-equality vision on the text. This topic will be studied through the works of Amina Wadud’s methodologies of re-reading the Qur’an in Woman and Qur’an and Fatima Mernissi’s methodologies of reconsidering the hadith in The Veil and the Male Elite. These works will be examined in light and in comparison with the methodologies of the Muslim modern liberal thinking.

Keywords: Islamic feminism, liberal thinking, contextualization, re-historicization, literalism, empowerment, apologies.

Introduction

The interesting academic works of Islamic feminists on Gender and Islam have been gaining tremendous attention in the last decades. These works attempted at re-reading the sacred texts, deconstructing previously developed interpretations that directly impacted gender relations and women and desacralizing some religious authorities whose endeavors remain human and, thus, subject to criticism. Islamic feminists, as this article will discuss, were influenced by the general wave of liberal intellectual thinking pioneered by a number of philosophers and thinkers of modern Islamic thought like Mohamed Abed al-Jabri, Mohamed Arkoun and Nassr Abu-Zayd who ventured into the religious field and suggested their own approaches and criticism. It is this liberal thinking which paved the way to Islamic feminists to explore Islamic references through the rational line. The liberal intellectual thinking rethinks the sacred based on “the demonstrative approach” which shows the rational line of Islam in contrast to other approaches like the

literalist and the ignostic approach for being responsible for the blockage of interpretation and the decadence of the Islamic thought.

This article will examine the works of some Islamic feminists who were influenced by the liberal intellectual thinking and modern criticism and who developed different deconstructionist methodologies in order to gain legitimacy over the sacred texts and to deconstruct misogynistic discourses on women that are often attributed to Islam itself and not to the interpretations of the early religious authorities as they try to demonstrate. This article will discuss the ideas of the aforementioned liberal thinkers and how they fueled Islamic feminists’ liberatory quests: the quest to liberate women from some of the well engraved misogynistic traditions and equally the quest to liberate the sacred texts from some “sacralised” human-made disparaging interpretations.

While holding this interesting discussion, this article aims at critically analyzing the methodologies used by Islamic feminists in defense for their quests and that are at times empowering and at times apologetic. This argument will be defended by studying the methodologies used by Amina Wadud in Qur’an and Woman and Fatima Mernissi in The Veil and the Male Elite. The reason why I chose these two works is that Woman and Qur’an deals with Qur’anic interpretations and The Veil and the Male Elite centers around hadith (Prophetic Traditions). Besides, they propose a multiplicity of subversive methodologies to reading the texts and a plurality of perspectives.

**Amina Wadud’s Re-reading of Qur’anic Verses**

One of the methodologies Amina Wadud uses while re-considering some “misogynistic” Qur’anic verses is “the grammatical composition of the text”. The early interpreters and the traditionalists mastered the needed linguistic tools to decode the Quranic messages, rules and principles. Capitalizing on the same tool which is language, Wadud decodes the seemingly ambiguous verses for one reason: to un-read the readings of some exegetes in order to validate her argument that women’s position in the Muslim world is not Islamic.

Wadud uses concrete examples from Qur’an like the distinction between men and women’s Creation. To deconstruct the idea that women were created inferior, she resorts to language to legitimize her interpretation. God says: “And His ayat (is this:) that he created you (humankind) min a single nafs, and created min (that nafs) its zawj, and from these two He spread (through the earth) countless men and women” (4:1). To refute the inferiority of women that started as early as the story of Creation, Wadud focuses on the word min, which is a controversial word here. Min in Arabic has two meanings: the first one is the English preposition “from” which means the extraction of a thing from other things; the second meaning implies something which is “of the same nature as something else”. Therefore, the word min changes radically the meaning of the verse.

1 Wadud,1999 , p.17
2 Ibid, p.18
"Min as extraction, Wadud argues, “gives rise to the idea that the first created being (taken to be a male person) was complete, perfect and superior [whereas] the second created being (a woman) was not his equal, because she was taken out of the whole and therefore, derivative and less than it”. Obviously enough, Wadud opts for the second meaning: “your mates are of the same type or kind as you are”. While the conventional interpretation opts for the meaning of the extraction to consolidate women’s inferiority, looking at the verse from a female perspective refutes this inferiority by choosing the second meaning of equality.

While the grammatical composition of the text reveals that the word “min”, as small as it is, can lead to two radically different interpretations of the creation of males and females, the story of the Garden of Eden can also lead to the demystification, the (un-)learning and the (dis-)location of women’s position/perception through religious readings of the text that manifests in language. The sin of approaching the tree is attributed to Eve despite the clarity of the Qur’anic verse. In this sense, Wadud says: “It is noteworthy that [...] the Qur’an always uses the Arabic dual form to tell how Satan tempted both Adam and Eve and how they both disobeyed. In maintaining the dual form, the Qu’ran overcomes the negative Greco-Roman and Biblical-Judaic implications that woman was the cause of evil and damnation”. Ironically, a blind eye was turned on the Quranic narration which could not be clearer. To make Eve guilty in spite of her and inspite of the divine intention, they made recourse to the biblical-Judaic narration while ignoring the book in which they believe.

In addition to “the grammatical composition of the text”, Wadud uses another methodology which is “contextualization”. She argues that Quranic rules have to be understood and discussed within the framework of seventh century Arabia. Wadud states that: “Quranic guidelines should lead the various communities towards progressive change within the context of universal Qur’anic guidance. To restrict future communities to the social shortcomings of any single community –even the original community of Islam—would be a severe limitation to that guidance”. To back her argument and give it more credibiliy, she refers to Fazlur Rahman who reckons that:

The Qur’an and the genesis of the Islamic community occurred in the light of history and against a social-historical background. The Qur’an is a response to that situation, and for the most part it consists of moral, religious, and social pronouncements that responded to specific problems confronted in concrete historical situations.

Indeed Fazlur Rahman’s opinion promotes and encourages historicizing Quranic situations for a correct understanding of intents. It is within this logic that

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1 Ibid, p.19
2 Ibid, p.20
3 Ibid, p.25
4 Ibid, p.81
5 Ibid, p.69
Wadud discusses and re-interprets a number of rules stipulated in the Quran. Among other issues, Wadud discusses the thorny issue of polygamy in Islam in light of its context. At the time of the revelation women depended financially on men. One of the common justifications/excuses given to polygamy is that a man who has financial means should cater for more than one wife. However, this justification is based on the assumption that women are economically in need of a man to provide for her. However, in the modern time “it is no longer accepted that only men can work, do work, or are the most productive workers [and] surely, polygamy is no simple solution to complex economic problems”. In the modern time, both men and women are impacted by unemployment and economic vulnerability, not only women. Thus this solution which used to be efficient back at a certain time and in a certain context is no more in function given the current context.

The second context of polygamy is protecting the orphans’ wealth. Fearing that the male guardians mismanage the female orphans’ wealth, the Quran suggested that they marry them and limited the number to four. Here, rights are protected within the “legal structure of marriage”. However, this context is almost always occulted when polygamy is discussed.

It is true that Wadud’s endeavours to contextualize and historicize Qur’anic verses are to be celebrated; however, justifying polygamy by referring to the context of managing orphans’ fortunes without addressing the shortcomings of this link is one of the apologetic sides of her methodology. Contextualizing a verse that is considered “misogynist” is normally done with the purpose of alleviating this misogyny. Nonetheless, in this case contextualization as methodology does not serve this reason as anyone might raise the following question: does marrying a female orphan prevent a man from mismanaging her wealth? If someone is immoral, he would mismanage the orphan’s inheritance regardless of his relation to her. This assumes that as long as a woman is provided for by her husband no matter how, there is no problem if her wealth is not managed properly. If this methodology is not empowering in this specific example, it is, then, apologetic for it tries by all means to justify what is unjustifiable. However, resorting to the apologetic tone does not undermine Wadud’s empowering methodologies in pluralizing the religious field and adding the female perspective to a domain that is well monopolized by males.

Indeed, when it comes to interpretations, perspectives do matter. Knowing “who” interprets the text is of fundamental importance. In addition to this, allowing for a multiplicity of perspectives to come forth with grounded interpretations pluralizes and democratizes the religious field and the circle of exegesis as it invites the readers to open up to other facets of the same issue. Also, the plurality of voices subverts what was long unquestioned like the early interpretations that are mistakenly taken to be divine, hence untouched.

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1 Ibid, p.84
2 Hidayatullah, 2014, p.83
Nassr Abu-Zayd encourages interpretational diversity as he believes that interpretations do only reflect the interpreters’ orientations and ideas. He states that:

[...] This insistence on the existence of a single Islam and the rejection of the plurality that actually exists lead to two results. The first is a single unchanging understanding of Islam, an understanding impervious to the influence of the movement of history and of the differences between societies [...]. The second result is that this unchanging understanding is possessed by a group of people – the theologians exclusively – and that the members of this group are considered to be free of the arrogance and the natural bias of humans.

There is so much of the interpreter in the explanation he comes up with. Sometimes, interpretations might be so subjective that they do not enable readers to access objective knowledge about their religion. Also, one unique propagated view will lead to no comprehensive understanding. “Single Islam”, according to Abu-Zayd, can only result in the production of subjective knowledge. In line with this, Aisha Hidayatullah argues that “[...] just as the historical context of the Qur’an shapes its content, the historical environment of exegetes shapes interpretations of the Qur’an”; she adds that “Islamic tradition has effectively canonized readings of the Qur’an generated over a thousand years ago in the name of sacred history and historical precedent”. Thus, un-reading and re-reading history is to be applied on Qur’anic verses and equally on the exegetes’ historical period and context which shaped their understanding and our understanding, too. Shedding light on the exegetes themselves enables readers to distinguish between divine knowledge and earthly contributions.

In relation to this, Barlas says that “over the course of time, Muslim interpretive communities have come to see their own tafsir, hence their own interpretive authority, as being on a par with revelation”. While Barlas admits that not all traditional and early scholars contributed in producing misogynist knowledge, she states that “the sexual ethos of the time in which they wrote (the Middle Ages) was, and they could not but be influenced by it to varying degrees”.

The third methodology Wadud adopts is reading the text as a “World View”. The Qur’an has to be read in relation to itself and as textual entity. Fragmenting the text along with its teachings, principles and laws leads to huge contradictions within the Qur’an. This is indeed reminiscent of the outstanding work of the liberal intellectual thinker Mohamed Abed al-Jabri Binyat al ‘Aql al ‘Arabi (The Structure of Arab Reason) in which he criticizes the literalist approach in interpreting the foundational texts. He criticizes this approach for separating the words from the meaning they convey. This separation, according to him, hinders the true understanding of any text as words and meaning have to be understood in relation

1 Kermani, 2006, p. 182
2 Hidayatullah, 2014, p. 79
3 Barlas, 2006, p. 106
4 Ibid, p. 107
Al-Jabri believes that the literalist approach produces subjective understanding about Islam because it is subject to the authority and power of the Arabic language itself. It interprets the sacred scriptures in line with the linguistic features and the structures of Arabic. For al-Jabri, one of the pitfalls of literalism is that it produces interpretations that do not represent all the believers bearing in mind that not all of them are Arabs or Arabic speakers. If the authority of the Arabic language decides for the meaning and impacts the interpretation, what about the believers who do not speak Arabic and who do not belong to the Arab world? Here al-Jabri raises the following questions:

Was the Quran revealed in Arabic to keep its content forever incarcerated within the Arab world? Or was it revealed, in contrast, in Arabic to trespass the world if ignorance (al-jahiliyya) in which they lived and open up on an enlightened one. (Translation mine) p.248

As al-Jabri advocates reading the Qur’an away from separations and in relation to each other, Wadud also advocates considering the Qur’an as a World View and as an entity. To do this, she, for instance, analyses the following verse

So good women are qanitat, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded. As for those from whom you fear [nushuz], admonish them, banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then, if they obey you, seek not a way against them (4:34).

This verse, aiming at solving marital problems, is one of the thorniest and most debatable ones due to its apparent recommendation of “beating” the wife in return for her obedience. This suggestion comes as final measure if marital disorders continue. This last measure, the scourge, is an androcentric and misogynist one par excellence. Wadud tries to make up for this by saying that “even if the third solution is reached, the nature of ‘the scourge’ cannot be such as to create conjugal violence or a struggle between the couple because that is ‘unislamic’”. In addition to this justification, Wadud uses Lisan al-Arab and Lane’s Lexicon to argue that the word “daraba” in Arabic does not always allude to violence. If this verse is read, as al-Jabri suggests, from the view of reading the Qur’an as an entity or from the view of Wadud who read the text as a World view, then this verse represents only a minor voice.

However, While Wadud tries to apply her methodology on this verse by arguing that it has “no universal potential” and that violence “contradicts the essence of the Qur’an and the established practices of the prophet”, readers of this methodology feel that Wadud is trying by all means to exonerate the Qur’an from this suggestion no matter what. Here, the apologetic discourse of Wadud emerges once again because the androcentric nature of the verse was just made invisible. It is true that Wadud’s rereading is done from the point of view of a believing woman, but this does not mean that being apologetic is the solution. Addressing frankly the “minor” androcentric language of the Qur’an does not harm one’s

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1Al-Jabri, 1982, pp. 42 - 45

beliefs especially if this is compared to other universal fundamental Quranic rules preaching justice, tolerance and respect.

**Fatima Mernissi and “Misogynistic” Transmissions of Hadith**

While developing modern methodologies to re-read the Qu’ran, re-interpreting Hadith (the Prophetic Traditions) is also of vital need since it complements Qur’anic teachings and explains them in more details. Hadith is important in this discussion because it is also considered a divine revelation. Fatima Mernissi, in *The Veil and the Male Elite*, uses another methodology to refute many of the unquestioned Traditions through historicity, “the process of verification” and the background of the transmitters. These are key tools, for her, to assess whether or not the hadith is situational and also the authenticity and the veracity of hadith. These different methodologies used by Islamic feminists and Modern Muslim scholars attest to the plurality of voices in the religious field and brings more democracy to religious discourses. In what follows, we will analyse some Traditions that the transmitters are supposed to have heard from the prophet and that stem for a huge contradiction when compared to other Traditions and core messages of Islam.

Fatima Mernissi, as an intellectual, a feminist and a woman, questions a hadith that says: “Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity” especially that it does not rhyme with reality. A lot of countries entrust their affairs to women and they are more prosperous than some countries led by men. Why, then, does this hadith circulate so confidently among Muslims? Historicizing the hadith, as deemed by Mernissi, is a powerful tool to refute it.

The hadith at hand was said by the prophet in reference to a specific historical event: the assassination of Kisra, the Persian king, and his daughter’s succession. Abu-Bakra, a Companion of the prophet, is the one who transmitted this hadith and who recalled it twenty five years after the death of the prophet to comment on what was happening during the battle of the camel and specifically to comment on ‘Aisha’s involvement in this battle. A civil war was provoked between ‘Ali, who was a Caliph at that time, and ‘Aisha, the prophet’s beloved and wife because Ali did not condemn or punish the killers of ‘Uthman, the previous Caliph.

Abu-Bakra was among the people against fitna(chaos) and this is why he declined Aisha’s invitation to take part in the war. However, his justification was different as he refused to take part in the war because a woman was one of the parties. But, why did he give this justification? And why did he recall this hadith in this specific occasion? Part of how Mernissi analyses the reasons that led Abu-Bakra to remember this hadith at that specific moment is that he, as she alludes to, was afraid of losing his position and fortune especially after the triumph of ‘Ali over Aisha.

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1 Mernissi, 1991, p. 49
2 Ibid, p. 54
3 Ibid, p. 57
By claiming that Abu-Bakra used to remember hadith at opportune times, Mernissi addresses the dangerous issue of the political manipulation of religion which is not the least a modern phenomenon. In the period that follows the prophet’s death, religion was used to legitimize a lot of political claims related to succession. In the same context, Raja Rhouni states that “far from being idyllic, this early period, she points out, is one of dissension, political rivalries, violence and assassinations, elitism, and marginalization, and manipulation of the prophet’s tradition for political reasons”.

In his article “Rethinking Islam Today”, Mohamed Arkoun examines how politics shapes and reshapes Islam according to its own interests. For instance, he puts the blame on the Umayyad, the Abbassid and the Ottoman periods which periodized and politicized the history of thought and literature. He affirms that one of the incentives of calling for rethinking what he describes as “the problem of religion” is that both “Christianity and Islam […] became official ideologies used by a centralizing state which created written historiography and archives”. History becomes subservient to political interests, and sometimes greed, via the power to manipulate and re-write literature.

Like history, Orthodoxy serves the intentions of politics. Arkoun defines it as “the ideological use of religion by the competing groups in the same political space”. The problem of orthodoxy is that no “ijtihad" has been implemented to separate orthodoxy as a tool supporting the state and its values and ideologies, and orthodoxy as a religious tool to worship God. A separation between the two functions of orthodoxy, the ideological and the religious, is one way of rethinking Islam according to Arkoun.

Arkoun’s criticism fits the story of the hadith at hand as Abu-Bakra had to use religion in order to justify his political acts mixing two ideologies, the political and the religious, in a total absence of historicity as the hadith was excavated from its original historical context.

In addition to this empowering methodology of re-historicisation and contextualization, Mernissi adopts another methodology of verification: historicizing the background of the hadith’s transmitters. Mernissi inquires: “who is eligible to transmit hadith?” Mernissi discredits all the prophetic traditions transmitted by Abu-bakra because if we follow Imam Malik’s criteria of transmission and isnad (verification process), Abu-Bakra is not an eligible transmitter. For Imam Malik, knowledge “cannot be received from a safih [mentally deficient person] nor from someone who is in the grip of passion […] nor from a liar who recounts anything at all to people”. Mernissi affirms that “one

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1 Rhouni, 2010, p. 212
2 Ibid, p. 212
3 Arkoun, 2003, p. 20
5 Ibid.
6 Mernissi, 1991, p.59
of the biographies of [Abu-Bakra] tells us that he was convicted of and flogged for false testimony” by ‘Umar Ibn Khattab.

Fatima Mernissi does not follow this methodology only in relation to Abu-Bakra but also in relation to Abu-Hurayra, the transmitter of a number of misogynistic Traditions like “The dog, the ass and woman interrupt prayer if they pass in front of the believer, interposing themselves between him and the qibla”. As a comment on this hadith, Mernissi says: “by lumping her with two familiar animals the author of the Hadith inevitably makes her a being who belongs to the animal kingdom”.¹ If women, like men, are adherents to this religion, why does it hurt them and equally hurt the very essence of Islam?

This hadith was contested by ‘Aisha, the prophet’s beloved and the closest person to him. She reacted to Abu-Hurayra by saying: “You compare us now to asses and dogs. In the name of God, I have seen the prophet saying his prayers while I was there lying on bed between him and the qibla and in order not to disturb him I didn’t move”. The transmitter of the hadith is not supposed to have been present while ‘Aisha was in bed watching the prophet doing his prayers. The contestation of ‘Aisha alone would discredit the hadith as being false. However, despite this, the hadith is so much influential to the extent that it successfully made its way into the al-Bukhari’s Sahih. More than this, ‘Aisha’s objection is not included.²

In addition to contesting the hadith’s veracity by including the opinion of another religious authority, Mernissi resorts to her methodology of researching the background of transmitters. Mernissi states that: “he [Abu-Hurayra] has been the source of an enormous amount of commentary in the religious literature. But he was and still is the object of controversy and there is far from being unanimity on him as a reliable source”.³ on the one side ‘Aisha contested him concerning some Traditions that he claimed he had heard - and in this vein she says “He is not a good listener, and when he is asked a question, he gives wrong answers” - and on the other side, he is contested by Umar Ibn al-Khattab who is quoted in the biography of al-Asqalani saying: “we have many things to say but we are afraid to say them, and that man there has no restraint”.⁴

Some critiques have written about the limitations of Fatima Mernissi’s methodology of verification. Raja Rhouni, in her outstanding work on Fatima Mernissi’s writings Secular and Islamic Feminist Critiques in the Work of Fatima Mernissi, analyses what she calls “the disabling moments” of Mernissi’s methodology. Rhouni criticized her for espousing the authenticity logic. In other words, Mernissi’s focal point in this book is to doubt the veracity of Misogynistic hadiths and the honesty and reliability of their transmitters. Tracing back the transmitters’ background should not be an end in itself. In this line, Rhouni asks:

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¹ Ibid, p. 70
² Ibid.
³ Ibid, p. 78
⁴ Ibid, pp. 78-79
“what if the hadiths are found to be authentic?” Rhouni believes that Mernissi’s methodology could have been more powerful, if it had criticized authentication as a methodology that characterizes al-Bukhari’s and others’ works in general, not only in relation to androcentric hadiths.

While Rhouni does not entirely discredit the authentication methodology, she argues that “the ultimate goal […] is the dismantling of foundationalism and fixity altogether”. Authenticity should only be a means to reinforce historicity and contextualization. To support her argument, Rhouni refers to Nasr Abu Zaid who considers that patriarchy is manifest in the religious discourse because gender differentiation mattered culturally and socially to the first recipients of the revelation and thus it is reflected in the text because they needed to communicate a certain message to these recipients. This is, for Rhouni, a more “enabling” argument that is difficult to be proven invalid when interpreting other situations. Not addressing androcentrism in the religious texts and focusing, instead, only on the transmission of hadith makes her discourse apologetic.

While Mernissi’s methodology is cunningly important, there are more intriguing questions than dwelling on the lives and personalities of the transmitters. Why did misogynist hadiths that exclude women from public affairs and that insist on their inferiority, seclusion and domesticity gain more importance and influence than other hadiths that transmit more important and guiding messages? What is it that endorses their circulation after all these centuries?

Perhaps, the shift from secular writings to Islamic writings is, I believe, what led Mernissi to opt for isnad, authentication. The adoption of isnad as discussed by Imam Malik is all she needed to communicate her message with an Islamic, moderate and reconciliatory tone. Mernissi is aware of the double defiance of her endeavor, politically and religiously. Venturing into the theological domain and defying male clerical surveillance is a risky act. Perhaps, what alleviates this risk is her focus on Isnad and religious authorities like Imam Malik.

Though criticized for over insisting on the authentication methodology, isnad, Mernissi’s arguments decenter power relations. It is her now who asks the question: did certain transmitters meet the Islamic requirements of transmitting hadith? a question that is, often, used to attack Islamic feminists who venture into the texts: “are you eligible to read the Quran and hadith?” Without theoretically re-reading the text, Mernissi empowers her arguments by re-reading, questioning, destabilizing and desacralizing the history of the early transmitters. That was one of Mernissi’s routes to the religious text. However, seeking legitimacy was done at the expense of fighting foundationalism.

A good example to cite in order to underpin Rhouni’s advocacy of going beyond foundationalism and fixity is Abed al-Jabri’s discussion and encouragement of taking the conduct of the Companions after the death of the

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1 Rhouni, 2010, p.215

2 Ibid, pp. 214- 215
prophet as an example worthy of emulation. While a number of Islamic feminists make recourse to the past to gain legitimacy and to disprove gender inequality in Islam, al-Jabri makes recourse to the conduct of the Companions not to dwell in the past but to move forward.

In his book, *Democracy, Human Rights and Law in Islamic Thought,* he states clearly that: “I am calling for the deferment of previous interpretive judgments and for resorting directly to ‘the conduct of the Companions’”.

Commenting of this conduct, he argues that

[...] what is needed now is to view these men as having established for themselves certain authoritative referents to address the new developments in their ages, on the one hand, and, on the other, to regulate *ijtihad* and define its rules [...] If such means do not match the development of learning and knowledge, they become impediments which fossilize that knowledge, thus fostering imitation (*al-taqlid*) and killing the spirit of *Ijtihad.*

This quote encourages directly continuous interpretation which is the only solution to revive the Muslim heritage in compatibility with the ongoing changes. Acknowledging the idea that every era should be dealt with in accordance with to its particularities can only attest to the idea that Islam is, indeed, prone to provide rational solutions. Thus, referring to the conduct of the prophet is a tool to gain the needed legacy to argue against the archaic *taqlid* and to foster *ijtihad* and independent thought which enable them to sometimes go beyond the text despite its clarity. Following the same quest of going beyond fixity, Arkoun argues that to make the unthinkable in Islam thinkable again, a new epistemological project should be developed to counter-balance the rigid definitions and methods imposed by theology and classical metaphysics.

Furthermore, instead of clinging to the literalist meaning of the words, he suggests a “tool for a new thinking” which is “*épistème*”, a words he prefers to keep in French. He argues that the latter is “a better criterion for the study of thought because it concerns the structure of the discourse – the implicit postulates which command the syntactic construction of the discourse”.

**Conclusion**

Understanding the dynamics of Islamic feminism’s deconstructionist methodologies should be understood within the general wave of liberal intellectual thinking which paved the way to the de-sacralization of *sharia* as a “human historical production of thought”. I argue, here, that the methodologies used by

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1 Al-Jabri, 2009, p.5
2 Ibid, pp. 4-5.
3 Arkoun, 2003, p.21
5 *Sharia,* as explained by Abu-Zayd, encompasses the Qur’an, the prophetic hadith, *ijmaa’* (consensus or unanimous agreement on a matter) and *qiyass* (syllogism: inferring rules based on already established ones). The last one is not agreed upon by all the religious schools.
Islamic feminists vacillate between being empowering and being apologetic to a historical period pregnant with androcentric practices that could not but affect the Islamic discourse on gender. The apologetic discourse emerges when Islamic feminist force their own interpretation, which is of course not free from subjectivity, on a certain text in order to exonerate it from its androcentric articulations.

However all the limitations that have been addressed in this article do in no way belittle the interesting works and endeavors of these Islamic feminists in participating in and contributing to the production of the female knowledge. Intruding in a field that is considered male par excellence and contesting some of the deeply rooted traditions and practices along with some figures who have been considered sacred are enough reasons to appreciate these endeavors. These attempts at reinterpretations are a form of intellectual rebellion against the status-quo that has been prevailing for ages as divine laws. This intellectual rebellion proudly deconstructs the ivory tower of androcentric interpretations that tightly/narrowly believe in the divinity and the arrogance of the prism from which they see laws. These female re-readings are not but a reminder that this prism is not the only one reflecting reality; there are, instead, other prisms providing multiple possibilities to see reality.

References
Abdelmjid Kettioui

Islam’s Blonde Conquests on the Barbary Coast: The Geopolitical, Spiritual and Sexual Stakes of Female Captivity in Elizabeth Marsh’s The Female Captive (1769)¹
(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

Abstract
This chapter alights at the geopolitical, spiritual and sexual stakes that attend and haunt Elizabeth Marsh’s The Female Captive (1769). Intercepted in the context of a diplomatic impasse between Morocco and Britain in 1756, Marsh turns down a royal proposal of marriage after incessant intrigues of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah’s female renegades. The then future Sultan frees the reluctant Marsh as Britain sent envoys to re-establish peace with Morocco. While she cannot take Islam or lead a harem life, Marsh is fascinated by the prince’s elegance and luxurious palace life. Framing female captives as Islam’s blonde conquests, I examine how Marsh enacts and negotiates what Anthony Ashley Cooper calls “Moorish Fancy” and what Michel Foucault dubs “the image of the imperial prude.” Beyond clichés of Muslim sexual prurience and forced conversions, this chapter argues, the Self is forged in the interstices of personal ambition and imperial pursuit, sameness and difference, desire and sense of belonging, fact and fiction.

Keywords: Barbary captivity, blonde conquest, Elizabeth Marsh, female captives, geopolitics, sexual, spiritual.

Introduction
Elizabeth Marsh’s story of captivity triggered scholarly attention across the cultural divide. When, in 2007, a female marine and her 14 Royal Navy shipmates were intercepted and detained for one week by the Revolutionary Coast Guards, British historian and empire apologist Niall Ferguson blamed the British government for allowing its sailors to be “temporarily enslaved by the Iranian government.”² He assumes, as Khalid Bekkaoui points out, that “The Faye Turney of 1756 was Elizabeth Marsh,”³ and demands that the Moroccan king apologize for the captivity of Marsh. As such, Ferguson praises Linda Colley’s Captives (2002) for highlighting the plight of white women captives in North Africa. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Marsh’s The Female Captive (1769) saw print again in 2003 in the press

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³ Ibid.
of a North African university that ironically bears the name of Elizabeth Marsh’s royal captor and emancipator, Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah. Moroccan scholar Khalid Bekkaoui republished the manuscript with an introduction and notes, sketching the nuances and subtleties of Marsh’s text and reconciling it with the site of its inception. *White Women Captives in North Africa* (2010) privileges a gendered perspective to a hitherto predominantly masculinized genre.¹ In 2007, Colley wrote a biography of Marsh, celebrating her countrywoman’s resilience, resourcefulness and enterprising character. While *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: How a Woman Crossed Seas and Empires to Become Part of World History* highlights Marsh’s suffering, it masks her identity as an imperial subject. This chapter examines Marsh’s negotiation of gender dynamics within a volatile and intricate transnational context of opportunity and danger.

1. **Doing Geopolitics in the Maghreb’s Past-colonial Sea: Sovereignty, Captivity and Diplomacy**

   The interception of Marsh’s vessel, the *Ann*, in 1756 comes in the context of the Moroccan sovereign’s sanction to his corsairs to capture British vessels on account of their illegal activities in Moroccan waters. Leaving the newly French-occupied Island of Minorca, twenty-year-old Marsh (1735-1785) set sail from Gibraltar to England on 28 July 1756 to reunite with her fiancé. The *Ann* merchantman surrendered to Salé corsairs, being ―unhappily deserted‖ by the man-of-war responsible for its safe voyage. Marsh is taken to Marrakech to meet Moroccan crown prince and acting monarch Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah. In Marrakech, the prince solicits her to marry him and share a harem life. The unyielding Marsh is tricked by one of the renegade concubines into repeating the Arabic formula of conversion, thus nominally becoming Muslim. The prince finds it a fit opportunity to compel the blonde captive to betroth him or else face death, “namely, Burning”, in principle the lot that awaited apostates. The steadfast Briton is allowed to sail home without ransom as soon as England had sent envoys to negotiate for peace with Morocco.

   The work of Marsh’s father as a shipwright in formerly British-held Minorca and elsewhere indirectly enmeshed Marsh in Britain’s colonial and imperial traffic and aggression across continents.² Elizabeth Marsh was taken captive as Moroccan corsairs made prizes of English vessels in retaliation for their breach of Moroccan waters. Although the mid-eighteenth century was characterized by the rise of the British empire and the decline of the power of Arabic and Ottoman Islam,³ corsair activity still worked havoc with European vessels trespassing into Maghrebi

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¹*Published in Europe, the first four accounts in Bekkaoui’s anthology recounted real experiences of captivity. The second cluster appeared in America and are literary accounts of female captivity. See his *White Women Captives in North Africa*, p. xvii.*

² On Marsh’s extended family’s service in the Royal Navy and direct involvement in empire building, see Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh*, p. xxii.

³ Colley, *Captives*, p. 130.
littorals. Marsh intimates that her capture was motivated especially by a grave diplomatic misconduct on the part of Britain’s envoy to Sidi Mohammed. The prince, so relates Marsh, informed us, that the Reason of our being taken was on Account of Captain Hyde Parker’s insolent Behaviour, as he was pleased to term it, having treated him in a very disrespectful and rude Manner, when Ambassador from the Court of Great Britain: – He assured us, however, that we were not Slaves, but that he should detain us until the Arrival of a Consul.¹

Marsh frames her capture within these circumstances of non-peace between Morocco and England. Towards the end of her account, Marsh makes reference to an epistle the emperor of Morocco dispatched to the king of England. Marsh reports that

If in that time peace was not ratified by the Court of England, he (the emperor of Morocco) should esteem it as a Declaration of War, and order his Cruisers to make Reprisals, and stop the Communication between the Garrison of Gibraltar and his Dominions, ending his letter with Complaints against the English, for furnishing his rebellious Subjects with Arms and Ammunition.²

Sidi Mohammed releases Marsh and her consorts when a British envoy was sent from King George II to Marrakech to sue for their release and establish peace with Morocco. Marsh is implicated against her better judgement in the spiritual and sexual allegories of captivity, penetration, conversion, resistance and conquest. The sexual and theological strongly feature in Marsh’s account. The Female Captive is about how geopolitics and diplomacy are enacted by a strategic geopolity that lied heretofore outside British colonialism. Marsh’s account projects how England’s transgression of Moroccan waters is assimilated within economies of captivity, acculturation and conversion. In Elizabeth Marsh’s captivity narrative, England’s trespass of Moroccan waters is met with acute spiritual and sexual re-appropriation. That is, Marsh’s story shows how the white female body and, through it, the nation it represents come under the sway of brown corporeality.

2. The Desdemona Precedent: From “Blackamoors” to Black Lovers

Queen Elizabeth issued two edicts in which she ordered the banishment of all the “Blackamoors” from her dominions. In 1596, she exhorted the Lord Mayor of London to deport England’s black foreigners for “there are of late divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kind of people there are allready here too manie”.³ In 1601, the queen reiterated her grievance against the “Blackamoor” threat. Queen Elizabeth was ill at ease by the “great number of Negars and Blackamoors which... are crept into this realm”.⁴ Such discriminatory gush notwithstanding, the figure of the Moor continued to grip the imagination of

¹ Marsh, The Female Captive, p. 77.
² Ibid.
³ Queen Elizabeth quoted in Emily C. Bartels, Speaking of the Moor: From “Alcazar” to “Othello”, p. 100.
⁴ Ibid.
British playwrights well into the eighteenth century. “As to Books”, writes the earl, “the same Moorish Fancy, in its plain and literal sense, prevails strongly at this present time”.¹Moors on Elizabethan drama were maligned as blackamoors where blackness was constituted as a form of disability in white culture, an instance of pitiful and disdainful vulgarity and a deviation from nature, sense and white norms. In seminal dramatic performances such as Shakespeare’s Othello, the racial legacy that surrounds the Moor on English stage was countervailed by subversively endearing portraits of black Africans on English stage. Blackness was transformed from handicap to gift and the Moor grew from a reviled outsider into a desired community member. Othello documents the oscillation of the Moor between “blackamoor” and lover.

With recurrent instances of female defection to the Moorish fold, Englishmen expressed fear for their maids incarcerated in Islam. With what I call the “Desdemona precedent” in the English literary and lived collective memory, English fathers and husbands should find the advice of Brabantio to “trust not your daughter’s minds” imperative. Almost a century after Brabantio’s soliloquy, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftsbury, still observes British women’s sustained infatuation with Muslim masculinity. In his Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times (1711),² Cooper, as Khalid Bekkaoui has indicated, remarks that eighteenth-century British females are willing to desert relatives and nation for the sake of a Moorish paramour after Desdemona. These voluntary defectors are keen to “change their natural Inclination for fair, candid, and courteous Knights, into a Passion for a mysterious Race of black Enchanters: such as of old were said to creep into Houses, and lead captive silly Women”.³

Eloquent and charismatic Moorish story tellers can easily “corrupt” the affections of many a British damsel:

A thousand Desdemonas are then ready to present themselves, and wou’d frankly resign Fathers, Relations, Countrymen, and Country it-self, to follow the fortunes of a Hero of the black Tribe.⁴

Desdemona’s seminal act of paternal disobedience laid the ground for English womankind to defend their black lovers in the face of patriarchal authority. For Ania Loomba, as Bekkaoui points out, “what is especially threatening for white patriarchy is the possibility of the complicity of white women; their desire for black lovers is feared, forbidden, but always eminent”.⁵

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¹ Ibid.
² Cooper, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times, p. 214.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Bekkaoui, “White Women and Moorish Fancy”, p. 159.
3. Herstory of Sexuality: Beyond the “Imperial Prude” and “Moorish Fancy”

The third Earl of Shaftsbury identifies English women’s desire for Muslim men as expressive of a sustained “Moorish Fancy”. Drawing on the earl’s thesis, Khalid Bekkaoui establishes ample evidence to substantiate this claim in his wide-ranging survey of instances of white women’s infatuation with the Moors in eighteenth-century English literature. In another respect, the female captivity fiction is informed by what Foucault calls in his History of Sexuality “the image of the imperial prude”. In the captivity narratives of Miss de Bourk, Elizabeth Marsh, Maria ter Meetelen among others, female captives are in the first place desired by Muslim men. Their assumed aversion or fancy for North Africans is a response to a number of push and pull factors within differing conditions of captivity and prospects of social advancements. It is Muslim men, women and even their renegade associates who contrive every means to lure their captured maids into Oriental nuptials. In this sense, these female captives are subjected to an altogether subverting order of desiring and hence feature as “Islam’s blonde conquests”. The racial and cultural superiority of the empire’s domestic subjects is extremely undermined in Muslim captivity.

In his The History of Sexuality, Michel Foucault argues against a “repressive hypothesis”, a theretofore misconceived take on a rather conspicuously articulated European sexuality since the seventeenth century. The emblem of this assumed European sexual repression is what he parenthetically alludes to as “the image of the imperial prude”. Since the seventeenth century, Foucault warns us, Europeans broke unashamed into discourses of sexuality to the extent that “around and apropos of sex, one sees a veritable discursive explosion”. Foucault’s critique, however, misses out on the Oriental economy of desire that attended and haunted the constitution of an otherwise clearly demarcated European history of sexuality. Europeans, Turks and Moors of early modernity moved and networked in the fluidities of navigation, commerce, piracy, diplomacy, conversion, sex and desire. Their sexualities were redefined and articulated at the interstices of the multifaceted exchange between Islam and Christendom.

Cooper recognizes Oriental agency in reshaping English women’s tastes and affections, thus, placing The Arabian Nights, an Oriental text-event, at the forefront of the development and redefinition of female European sexuality. The Barbary captivity story was mobilized by European authors to extend the limits of literary convention by drawing on a hitherto forbidden erotic material. As such, Euro-American writers exploited Barbary as an excuse to explore sexual fantasies that their own social conventions may have prevented them from openly addressing.

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1 Ibid.
2 Foucault, The History of Sexuality, p. 10.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
The Oriental harem, in the words of Emily Apter, featured as Europe’s “cultural supplement” while it was deemed insignificant that the image of the harem seldom corresponded with the phantasmal reveries of western men.¹ Within this general framework, Marsh had to fine-tune her original manuscript to fit within the dominant literary standards of the female captivity genre to appeal to a market in search of romantic captivity plots in Oriental settings.² In defense of her virtue, Marsh plays prude and steadfast. Fearless, she prefers to be a martyr to a sex slave. Marsh replies that it was impossible for me to change my sentiments in religious matters; and that consideration was entirely unnecessary to me, who was peremptorily determined to remain a Christian.³

Marsh was echoing what turned into an eighteenth-century women’s refrain against molesters.⁴ Marsh’s staging of “the imperial prude” in the face of sexual threat and temptation, underscoring her imperviousness to Muslim lust, is unhinged by her conspicuous and unreserved obsession with Ben Abdellah and his extravagant palace life. Even when she seems engrossed in, what she calls, her “ordeal”, Marsh is intrigued by the palace’s extravagant architecture which she describes with admiration on her way to the prince’s “private apartment”.⁵

It was my fate to be reduced to passive obedience and non-resistance, without any hesitation, I followed the man through many noble squares. Some of which were of white Marble, and the Pillars of Mosaic Work; with Variety of delightful Fountains that fell into large Basins.⁶

Complicating her attitude even more, Marsh was “amazed at the elegant figure [the prince] made”.⁷ She does not fail to draw an endearing and detailed portrait of the prince.

The Prince was tall, finely shaped, of a good Complexion, and appeared to be about Five and twenty. He was dressed in a loose Robe of fine Muslin, with a Train of at least two Yards on the Floor; and under that was a Pink Satin Vest, buttoned with Diamonds: He had a small Cap of the same Satin as his Vest, with a Diamond Button: He wore Bracelets on his Legs, and Slippers wrought with Gold: His Figure, all together, was rather agreeable, and his Address polite and easy.⁸

Even when they are reluctant to wed Muslim men, Elizabeth Marsh and Miss de Bourke do admit their fixation with their former masters. Marsh takes the liberty to describe her fascination with the prince, confirming Foucault’s proposal that European sexuality systematically found expression in conversation and prose.

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¹ Emily Apter, Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects, p. 105.
² Bekkaoui, White Women Captives, p. 122.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 19-20.
⁵ Ibid., p. 91.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., p. 91.
⁸ Ibid., p. 87.
Censorship notwithstanding, Marsh’s account of the sexual communicates and partakes in the sexual anxieties and stakes that typically attend and haunt a female captive’s compulsory sojourn in Islam. In the final account, her story amounts to a “chastity report” whereby she has to give proof of her virginity, chastity and, therefore, marriageability. Despite self-censorship, Islam’s erstwhile blonde detainees align themselves with Moorish sexual intrigues.

Indeed, Marsh’s position vis-à-vis the prince’s advances should confound Mr. Court, her English consort, as well as readers. Marsh was asked to attend the Prince in the private quarters of his palace. Instead of resisting this intimate encounter with alien sexuality, the female captive meekly accepts the invitation. For the occasion, Marsh “dressed myself in a Suit of Cloaths, and my Hair was done up in the Spanish Fashion.”¹

Just as I had myself ready, Mr. Court visited me as usual; but he seemed to be surprised at my Appearance, and walked very pensively about the room, without speaking a Word; which I could not then account for.²

Adding to the reader’s confusion, Marsh “hastened through the different Apartments, until we came to that where his Imperial Highness was”.³ The prince urges her to take Islam and marry him.

His Imperial Highness wished to know if I would become a Moor, and remain in his Palace; desiring me to be convinced of his Esteem, hoping that I would properly consider the advantages resulting from doing as he desired, and [promised] me every indulgence that he could possibly favour me with.⁴

Frustrated by Marsh’s response, the prince reminded her that she had already renounced Christianity as she repeated the Muslim formula of conversion after one of the female slave captives. The prince torments Marsh as he informs her that a capital punishment awaits Muslims apostates.

4. The Fictional of the Factual: The Marketing Aesthetics of the Female Barbary Captivity Story

Lady Mary Montague’s unconventional narrativization of oriental life parts ways with a sustained orthodox narrative practice. In her *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics*, Elizabeth A. Bohls credits Montague for managing to turn aesthetics against another discourse of domination, early Orientalism, whose crude stereotypes populated seventeenth-century travel writing on Turkey. Her aestheticizing rhetoric de-eroticizes and dignifies the Turkish women whom earlier travelers had relentlessly objectified.⁵

Elizabeth Marsh shows herself to be aware of the prevalent aesthetic norms that defined the captivity narrative to both authors and their reading publics.

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¹ Ibid., p. 84.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., pp. 84-7.
⁴ Ibid., p. 92.
Characterizing narrative as a site of eroticization and fetishization, Marsh intends to sever her text from the sensationalist twist that the captivity fiction embraced in England. Militating against the fictionalization of the captivity narrative, Marsh insists that her captivity story is unembellished by any Ornaments of Language, or Flights of Fancy; I rather chusing to present to the World with all its Imperfections on its Head, than to lose its Simplicity by trying to polish it.¹

If mainstream captivity authors appropriate run-of-the-mill motifs to account for the singularity of their recitals, the female captive-turned-author mobilizes the plain, the ordinary and the flawed to signal the originality and distinctiveness of her ordeal. Marsh hopes that the ordinariness of her idiom would vouch for the uniqueness of her story. However, Marsh cannot abstain from bringing to the fore of her recital titillating episodes from her intimate interaction with the Moroccan prince. Marsh’s candid and subtle, protestant and yet misleading realism frames as well as disrupts narration as a seamless projection of experience in its entirety and at a remove from the artifice of fiction.

In Marsh’s two-volume autobiography, action centers on the ingenuity of the author-heroine to escape defilement in the same way in which it zeroes in on her master’s intrigues to trick her into matrimony. While she strives to emerge as a scrupulous imperial subject, her preservation rests on intrigue and maneuver, but also on ben Abdellah’s benevolence. Marsh claims that she is married to Mr. Crisp, a fellow passenger on the Ann. Marriage in Moroccan culture, as mobilized by Marsh, serves as a shield against molesters. By re-appropriating the marriage institution, she does not only conjure up the means to escape a diasporic married life. She also identifies a common cultural denominator that contests assumptions about Morocco as a site of unbridled sexuality, lawlessness and cruelty. Well knowing that her royal master “never approached those who were pregnant, deeming it sinful to have intercourse with those who were impregnated”,² Maria Ter Meetelen feigns to be pregnant, winning the sympathy of the harem women, the king’s sister and the king who allowed her to join her fellow captives outside the palace walls.³

English voyage in the age of piracy constitutes a predominantly masculine enterprise. What Eric Leed refers to as “spermatic journey”⁴ was at the heart of England’s business and narrative of empire and expansionism. With very few exceptions, piracy and corsair activity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Muslim and Christian shores were typically male domains of maritime violence, confrontation and appropriation.⁵ In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, females fared in the shadow of male relatives. However, English voyage and, by

¹Marsh, The Female Captive, the preface, p. 41.
²Maria Ter Meetelen, “Miraculous and Remarkable Events of Twelve Years Slavery, p. 75.
³Ibid, p. 76.
⁵There are very few cases of women pirates in the early modern period. There are no historical or fictional accounts of female pirates, corsairs or privateers across the religious divide of the Mediterranean.
the same token, captivity discourse, were increasingly gendered by the steady though liminal travel of empire’s female domestic subjects, escorting or joining father, husband or fiancé. 1 Aristocrat, poet and wife of the British ambassador to Turkey, Lady Wortley Montague (1689-1762) registers her sense of abjection at the restricted mobility of her kind in Europe in comparison to the freedom of movement their female counterparts enjoy in Istanbul. She writes that

‘Tis very easy to see they have more liberty than we have, no Woman of what rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without two Muslins, one that covers her face all but her Eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head. 2

Ian Watt assumes in his The Rise of the Novel that eighteenth century English literature was “primarily a feminine pursuit”. 3 It was against such male domination of the literary expression that Lady Wortley Montague, a literary dissenter and itinerant traveler, 4 contemporary of the earl, militates in her address to her womankind in 1724. The anonymous editor of Montague’s manuscript contests in the preface of her anonymous book that the world is surfeited with Male-Travels, all in the same tone and stuff with the same trifles; a Lady has the skill to strike out a new path, and to embellish a worn-out subject, with a variety of fresh and elegant entertainment. 5

This call for literary heresy and narrative unorthodoxy found expression some four decades later in Elizabeth Marsh’s account of travel and captivity. Marsh’s memoir of historical captivity in Morocco is the only one of its kind that disrupts the socio-cultural dynamics of gender that undermines “the masculinization of travel and “the feminization of ‘sessility’”. 6 Against received wisdom, Marsh looms large as an especially peripatetic, enterprising, resourceful, entrepreneurial and ingenious Englishwoman in the age of empire. Marsh emigrated to Menorca, escaped slavery in Marrakech, married in London and traveled with her husband to Rio de Janeiro. She lived in Dhaka and Madras and cities in eastern and southern India. 7

5. Deflecting the Past-colonial Harem: No Coercion in Islam, No Compulsion in Love

1 James Clifford maintains that in the European tradition until the colonial period, “[g]ood travel” (heroic, educational, scientific, adventurous, ennobling) is something men (should) do. When women traveled, they traveled as “companions or as “exceptions”. See his Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century, p. 31.
2 Lady Mary Wortley Montague, Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague Written during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, p. 104.
3 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, p. 43.
4 Billie Melman argues that Montague’s travel letters from Turkey constitute “the very first example of a secular work by a woman about the Muslim Orient”. See Melman, Women’s Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 2.
5 Lady Wortley Montague, Letters (preface by editor, vii).
6 Roxanne L. Euben, Journeys to the Other Shore, p. 134
7 “Although Elizabeth Marsh rejoined her husband in Dhaka in mid-1776, it was again not for long. From late 1777 to mid-1780 she was once more on the move, sailing first from Calcutta to England, and then, after more than a year’s intrigue, and a further twelve thousand miles at least in sea distance, returning to the subcontinent”. See Colley, The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh, pp. xx-xxi.
Typically, masculine *Barbary* captivity discourse is organized by allegories of the defenseless and frail female captive against the brave and resourceful masculine hostage. In Chetwood’s *The Voyages*, the hero has not only to masquerade his female consort as a man whenever she has to appear before men, he is the one to design and occasion her escape in the first place. Women’s captivity fiction, on the contrary, overturns such masculinist configurations of gender and the captive body. The female captivity story throws into disruption masculine assumptions on the helplessness of Islam’s bondswomen.

Challenging clichés about women captives’ helplessness, de Bourk, Maria ter Meetelen and Marsh show themselves to be resourceful and impervious, outsmarting countrymen and captors alike. Ter Meetelen got into the king’s favor in the face of jealousy from fellow captives and managed to keep a tavern. The widowed ter Meetelen chose Pieter, “the chief of the Dutch nation”¹ in marriage and only when he agreed to convert to Catholicism.² Ter Meetelen insisted that “before we got married, it was first necessary that my husband should be baptized in a Catholic way”.³ The doting prince had to concede to the heroic Marsh and grant her liberty in the same way in which ter Meetelen’s royal master in Meknes had done. Inverting figures of conquest and fortitude, significance and marginality, it is the male captives who appear restricted in alien spaces, incapable of effecting their own release and ironically in need of female mediation and protection.⁴

It was the trope of eighteenth-century English captivity to hype North African mostly sovereign and geopolitical acts of captive-taking as indices of sexual and spiritual violence. In *Barbary* captivity discourse, while women captives faced rape, men risked sodomy, circumcision (converts) or castration (eunuchs). Muslim desire for white female captives is prominently insatiable in the accounts of one-time female *Barbary* captives such as Miss de Bourk, Maria ter Meetelen, and Elizabeth Marsh. The sexualization of blonde captives under Islam proved a thriving business in the English presses of the time.⁵ Their captivity stories mirror the interplay between the territorial and the sexual where the transgression of maritime borders and breach of territorial sovereignty sanction, from a Maghrebi perspective, interception at sea, corporeal subjugation and sexual and theological assimilation.

In thrall to his envoy’s gripping account of King Louis XIV’s daughter, Moulay Ismail demands the French princess in marriage. Abdullah Ibn Aisha, the Moroccan ambassador to the French court in 1651 was commissioned to deliver

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¹ Ter Meetelen, “Miraculous and Remarkable Events of Twelve Years Slavery”, p. 77.
² Ibid, p. 78.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives*, p. 27.
⁵ Bekkaoui argues that besides female captives’ ability to trespass into spaces inaccessible to their male counterparts such as royal harems, another factor that “made female captivity such an appealing genre for a wider audience is the thrilling suspense surrounding the dramatization of feminine entrapment and beleaguered virtue and the transformation of the captured body into a panoply of contentious desires, a voyeuristic spectacle. See his introduction to *White Women Captives*, p. 29.
Moulay Ismail’s marriage proposal to the French monarch. The envoy stressed that the maid shall not be coerced to turn Muslim. The ambassador said,

Our Sultan will marry her according to the law of God and the Prophet, but she shall not be forced to abandon her religion, or manner of living; and she will be able to find all that her heart desires in the palace of my sovereign - if it please God.¹

As instructed by his monarch, Ibn Aisha was trading an image of a tolerant Islam and one of the faith’s founding principles: that there is no coercion in Islam, thereby, contradicting the general belief that North African Muslims are set on converting Christians. King Louis courteously spurned his Moroccan correspondent’s demand on account of religious difference. Moulay Ismail’s liking for Mademoiselle de Blois (later Princess de Conti) enticed the imagination of Versailles poets. J. B. Rousseau is among the poets who wrote on the incident:

Votre beauté, grande princesse,  
Porte les traits dont elle blesse,  
Jusques aux plus sauvages lieux;  
L’Afrique avec vous capitule  
Et les conquêtes de vos yeux  
Vont plus loin que celles d’Hercule.

Your beauty, great princess,  
Bears traces that hurt,  
To the visceral places,  
Africa capitulates before you  
And your eyes’ conquests  
Go further than those of Hercules.²

The female protagonist in Strickland’s fictional rewrite of a historical French account of shipwreck and captivity in Algiers affirms that Aladin, her master’s son, took a liking to me, now fast stepping into early womanhood, and a still greater fancy for the handkerchief I wore round my hair, which he insisted upon having”.³ Miss de Bourke, too, cannot conceal her admiration for the sheikh’s youth who had just attained to manhood, had already signalled himself by his great courage. He inherited a good deal of his mother’s haughty character as well as her fierce beauty; and being lately returned from a military expedition against another wild tribe, was much extolled and humoured by his parents and people.⁴

Echoing King Louis XIV’s daughter’s fears vis-à-vis Moulay Ismail’s marriage offer, the French girl’s aversion to Aladin’s proposal is on account of his steadfast defence of the Muslim creed. While his “vehement love” saves her from

³ Strickland, The Orphan Captive, p. 44. Italics mine.  
⁴ Ibid., p. 43. Italics mine.
being coerced to take Islam, Miss de Bourke confesses that “I could entertain no hope of winning to my own faith a spouse of such a temper”.

Still, de Bourke’s doting paramour is not the native of the brutal culture she urges her reading publics to identify and abhor. If Aladin’s “generous relinquishment of me has left an indelible impression upon my mind”, such a gesture does not only “[refute] the Oriental despotism thesis”, as Bekkaoui observes in the case of Mohammed Ben Abdellah’s generous manumission of Elizabeth Marsh. It also shows that the love Moorish men show to white women becomes an expression, statement, declaration and pledge of protection; a sanctuary against molestation. The female abductee is safe in her Moorish paramour’s love. Since there is no compulsion in faith, there is no coercion in love, Ben Abdellah’s and Aladin’s bids confirm. Even when she is ransomed and sure of homecoming, Strickland’s female captive feels twinges of sorrow for parting with her Algerian hosts/owners. “Notwithstanding my ardent desire for liberty”, concedes the young hostage, “I could not part with the sheikh’s family without some feelings of regret”.

The historical Miss de Bourk insists in the Remarkable History of the Countess De Bourk’s Shipwreck, and Her Daughter’s Captivity (1735) that “I will however sooner suffer Death than once fail in what I have promised to my God”. The sense of preservation and fortitude expressed by female survivors of Muslim thrall is irrevocably thwarted by the fact that their captivity and conversion are plotted, carried out and overseen by ex-co-religionists. While the French Countess de Bourk is seized by a Dutch renegade under an Algerian corsair rais in 1719, Marsh is tricked into disowning Christ by the daughter of an English renegade who feigns to teach her “Morisco”. The cast of female renegades in Mohammed Ben Abdellah’s harem become Marsh’s cunning missionaries. When she is undeceived about her new religious identity, Marsh proclaims herself a Christian.


Like ter Meetelen, who had to outsmart the “daughter of a renegade, who spoke a little bad Spanish and told me that the king had confided me to her to turn me Turk”, Marsh had to dodge not only the prince’s advances but also the conspiracy of his European renegade women. While the first feigns pregnancy, the second pretends to be married. Unwilling to convert, Marsh is fooled by “the daughter of an English renegade” to abjure Christ through the recital of the Muslim formula of conversion, the shahada. Indisposed to be “witness” to her own defection into another divinity, she denies that she is “not a Christian, but a Moor” as her female beguilers have triumphantly declared. These Christian-turned-Muslim zealots and passionate missionaries mobilize Marsh’s “accidental”

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1 Ibid., p. 53. Italics mine.
2 Ibid., p. 97.
3 Ibid.
4 Miss de Bourk, “Remarkable History of the Countess de Bourk and her Daughter’s Captivity”, p. 51.
5 Ter Meetelen, “Miraculous and Remarkable Events of Twelve Years Slavery”, p. 75.
6 Marsh, The Female Captive, p. 93.
apostasy to inflict on her harem codes, licensing her body to the whims of the potentate. Marsh’s fascination with the crown Prince, however, could not induce her to trespass the color and faith lines. The luxurious world she is tempted to embrace could not bring her to submit her body and virtue even when the crown prince bullies her into submission, enjoining that the lot that awaits converts in Islam is death.

Not unlike their male counterparts who decamped to Islam, female renegades conspire against country and nation and inveigle their countrywomen into oriental marriages. Assimilated female apostates serve as initiators of new female captives of their own into a world of sexual fulfillment and worldly prosperity. Instead of extending support to her co-national and capitalizing on her closeness to the prince to intercede for her countrywoman’s release, the renegade woman is keen to cajole an English maiden in the bloom of youth into following in her very footsteps. Their harem sense of belonging and loyalty urges them to further the cause and interests of their royals.

The success of these veteran female renegades in attracting new beauties to the fold should bring them into the prince’s favor or else expose them to the risk of falling into their master’s displeasure. The stakes notwithstanding, these women devote themselves to the enlargement of their polygamous community. Instead of commiserating with their countrywoman and seconding her in her choice of not reneging, Ter Meetelen or Marsh’s proselytizers enmesh them in the very trap those captives have tried hard to sidestep. With no moral obligation towards Britain, the ulja (the Arabic term for a female renegade) sets herself up as a model for English young women to emulate whereby her promotion from slave to queen makes a rare success story.

Tales of slave-turned-sultana include a Scottish girl during king James I’s reign whose brother thrived as a businessman in Morocco and, in recognition of his royal brother-in-law’s favors, raised a statue of a Moor in the mansion he built. The female renegade does not embody the libertine anti-heroine to be deprecated by countrymen. This woman’s reconstruction of space and negotiation of gender are dictated by her new Moroccan reality. She offers to save an English maid from England, an uncertain future, community censure and ostracism, transforming Barbary from an alleged site of peril, loss and enslavement into a space of social security and cultural protection. Such a stance disrupts and subverts the whole patriotic, filial, moral, humanitarian and cultural narrative, enterprise and ethos of saving on which European colonization of the Maghreb was founded. New female arrivals in North Africa, according to veteran female converts, do not need saving, and need not worry about survival in a milieu that promises far better chances for social preferment. Rather, defection to Moorish households and harems amounts to an act of saving from the poverty and injustices of home country.

1 Bekkaoui cites many instances of European female captives. See his introduction to White Women Captives, p. 25.
7. Saving the Female Captive: From Muslim Captivity or White Society?

Marrying North Africans availed English women and their relatives and connections both in Morocco and abroad. Elizabeth Marsh recalls the generosity and kindness of an English renegade woman in the harem of Sidi Mohamed ben Abdellah. Marsh writes:

One of the most agreeable of them, and who shewed me the greatest Civilities, was the Daughter of an Englishman, who became a Renegado, and had married a Moorish Woman; she took her Bracelets of her Arms; and put them on mine, desiring I would wear them for her Sake.¹

This generous queen might have been the same woman who extended her generosity to the survivors of the shipwreck of The Litchfield on the Atlantic coast of Morocco two years after Marsh’s capture and manumission.² Sutherland reminisces in *A Narrative of the Loss of His Majesty’s Ship the Litchfield* (1768):

December 25th. Being Christmas day, prayers were read to the people as usual in the church of England. The captain received a present of some tea and loaves of sugar from one of the queens, whose grandfather had been an English renegado.³

Still, while they grace their relatives and countrymen at home or in Morocco, female renegades project their allegiance to their Royal husbands. Enacting a double filial consciousness, the said queen was the same woman who did her best to trick a countrywoman into accepting Islam and a Moroccan crown-prince for husband. Marsh reminds her readers:

The lady, whose father, as I have already remarked, was an Englishwoman, talked to me in Morisco, and was seemingly fond of me; and, by her Gestures, I imagined she wanted me to learn their language... I imprudently repeated some Words after her, but found, when too late, that I had renounced (though innocently) the Christian Religion, by saying, There is but one God, and Mahomet is his Prophet.⁴

If women coreligionists conspire to lure her to a harem future, her male coreligionists traumatize her with tales of her liability to sexual predation in Morocco. Not unlike Iago, the ring-leader in *Othello*, vulgarizing the sexuality of a Barbary native, Marsh’s friend sketches hyped images of Moorish barbarism and eroticism to the extent that “he seemed to delight in terrifying me with stories of the cruelties of the Moors, and the dangers my sex was exposed to in Barbary”.⁵

When the young captive was recalled to attend the prince in Marrakech, she agreed with her shipmate and companion Mr. Crisp to go as her brother. That, thought

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¹ Marsh, *The Female Captive*, pp. 79-80.
² Ibid., p. 79.
³ James Sutherland, *A Narrative of the Loss of His Majesty’s Ship*, pp. 41-2.
⁴ Marsh, *The Female Captive*, p. 89.
⁵ Ibid., p. 47.
Marsh, would dissuade the prince from wooing her. On their way to Marrakech, Don Pedro, a coreligionist Minorcan slave alerts Mr. Crisp to “the danger your fair companion is exposed to”\(^1\) and advises that Crisp masquerades as her husband. Concerned about the preservation of her chastity, Don Pedro insists that Marsh and Mr. Crisp pass for a married couple. Don Pedro confides to Mr. Crisp:

> have been a slave to Sidy Mohamet, since the year 1750. And you must conclude I cannot be unacquainted with his temper and inclinations; and such, I can assure you, is his despotic power, that if she is at all preserved from being detained in the Seraglio, it must be by the means above mentioned.\(^2\)

Instead of soothing and comforting her, Marsh’s male compatriots in the land of her detention inconceivably terrorize and upset her with a horrifying portrait of the then acting potentate. In lieu of providing psychological support to “the damsel in distress”, coreligionists exaggerate her captor’s inhumanness. Lest the twenty-year-old Marsh should be tempted by Sidi Mohamed’s opulent palace life, they increase her fears to antagonize her against the prince’s likely amorous proposals. Similarly, hopelessly waiting for an envoy to deliver her from captivity, Marsh is frustrated by the negligence of the English authorities. A Swedish merchant in Safi assured her that an English Admiral was arrived at the Garisson of Gibraltar, who had ordered that the Man of War should be dispatched to demand us. This agreeable Information, however, gained little Credit with me, who had been accustomed to this Sort of Deception, and even inured to Disappointments.\(^3\)

On the contrary, the story of the Dutch merchant who paid Marsh a courtesy visit in Safi before her ship set sail to Gibraltar unsettled her fears and anxieties. The merchant was going to Marrakech, Morocco’s administrative capital, “to solicit the Favour and Protection of the Prince, in order to reestablish a House in the said City”.\(^4\) Marsh adds that this man had, as it was reported, formerly traded with great Success in this Place, and, to the Surprise of all, the Prospect of adding yet more to his Fortune had so strange an Effect upon him, that the Difficulties a Christian is exposed to in that Country; were overlooked by him, as Matters of no Importance or Consideration.\(^5\)

First, the Dutch merchant shows Morocco to be the land of opportunity and successful commerce. Second, Morocco looms large as a stable and safe country where European traders could do business unmolested. Third, the Moroccan regime emerges as a trusted and responsible partner. The merchant does not only dispel Marsh’s fears, but also challenges deep-seated clichés about Morocco.

Easy prey to Muslim corsairs and victim of white society suspicion, Marsh diligently escapes community censure. She delayed the publication her two-

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 63.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 107.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 111.
\(^5\)Ibid.
volume narrative of captivity in Morocco thirteen years after the fact and only when her husband went bankrupt. It seems that had not been for her financial crisis, her memoir would have never seen print. Marsh preferred to remain reticent about her ordeal, deleting dates, names of people and places from her immediate milieu. When her volume came out, it was sold only to a limited circle of relatives, friends and subscribers. It is on homecoming that Marsh’s real ordeal begins. In her note to the public, Elizabeth Marsh remarks with frustration and anguish that

I have unhappily experienced those Hours, who, may say, with too much truth, that the Misfortunes I met with in Barbary have been more than equalled by those I have since experienced, in this Land of Civil and Religious Liberty.¹

Throughout her captivity, apprehension of being the victim of black sexuality haunted her incessantly. However, she confesses that she could placate her fears in Barbary far better than in her homeland. In a reversal of sites of trauma, Marsh writes:

I earnestly invoked heaven to put an end to my Days, which gave me a Dismal Prospect of nothing but Misery; and, tho’ I was preserved, yet it was for still greater sorrows, and in my own Country, than any I ever experienced, even in Barbary.²

By the same token, Ter Meetelen suffered more from countrymen than from Moorish culture. In response to her fellow captives who abhorred her as “the king’s whore”,³ she laments that

I complain not of having been so far away in the world, nor of my twelve years’ enslavement, nor of the pains the Turk inflicted on me, all this I can endure, but I cannot forget the insults and defamation to which me and my husband were subjected by our own brethrens.

Conclusion

Torn between self-fulfillment and community censure, the female captive’s text unsettles home culture’s jingoist, imperial and patriarchal discourses on female virtue and tales of Muslim violence and prurience. Certainly, the complex nature of Marsh’s intimate encounter makes any attempt to read her captivity prose within a clearly defined terrain misleading. Elizabeth Marsh’s prose oscillates between reserve and openness, agency and passivity, discretion and promiscuity, self-censorship and indulgence, titillation and frustration. Despite the plots to win Marsh over on the part of the acting monarch and the women renegades in his palace, Marsh is given the liberty to choose her lot.

¹Ibid., p. 41.
²Ibid., p. 66.
³Ter Meetelen, “Miraculous and Remarkable Events of Twelve Years Slavery”, p. 106.
Bibliography

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Deconstructing Religious Misinterpretations of the Feminine Body for Promoting Arabo-Moslem Women’s Rights¹
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Abstract:
The argument of this paper explores the role of deconstructing and reforming the religious misinterpretations of the female body in promoting women’s rights in the Arab-Muslim world. On the basis of the method of deconstruction, the paper is not only interested in conducting an anatomy of the dysfunctional structure of the Arab-Muslim gender representations, but it also engages in demonstrating how this male imaginary on the female body, based on misinterpreting Islam, oppresses Arab-Muslim women and restricts their potential in the long run. Unveiling the symbolic and concrete social practices intended to control women resulting from the misrepresentation of the female body, the paper’s ultimate aim is to demonstrate how academic research on this issue is likely to take part in promoting women’s rights through raising awareness about the connections between religious misinterpretations and women’s subordination.

Keywords: Deconstruction; Female body; Imaginary, Misinterpretation; Representation.

Introduction
The argument of this paper explores the role of deconstructing and reforming the religious misinterpretations of the female body in promoting women’s rights in the Arab world. On the basis of the method of deconstruction, the paper is not only interested in conducting an anatomy of the dysfunctional structure of the Arab-Muslim gender representations, but it also engages in demonstrating how this male imaginary on the female body, based on misinterpreting Islam, oppresses Arab women and restricts their potential in the long run. Unveiling the symbolic and concrete social practices intended to control women resulting from the misrepresentation of the feminine body, the paper aims to argue how academic research on this issue is likely to take part in promoting women’s rights through raising awareness about the connections between religious misinterpretations and women’s subordination. In relevance to this purpose, and relying on the method of deconstruction, the argument is developed through four steps:

1) Introducing how the body is deconstructively defined. 2) Exploring how the physical body is transformed into an imaginary body regulated with socio-

cultural values. 3) The representation of the female body during the initial phase of Islam. 4) The female body under religious misinterpretations. 5) The implications and recommendations of this study on promoting Arab-Muslim women’s rights.

**The body deconstructively defined**

Many disciplines, from biology to philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology and medicine, have attempted to systematically approach the body to turn it into a methodological field of study. However, due to its complexity, the body remains a difficult sphere to explore, in such a way that the multiplicity of disciplines tried on it only produce different discourses about it, which ironically leads to its fragmentation among a plurality of perspectives. This happens as the body’s coherence is dispersed, for nothing of it becomes accessible since we consciously or unconsciously approach it through the mediation of collective social discourses anchored in symbolic systems.

Realizing that the body is constantly out of reach, remaining elusive for intellectual grasp, the body always exceeds the concept that designates it, so that the investigator’s concepts end up silencing the real voice of the body pre-existing discourse. In this line of argument, against any pure and absolute static definition conferred on the female body on the basis of binary oppositions, the method of deconstruction in this paper’s context is handled to question the presence of truth claims of body representations and unveil the relativity of values underpinning the Arab-Muslim body imaginary. This is intended on the whole to explore the arbitrariness of these representations constructed for controlling women’s potential. So what is deconstruction first?

Developed by the Algerian-born French philosopher Jacque Derrida, Deconstruction was originally conceived in his works as a critical method used for analyzing different cultural aspects for the sake of unveiling inherent contradictions and lack of coherence, besides revealing subtle strategies of concealing the contradictions threatening a given discursive paradigm (Derrida, 1976). 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, cultural products and aspects of cultural representation. 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.

From the physical to the constructed Imaginary body

Through a deconstructionist prism, the body is handled in this paper to demystify how it functions to produce and circulate given cultural messages which ultimately gain ground in a given society and turn into incontrovertible naturalized norms. Behind the perceived materiality of the body, there is the body as a cultural sign created by verbal communication. Thanks to language, our physical body, being a seat of our perceptions and our sensations, is made to express itself. However, human language only expresses the culture manifested in rituals and myths - which are called by Gilbert Durand “Récits imaginaires”("imaginary" stories ") (Durand, 1994, p.57). These latter are the visible symbols of the
imaginary in which the body has been inserted. Thus, with the intervention of language and interpretation, the body becomes itself a symbol of representations and images conveyed by the imaginary. Here intervenes the language which tries to orient us towards a certain interpretation, to give us a unitary perception that we suppose to embody the whole body, and to offer an exhaustive meaning to the "material support" which is our body. But, after all, the words do not reveal the true nature of the body and we are immediately in the field of representation, which reassures us and gives us the impression to seize it.

With Gaston Bachelard, we know that the imaginary has a specific dynamic organizing our personal images and homogenizing collective representations, which means that devoid of the imaginary we cannot end up having a unitary vision of the society in which we live at a precisely determined moment. Through this representation, the body connects the personal or lived body experience with the world and language (Bourdieu, 1982, p.89-90). Similarly, through these concepts, we can advance the idea that, instead of attaining a totalizing truth, we can only have a relative image of our body which, thanks to the dynamism of the imaginary, encompasses a personal vision and collective representation. This imaginary, rooted in the body and personal experience, is shaped by "social connotations" and "cultural specificities" conveyed by the collective imagination, for as quoted by scholar Malek Chebel from Greimas and Courtès: "The body is the place of the inscription of the educational act, the word, the desire, the individual and collective history. It is the school of the group's memory[...]" (Chebel, 1984, p.196).

The effort to talk about and to define the body, be it ours or that of the others, is problematic, for it cannot be dissociated from the reflective faculties of thinking, analyzing, expressing self-expression, with which we go beyond the material reality of the body to reach its reflective capacity. Thus, we go beyond the concepts of the perceived body as being a recipient of actions to reach what J. Corraze calls the" known "body and the" Recognized body", that is the body as being coded by cultural values, representations and "frames" (Corraze, 1973, p. 185). However, how is it possible to explore and understand the female body of the Arab-Muslim society pregnant with specific cultural values and religious normativity, but also hybrid with colonial values? In view of this heterogeneity of contradictory components, it is fit to handle the Arab-Muslim representation through a deconstructionist perspective taking into account the evolutions having occurred in this body imaginary throughout fourteen centuries.

**The female body in the initial phase of Islam**

For many reasons, the body is endowed with an identity since it bears various marks of a plural reality combining physiological, sensible, intellectual and affective components, and constituting the personality of each individual, says Barthes (Barthes, 1995, p.63). Like this multiple body, identity is also multiple because of several dimensions: familial, tribal, social, political, historical and also religious. In a similar vein, the argument of this paper is motivated by an attempt of recovering the very origins of Islam to revive the female body as it was constructed and represented within a moment of monumental liberties granted to
women by the Coran, the chronicles and the Hadith of Prophet Mohamed. Likewise, this argument is anchored in creating a subsequent research for recovering the lost Arab-Muslim feminine identity of which her body is a crucial salient part.

Understanding the Arab-Muslim representation of the feminine body necessitates the joint consideration of both the religious dimension and the relation to man considered in a diachronic way. For to try to devise a definition for Muslim woman presupposes to define Muslim man first, but in a retrospective way, in going back in history to find out about the initial Islamic representation of women at the initial stages of Islam. Undoubtedly, the Coran is unequivocal about the equal status of women to men: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another and the wombs […]".¹ In this inaugural verse of Surat Al Nissa (women), the Coran makes it clear that (1) both men and women are made of one soul, that(2) both female and masculine bodies depend on each other for the continuity of the human race and (3) that respect for the womb is a metonymy for the inalienable respect of the female body. By inference, one is led to conclude that like men's bodies, the female body in the Coran is in no way considered in itself "a taboo" (Awra), as would be considered in later Arab-Muslim epochs.

Likewise, the implications of a retrospective account on the social status of women and the female body are also very important, since polygamy and women's repudiation at the beginning of Islam did not annihilate or exclude their bodies. On the contrary, this one kept its dynamic dimension which created a movement of religious emigration, becoming little by little, a "flight", an "Evasion" of women's bodies because of the evolution of the religious doctrine: in Islam, woman is a hostess, that is to say, transient, risking at any time unilateral repudiation, so that she cannot claim a place of permanence. Thus, in Islam as being a religion that begins with a sacred emigration of the prophet, woman becomes a constant migrant.

It is true that in Islam, being a religion recognizing the body and physical enjoyment, the human dimension of partners and the act of making love are important. This human pursuit, of bodily nature in the act of love, is embodied by the very example of the Prophet who used to honor his wives, demonstrating that the happiness of a couple, among other things, comes from this physical contact that precedes and doubles the spiritual dimension given by feelings. The body, as an individual dimension of the subject and a medium for expressing feelings, is part of the feminine identity. It is not backgrounded, but on the contrary it is put forward in the act of making love. However, the physical act of making love is also coupled with a mystical sense, associated with a purpose that loses sight of the corporeal in order to move towards embracing the religious through getting children who will “become later […] Fighter[s] for Islam! (Djebar, 1991, p. 167-168).

Before the advent of dark changes in the social rules as well as in the female body, women used to enjoy the time of freedom to choose the husband (and to have more of them was still the rule). Similarly, virginity was not an obligation for
marriage. Instead, the society allowed the spouses freedom to decide on their fate, and repudiation could be reciprocal. The only criterion for choosing a wife was her beauty and moral qualities, the example coming from the Prophet himself. The Arabs of the time happily married such a beautiful woman who had already had two or three husbands after widowhood or reciprocal repudiation. The Prophet, who, after his long monogamy of twenty years with Khadija, who herself had been previously twice widowed, only had Aisha as a virgin among the fourteen women he married (p.116).

Domestic migration between several spouses is, therefore, a constant practice of female life: there are few women who have known a single husband at that time. This freedom of feelings is guaranteed by the freedom of the body which can decide freely thanks to the freedom of expression. To illustrate, Oum Hakim, informs us Assia Djebbar, after the death of Ikrima, accepts to marry his cousin, Omar, the future caliph, but she will leave him later to return to Mecca, to become again what she had always been, a Meccaen (p.167). Similarly, this freedom to accept a husband is brought to light by the fifth wife of Prophet Mohammed, Oum Salama. Before giving her affirmative answer, she described her qualities and defects and, therefore, fully shows her personality. We are thus before a rich female portrait far from the purified image of the women that have been created by the following epochs.

Female-sought repudiation as practical domestic migration was at least motivated by two chief causes. First, the death of the warrior husband was a very common motive during the prophet-led wars for the Islamic call. After the legal period of mourning, a widow used to be proposed to marry, and freely exercise her freedom to accept or refuse. This natural cause was easily accepted by women, but the roughness of some husbands’ manners was less so, which was a second cause for marital migration.

The Female Body Under Religious Misinterpretations

We discussed above a body that had become aware of itself at the beginning of Islam, a body becoming a presence offering itself to the eyes of others. A female body in which identity began to take shape in the individual and collective imagination, a body transformed into a source of memory, a place in which the rituals have been inscribed to motivate life in society.

In later epochs of Islam, the shifts in interpretation of the hadith and the emergence of misunderstandings ended up having direct and visible consequences on the Arab-Muslim female body. In fact, the female world was considered by men, from the beginning, as the place of emotion, feeling, excess, the locus of passionate overflow and diabolical desire. Thus, as men thought, it was suitable to protect themselves by controlling women, by channeling them away and/or enclosing them in material or symbolic prisons. Thus, a woman’s body was perceived in Arab-Muslim imaginary as a site of “fitna” or disorder jeopardizing society, overflowing and eroticizing it. Woman was feared to appropriate the power for upsetting and subverting the order decreed by God in his creation. The identification of the triangle "desire-devil-woman", evoked by Fatna Ait Sabbah (Ait Sabbah, 1982, p.192), has always been very clear in the religious
literature that has emerged in the public and social sphere. Therefore, for strengthening masculinist power on women, religious misinterpretations were conducted to confine them, isolating them from the public sphere, banning them from participation in war and veiling them.

However, these interpretations have moved away from the true doctrine of Islam, a doctrine which has been "a faith that openly venerates carnal pleasures, a tradition which devotes a real cult to the body, to the care for the self, to the satisfaction of the senses and hedonism as a manifestation of divine grace" (Lamchichi, 2004, p. 22). All this art of loving has found its literary expression in classical Arabic poetry, and contemporary critics speak today of "poets of love," such as Jamil, Kuthayyir and Kais (presumed author of Layla's Fool), and Omar ibn Abi Rabia, among others (Khawan, 1995, p. 488).

Because of stereotyping assumptions stemming from religious misinterpretations, the female body was marked as a taboo necessitating invisibility and requiring disappearance from the public life. The original reason found its explanation in misinterpreting religious texts or rather in the interpretation made from power perspectives adopted by men and women. Most often, the female body has been associated with impurity, and filth banned by Islam; for as Malek Chebel notes in his Encyclopédie de l'Amour en Islam, “A woman having menses was considered a taboo by the fuqih who thought she makes everything she touches impure” (Chebel, 1995, p. 32). This obsession with an absolutely clean and pure body, from a physical and psychological point of view, is associated with men’s stereotyped fear of women, (Minces, 1996, p. 22), misrepresenting them as evil forces of destabilizing the rules that regulate their life. To abolish this power supposedly incarnated by women, religious interpretations have attacked the first term of the triangle represented by the desire lived as a symbol of femininity, and interpreters have engaged in the negation and condemnation of passion, to which bodily and sexual desire is often assimilated. This aspect has long gone beyond religious interpretations to distort the initial Islamic values, which results in the current stereotyped Muslim imagination about the female body. Even Khatibi, one of the Arab postmodernist thinkers, when commenting on the famous scene of Joseph's seduction in the Bible, taken up by the Coran, writes lines that condemn the female passion seeing it as a source of disorder violating moral, spiritual and religious rules: “Passion is a mistake, a diabolical whisper, satanic revolt and cunning of female seduction” (Khatibi, 1983, p. 167).

Implications And Recommendations On Promoting Women’s Rights

Having explored how the body is linguistically and culturally constructed, and how religious misinterpretations deviated from Islamic values to produce an antagonistic normativity towards the female body, it would be convenient to make some remarks on the implications and recommendations related to promoting Arab-Muslim women’s rights:

1. The Arab-Muslim representation of the female body has evolved, deviated and even regressed from the Initial Islamic teachings. 2. Religious misinterpretations led to a downgrading gender attitude in which the female body
is held inferior and negatively seen as inciting to social disorder. This necessitates drastic reforms in religious interpretation through reverting back to the initial phases of Islam which incorporated them in social life. 3-Islam recognizes women’s sexual desire and allowed them to express it, giving them the right to ask for their repudiation and remarriage. Like men women in Islam can change their marital destinations in case they feel unsatisfied by their spouse. 5-Virginity is not a requirement for marriage in Islam 6-Women are responsible and free owners of their bodies 7-Women’s bodies operate actively in the making of a free equal society, consolidating a society free from explicit or implicit slavery 8-Women in Islam can freely practice geographical movement to meet their needs and assume social roles 9-Women’s body does not hinder them from taking part in physically challenging tasks, such as fighting in war. Hence, women in Islam are not inferior to men in the public sphere. 10-The beginnings of Islam held an image of the female body based on respecting difference with the masculine body without turning this difference into opposition. 11-Last but not the least, women in Islam are conceived as an integral human entity, beyond any fragmentation of female identity. In fact, the female body in Islam is not restricted to the phenomenal physical body. Instead, it is conceived as a balanced combination of the physical, the reflective and the imaginary. In the first physical aspect, the female body is conceived to maintain social relationships with both men and women. In the second, the female body is not dissociated from women’s reflective faculties of thinking, analyzing, feeling, desire, expression and self-expression. In the third dimension, the female body is approached in Islam as a locus of negotiation with the other through bearing shared cultural values enabling social communication.

**Conclusion**

The Arab-Muslim identity has evolved throughout the centuries. Within different ethnicities predating Islam, the Arab-Muslim factor has been superimposed, which reflects the religious impact of Islam. This forms the second "vertical" force of the Arab-Muslim personality and connects the profane and the sacred because "it ordains the presence of man to his God. It is new (at least dated), demanding, transcendental "(Chebel, 1993, p. 377). As we have already stated, manifesting its symbolic construction, the Arab-Muslim identity is subject to several psychic and spatial-temporal vectors, since the body is crossed by the time, space and language of others as being an amalgamation of foreign cultures. The inscription of this one leads to an institutionalization by the creation of stereotypes. For all our social representations are stereotypes regulating society. According to this paper’s argument for reforming religious misinterpretations turned into stereotypes, women are worthy of enjoying different rights. Hence, striking simultaneously a concluding note and a strong legal recommendation, The laws regulating the relationships between men and women should stay free from stereotypes, should shift and change to counterbalance men’s with women’s rights and interests, for in the Coran the word “Insan” (human) is more inclusive than and superior to man and woman.

**References:**

Abstract:

Submission (2004) is a European documentary film made by Ayaan Hirsi Ali who escaped Somalia and sought asylum in the Netherlands. This short film depicts and narrates the experiences of Muslim women who live and have to endure patriarchy and violence. It was aired on the Dutch national television and became popular among people and intellectuals. This documentary caused controversy and debates on the issue of the veil, the place of Islam, and the situation of Muslim women in the Netherlands and Europe in general. This paper tries to shed light on the representation of Muslim women which intends to sexualize and eroticize their bodies. In this context, I argue that this film works within the framework of orientalism and employs orientalist mechanisms that aim at distorting the image of Islam as well as Muslim women. This paper also is interested in exposing the sexualization process which is dominant in the documentary. This process, I argue, is employed to serve the European male gaze and responds to his desires and lust. Accordingly, this paper attempts to discuss how the display of the naked body enforces the colonial discourse and at the same time objectifies Muslim women’s bodies.

Keywords: Muslim women, body, harem, gaze, orientalism

The condition of Muslim women is one of the most contentious issues in Europe especially when this subject is related to Islam. In dominant European representations, including media texts, the Islamic religion in general and Muslim women in particular are often denigrated and stereotyped. In addition, Muslim women are constructed as one of the most oppressed groups of women in the world. The idea here is that the European representation of Muslim women is not a recent fabrication but it has been systematic and deep-seated in the Western conceptualization. In such representations, Islam is introduced as a backward and aggressive religion, while Muslim women are represented as veiled and oppressed by male figures. These images can be noticed in advertisements, films, magazines, covers of books and more importantly in documentary films.

The documentary film Submission which is the focus of the paper examination can be investigated and approached within the parameter of Edward Said’s book, Orientalism (1979), in which he defines “Orientalism” as a mode of Western discourse or as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having

authority over the orient" (Said, 1979, p.20). Orientalism is an ethnocentric conceptual framework that produces knowledge about the East and inscribes power over others. This documentary film strongly appears as politically charged and is mainly produced to justify the European domination and to reflect some social and political modes of European imperialism. In accordance with this, the objective behind this film is to articulate and to represent the Orient, particularly Muslim women as culturally different and sexually oppressed by Muslim males. It is the oriental woman that has always been seen as “an occasion and an opportunity” (Said, 1979, p.187) for Western scholars and orientalists to practice their domination over the orient.

The documentary film Submission opens with a scene of a Muslim woman called Amina. She is young, alone, dressed in a black hijab and completely covered from head to toe in a big and dark room. European viewers could only see a small opening for her eyes. As the woman prepares herself to pray, she picks up the carpet from the floor, unrolls it and then stands in a room with a colorful backdrop and an Arabian looking rug on the floor constructing an Islamic setting. The rug is pointed in the direction of Mecca. Amina stands and faces Mecca as she raises her arms up into the air, with her palms exposed, ready to address Allah, and yells “Allahu Akbar.” See the following figure

![Figure 1.1: Muslim woman praying, Submission](image)

The space where she stands appears to be a place of prayer and with Arabic music in the background. Amina is getting ready to start her prayer. When the light is placed on her body, it becomes obvious that the woman is wearing a sort of naked veil that looks so visible and transparent. In the same context, we see a camera moves up and down her body and through its lens we see her nude flesh under her outfit, from her belly to her chest, along with Quranic verses written on her skin. She starts praying and reading Surat Al Fatiha but once she finishes, viewers are automatically exposed to hear sounds of whiplashes in the backdrop.

Amina delivers a speech in which she tells the destiny of a Muslim woman named Aisha. In the meantime, the camera slowly moves from Amina to focus on Aisha who is lying on the floor in a very weak position. What we see here are wounds and scars on her body, caused by the strokes of the cane. Written across
them is a text from the Quran, chapter 24, verse 2, Al-Nur, or The Light, (Ali, 2004, p.154). See figure 1.2 in the following page,

Figure 1.2: Muslim Woman Beaten, Submission

The woman says “O Allah, as I lie here wounded, my spirit broken I hear in my head the judge's voice as he pronounces me guilty. The sentence I've to serve is in your words.” (Ali, Submission). She then goes on explaining that two years ago she fell in love with a man called Rahman. She used to exchange admiring looks with him before she began to meet him at the Souq in secret. She says

As the months went by our relationship deepened. What is more, out of our love a new life started to grow. Our happiness did not go unnoticed and before long, envious eyes gave way to malicious tongues. (Ali, Submission)

The result was that her family found out about her relationship with Rahman and decided to punish her in compliance with the Islamic traditions. This punishment, as Hirsi Ali described in her script, is written across her back and thighs. Verses were taken from the Quran and were inscribed on her body as a justification of the use of violence and beatings. As the camera spans over her body, the narrator reads the verses from Surat Al Noor and says

The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication flog each of them with a hundred stripes; let no compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day; and let a party of the believers witness their punishment. (Ibid)

The woman is lamenting and addressing Allah for her suffering. Her body is injured as it is lashed many times by a cane as the picture above reveals. The message here is that Muslim women live in horrible conditions and are badly treated and beaten by men who everytime quote Allah for their bad actions and beatings. This woman wants to convey a message that if Muslim women protest
against the maltreatment and the violence inflicted on them, they, instead of men, are exposed to severe punishment and vengeance. Therefore, they need to obey and be subservient as this is done in the name of Allah.

The notion that is being promoted through her injured body is that Quran is the main source of violence. It is this holy book that incites men to beat and strike their wives whenever they try to refuse their orders or resist their control. The fact that a Quranic text is being inscribed on the body of the woman suggests that in the words of Allah women in Islam are being punished and that men are always innocent. Ayaan Hirsi Ali comments on the way these women are presented and says that

There is the woman who is flogged for committing adultery; another who is given in marriage to a man she loathes; another who is beaten by her husband on a regular basis; and another who is shunned by her father when he learns that his brother raped her. Each abuse is justified by the perpetrators in the name of God, citing the Quran verses now written on the bodies of the women. These women stand for hundreds of thousands of Muslim women around the world. (Ali, 2006, p. 03)

In the light of this previous passage, it could be said that it is difficult to avoid reading Submission as a documentary film whose major message is that Islam is bad for women. In other words, the documentary film has all the characteristics and the aspects of Orientalism. The spoken and the written texts in the documentary refer to a more academic form of orientalism that envisages the lives of people as framed, shaped and determined by Islam. This is conveyed through establishing a connection between specific verses from the Quran and the behavior of Muslim men who beat and maltreat women. See figure 1.3,

![Figure 1.3: Wounded Body, Submission](image-url)
The fact that the filmmaker wants to convey a message that there is a close relationship between violence against women and Quran suggests that Ayaan Ali gives one interpretation and one meaning to the Quran. This reduction of a world religion with various different local disparities and centuries of interpretation to these five verses renders the literal statement obsolete and meaningless. To put it differently, Hirsi Ali only opted for one dimensional and one interpretation of the Quran which is the most detrimental to the cause of women. She also suggests that men’s violence against women is manly motivated by Quran and that their violence find legitimate grounds in Islam.

The documentary film does taint and distort the picture of Islam and its teachings. This is due to her way of presenting violence against women, relating it exclusively to Islam, and her use of a language that homogenizes the experiences of women rendering them all first and foremost as victims and weak in their own religion.

As narrated and described by the actresses in the documentary, the Muslim women in the stories are represented as powerless young women who submit themselves to Allah. They are seen to lack agency in dealing with their problems. These narratives tend to classify women by their vulnerability where women are always subordinated.

The documentary Submission not only generates the European Oriental image of Muslims and Islam, but also structures and principally frames this depiction within “a Western misogynist image in which women’s bodies are depersonalized as objects of desire and lust.” (Leeuw., Wichelen, 2005, p.327) In the same context, Muslim women are not treated as independent individuals with agency and dignity; rather they are treated as objects, sexual and erotic creatures that are there to fulfill and satisfy European man’s desires. As Leeuw and Wichelen confirm, the sensual female voice, the explicit use of American English, and her nakedness under a transparent veil, evoke an association with quasi soft-porn images. (Ibid, 2005, p. 328)

Indeed, the practice of eroticization is dominant in the documentary and only serves the male European gaze. The fact of covering and revealing the female body suggests that the filmmaker is aware of the power of imagery and the power of the naked body. See figure 1.4 in the following page,
The use of nakedness is meant to attract Western European attention and bring to the fore the male gaze. As a matter of fact, the employment of translucent forms of outfit and veiling has not only been a trope of Orientalist painting but also of representations of the erotic and the exotic in popular visual imagery. This has enabled the European male gaze to pore over Muslim women’s bodies while concurrently covering their faces. It is this male gaze that serves patriarchy and enforces male domination and control over women. According to Moors,

In making Submission Hirsi Ali and Van Gogh were well-aware of the power of the visual. Although some have referred to the film as a work of art, it is first and foremost striking in its unimaginative resonance with the visual imagery of Orientalism. (Moors, 2005, p. 08)

The male gaze is intended to bring into play the sexual politics of the gaze and indicates a sexualized and erotized way of looking which gives power to men and objectify women. In Submission, Muslim women are positioned as objects of male lust and desire. Laura Mulvey in this respect argues that traditional Hollywood films were produced in order to serve and respond to an essential male need or drive known as “scopophilia”. In this context, Mulvey says that “the cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia.” (Mulvey, 2004, p. 02) It is the sexual enjoyment, an ecstatic feeling of pleasure that is involved in the act of gazing or looking at the body of women.

Mulvey states that most popular movies are filmed in ways that gratify and satiate masculine scopophilia. To clarify more, in traditional movies men are always presented as active agents, controlling subjects and women are treated as
passive objects of desire and lust. This is to be noticed in both the story and in the audience. Therefore, women are not allowed to be desiring sexual subjects in their own right. According to Mulvey,

In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Ibid, p. 4)

In the light of this statement, the documentary film Submission is essentially meant to respond to the masculine voyeurism which intends to sexualize and eroticize women for male viewers. More importantly, it also tends to objectify Muslim women in relation to the controlling and to the curious European male gaze, presenting woman as image or spectacle and man as the bearer of the look. (Ibid) In other words, European men do the looking; Muslim women are thereto be looked at as they are mainly characterized by their “to-be-looked-at-ness” as Mulvey suggests.

There are important inconsistencies between the original script of the documentary film and its broadcast version. Despite the fact that Ayaan Ali tells repressive stories of Muslim women, she reduces these four Muslim women into a single character, denies them a name and introduces the male gaze. In fact, these stories bear the distinguishing marks of the colonial discourse which is to orientalize the orient. Hirsi Ali in this respect adopts a homogenous oppressive Islamic culture while producing submission. She portrays a homogenous collective of Muslim women rendering them one and denying them agency and autonomy. In other words, Muslim women in the documentary film are represented as powerless, defenseless, oppressed by their religion, abused and sexually assaulted by men, and incarcerated in a harem.

The notion of harem is embodied in the way Muslim women are presented and filmed. The stories they narrate are supposed to be secretive, between them and Allah and no third party is involved. However, Hirsi Ali intervened and exposed their conversations to the European audience allowing them to listen and to take part in the dialogue these women have with Allah during their prayers. In doing so, Ali in fact hints to the European and Western audience in general that they are about to hear the most intimate secrets, unspoken truths, and untold stories of Muslim women, and they, the audience, are being given a glimpse of the forbidden world of the harem. (Morin, 2009, p. 390)

The perception of harem in Submission means that place or enclosed space which is replete with oriental slaves, erotic women, sexual concubines and where women are incarcerated in order to fulfill and gratify man’s sexual desires. Muslim women in Ali Hirsi’s harem are caught, as Marsha Hamilton says, in a “forbidden realm of women complete with tales of sexual orgies, lesbian affairs, violence, greed, lust, and unimaginable wealth.” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 176) In fact, Ali employs the mechanisms of orientalism through introducing the Europeans to the world of harem and at the same time inviting them to live the sensation of exoticism and eroticism that is usually linked with this world.

The concept of Harem as Marsha suggests, evokes fantasies such as a place of beautiful and charming women, sexuality and seduction. Also, Harem might
connote inaccessibility, concealment and mystery. Ali in this context does not only allow the European men to have access to harem which has long been hidden, but she also implies that European men could conquer the body of these Muslim women. This image works as a reminder of Edward Said’s portrayal of Flaubert’s Egyptian courtesan who produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman. In this respect, Said states that she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental."(Said, 1979, p. 06)

In the light of this passage, it could be assumed that like the Egyptian courtesan Muslim women in Submission do not speak for themselves and they do not represent their emotions, or prove their existence as independent subjects, rather they are represented not by a foreign male as Said suggests but by a woman. It is a woman who has enabled Westerners and in particular Europeans to penetrate the intimate space of Muslim women without any resistance or confrontation. This in fact suggests that the colonial discourse in this documentary puts the emphasis on sexuality and gives more importance to eroticism as symbols and traits that characterize the representation of Muslim women.

The objective of the documentary film is not to describe the realities of these women but more importantly to exoticize their presence and eroticize their bodies to a wide range of European male audience. See the following figure 1.5 in the following page, Hirsi Ali behind the scenes gives instructions to the Muslim women on how to pose, what to say, what to show and how to deal with the camera.

Figure 1.5: On the left Hirsi Ali and on the right Muslim woman, Submission

The female body in Submission is displayed through a voyeuristic perception. The European and Western audiences are offered an intimate erotic
image or “quasi-porn” image as Moors says, which, through the representation of Muslim women as victims, serves to uncover the brutality, inequality and unfairness of Islam. Accordingly, Hirsi Ali has allowed European men to enter the forbidden world of harem and have access to the hidden secrets that are exemplified in the suffering, violence, abuse, lust, incest, greed, and rape which are concealed in this exotic world. Hence, Submission implies to visually open up the private space of Muslim women and the world of harem by unraveling and bearing witness to the internal violence of Muslim societies. In this context, it is assumed that Hirsi Ali has made abundant use of the analytical techniques of European Orientalism turning into, what Edward Said has named, the figure of the native informant. Edward said argues that

Such a system of reproduction makes it inevitable that the Oriental scholar will use his American training to feel superior to his own people because he is able to "manage" the Orientalist system; in his relations with his superiors, the European or American Orientalists. (Ibid, p. 324)

On this basis, Hirsi Ali is in fact perceived as a scholar and researcher from the orient who comes and sits at the feet of European and American Orientalists, and who employs her European education and training to obtain and feel superior in comparison to her own people. This is of course due to her potential and her ability to manage the orientalist system as Edward Said says. As a result, Hirsi Ali seems to manage well the orientalist discourse and embodies the role of the rescuer who embarks on the chore of saving mission which reminds us of the famous statement made by Gyatri Spivack “white men are saving brown women from brown men.”(Spivak, 1994, p. 92)

By deploying the rhetoric of orientalism, a connection can be made to her mission with the civilizing discourse that Western and European feminists use. Moreover, her saving task creates a linkage with a more modern version of that civilizing discourse. A similar example of this would be of Laura Bush’s position on Muslim women in Afghanistan. Laura Bush declared that her country will definitely help women of Afghanistan and rescue them from the tyranny, the oppression and the despotism of Taliban. Lila Abu Lughod reacted to this and says in clear terms that her speech reinforced chasms divides, primarily between the "civilized people throughout the world" whose hearts break for the women and children of Afghanistan and the Taliban-and-the-terrorists, the cultural monsters who want to, as she put it, “impose their world on the rest of us. (Abu Lughod, 2002, p. 784)

However, what makes the Dutch quandary even more complicated is that Hirsi Ali is neither a white man nor a white woman but a brown woman from the orient who adopts a superior position vis-à-vis her people in order to present herself as the heroin who is going to rescue Muslim women. Leeuw and Wichelen argue that rather than “white men saving brown women from brown men” (colonialism), or “white women saving brown women from brown men” (Barbara Bush), a “brown” woman (Hirsi Ali) wants to save other “brown women” from “brown” men. (Leeuw., & Wichelen, 2005, p. 333)
The embodiment of Hirsi Ali as the cultural and the Muslim female “other,” and not the masculinist white European man, makes the politics of saving even more effective by dismissing denunciations of speaking from a white masculinist position. (Ibid)

Hirsi Ali is doing exactly the opposite of what Gyatri Spivack believes. According to Spivack, the subaltern women cannot speak within hegemonic Western or European discourses. Hirsi Ali in this context adopts an orientalist and superior position, at the same time, presents herself as the legitimate representative of all Muslim women. Ali says in her book *The Caged Virgin* that

The third reason I am determined to make my voice heard is that Muslim women are scarcely listened to, and they need a woman to speak out on their behalf. (Ali, 2004, p. 23)

In the light of her statement, it can be assumed that Hirsi Ali is determined to present herself as a rebel, or as she calls herself as an infidel who embodies the Western European discourse and claims a voice from within. This voice is not intended to confront, challenge and contest the Western orientalist discourse but to confirm, reaffirm and reinforce the stereotypical views on Muslim women.

To sum up, the documentary film *Submission* (2004) remains an orientalist film that does not question the colonial and European discourse which tends to homogenize Muslims. The representation in this film reinforces and emboldens stereotypical images of Muslim women. Displaying erotic and sexualized images of Muslim women suggest that there is a need of a European intervention to save these women. Sexuality serves to justify the European domination and more importantly reinforces patriarchal control over the body of Muslim women. In this context, Hirsi Ali has not only been able to invite European men to penetrate this charming and erotic body of Muslim women but also to call upon them to intervene in order to save this beautiful body from the oppressive veil that paralyzes and deforms their bodies.

**References:**

Kebir Sandy

Women in the Moroccan Political Arena: A Struggle for Identity Confirmation
(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco)

Introduction:
The notion of identity is the central point of any subject throughout the world. The melting of the self into air leads to disempowerment and psychological emaciation. Thus, a lost self is always threatened by instability, insecurity, turmoil, nothingness and scattering. This is the situation of the Moroccan woman after the end of colonialism. The Moroccan woman has always been walking in shadows, and her great role in many fields of life has always been undermined to keep her in margins. Indeed, women in Morocco have never been weak or passive rather they had great contributions in freeing Morocco from colonialism, hiding guns and challenging the colonial powers. Yet, as we will see in this article, women are still fighting another form of colonialism called patriarchy. Here, religion and politics collaborated to sustain the patriarch’s power and execute normative strategies to keep patriarchy at work and leave ‘the other’ (the woman) in the shadows. In this context, many questions need an answer: what are the different strategies of silencing? How could politics serve the patriarchal agenda? Did women succeed in their struggle for power and equal rights? What is the future of women’s revolution against the hegemonic policies?

1. The Post-Colonial Family Code As A New Political Form of Colonialism:

After colonialism, the monarchy focused on three main points, which are kinship, citizenship, and the Islamic Shariaa as a symbol of identity and the notion of ‘Umma’. In this context, women were seen only as one of the mechanisms to empower the ‘Umma’ or the nation. Women were shrunk into the notion of family that collaborates in sustaining kinship, culture, and traditions instead of free citizens with a heard voice and power. Thus, to legalize women’s confinement, the king and a commission of ‘Ulama’ created the 1958 Mudawana (family code law). In this vein, a journal of Islamic and Eastern studies stated that:

Like other countries with a colonial past, Morocco’s history and culture is highly politicized: the struggle against the perceived threat of Western hegemony includes an effort to shape the historical narrative to include or exclude certain actors, suggest a fixed construction of gender and family, glorify certain groups, and minimize various ruptures in pursuit of a unified national identity. (1)¹

Hence, politics comes to serve the state against Western hegemony by planning and formulating biased and patriarchal laws. The process of subversion and exclusion was under the name of Shariaa Law to be given more sanctity. This strategy of relegation and oppression excluded the woman from all decisive positions and empowered the Moroccan man in and out of the private space.

Consequently, at the time when the man was politically present and heard, the woman was ‘the angel of the house’ with less visibility, abiding by the family law. This law was the epitome of patriarchal mindset in Morocco that transformed Shar‘ia Law into a symbol of identity and union opposing the tribal and traditional rules that were ruling Morocco. The 1958 Mudawana was one of the stringent rules in Morocco that claims absence of women’s independence and freedom; the woman should ask for permission to even pay a visit to the family, polygamy was legal without the first wife’s consent, divorce is man’s decision, and women are never legal guardians.1

Thus, we can notice a lack of trust and various forms of weakening that cannot be negotiated because of its ‘claimed’ religious credibility. As a result, any attempt to challenge this ‘sanctified’ plan would be an act of disruption of the ‘ummegna’ community. This is what the same journal highlighted when it stated that: “Women asking for equality are therefore challenging not only “Islam,” as it is locally understood; they are also challenging Moroccan nationalist conceptions of self, prevailing notions about Moroccan and North African tradition, and the impetus to resist Western cultural hegemony.” As a matter of fact, women would be challenging not only patriarchy but also the traditions and culture ordering of the state.

Nevertheless, the modernization process of the country and the growing rate of literacy among women had brought to stage many contradictions, and the bells started ringing for change. So, what is the status of the modern Moroccan woman in the new century? Can we talk about a radical change? And is it possible to separate between women’s identity, politics, and religion?

2- The 21st century Moroccan woman and the rage for order:

The new king has unfastened the strongholds of patriarchy thanks to his liberating perspective as the supreme power of the ‘umma’. He wondered: “How can society achieve progress, while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence, and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted them by our glorious religion?” (5)1. The new monarch insisted on relating human rights to Islam, and women were urged to voice out their rights and call for change freely. As a consequence, two historical rallies were organized in Rabat and Casablanca in 2000. Then it took the Moroccan women more than 40 years to witness the change and ratification of the family code by the two houses of parliament in 2004. Women become free to choose and decide on their own, and they start to feel their sense of being.

However, an ethnographic research project done by the scholar Katja Elliott shows many shortcomings and stumbling blocks that urge women to continue their struggle. Elliott argued that the new family code is only a process of patriarchy modernization or rather a ‘normative modernizing agenda’ that still relegates the
full agency of the Moroccan woman. Elliott sees that the new Mudawana targets only ‘married women with children’ at the time when unmarried, divorced, and widowed women are really unprivileged. Another serious limitation of the new reforms is the lack of consideration of the specific status of the rural woman who is still under the traditional patriarchal rules due to her illiteracy and double exclusion (as a victim of traditional rules and as a rural excluded woman). Indeed, the rural woman still falls at the margins of the legal system the fact that highlights the reform’s focus on the urban woman as a decorative element for national and international media.

As a matter of fact, these shortcomings and contradictions between the legal and the actual status of women stress out some misunderstandings and miscommunication that are still in play in the Moroccan political, social as well as psychological arena. Hence, why are women still in a quest for the self? And how can the rural woman’s voice be heard?

3. The Arab Spring As A Platform For Identity Negotiation:

Women’s struggle and journey towards equality and emancipation has witnessed an exceptional turn when the 2007 Democratic Society Party was at the hand of a woman, ZohourChekkafi, and many female ministers, advisors, and ambassadors ruled the government. This surprising shift did not really alter the patriarchal political agenda because it did not last for long, particularly after the Moroccan uprisings.

During the Arab revolution, women became one, and they showed to the world how important and powerful they are. Indeed, women consisted the majority of protesters, bearing in mind that they represent half of the nation. After ages of resistance, struggling, and fighting for an independent identity and a political empowerment, here comes the chance to echo their rights and voice them out to the world. As a matter of fact, the Moroccan woman’s issues become widespread nationally and internationally thanks to the media and the civil society during the upheaval.

Yet, the Arab ‘spring’ was nothing more than ‘an autumn’ for women in Morocco. A new government came and collapsed all the constitutional reforms and constructed steps towards democracy and woman’s human rights. After all the years of protest and all the different campaigns, there comes the new Islamic ministry (PJD) to select one veiled female minister and to prove to the world that women can’t exist out of the private space. In other words, the new government reveals that the patriarchal and political systems are interrelated whatever the reforms are. It is worth mentioning MohaEnnaji’s statement when he insisted that:

There are hurdles blocking women’s emancipation and legal rights in the region. For instance, most countries have not agreed to all the articles of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), and the quota system is not officially recognized in most constitutions, which implies that the representation of women depends on the political will and decision of political leaders. (98)

These stumbling blocks, for instance, are deeply rooted in the system because of the androcentric hegemony in the region the fact that keeps the
community less-developed in all areas and domains. More importantly, the Moroccan woman is still not well secured and protected as a free citizen, and she is also still seen as a sexual object instead of a strong and powerful agent. The proof is the continuous harassment and sexual assault of women such as the overwhelming case of the young girl ‘Khadija’ who was raped, burned, and tattooed by a gang, urging social media and civil society to call for a ban against violence and unequal rights in the region. According to ‘Washington Post’, the family of Khadija was reluctant at the beginning to report the assault to the police because of the issue of reputation and the strategy of silencing that is internalized in the family’s psyche. Nonetheless, 75,000 citizens signed a petition under one slogan “we are all Khadija”.

All in all, no one can deny that women succeeded to make their voice heard and to be considered in each reform. In fact, the ‘women-friendly’ constitution has recognized the equal rights in all domains in article 19, and it also provided more seats in the governmental body for women not to forget to mention the current immediate response to any act of violence or humiliation. Yet, there are still women who are behind the shadow and invisible in remote areas under traditional and tribal laws and still unaware of their rights. There are also strong political hurdles that stand against women’s emancipation and empowerment in male-dominated areas, insisting that women are non-existent out of the house walls.

Conclusion:
Undoubtedly, a society cannot move forward without the proliferation of equal rights, emancipation, freedom and empowerment of both genders. Women are the second half of society that should be fully recognized and manifested politically, socially and economically for a nation to move forward. Thanks to feminists and social activists, women start gradually to be aware of their constitutional rights that empower them in all sides of life, and they are urged to continue in their struggle and journey towards inclusion, power, and equality away from the patriarchal exclusion and silencing. Again, “the future of North Africa is significantly linked to the fate of women’s emancipation”.

References:
Farida Mokhtari

The Status of Moroccan Women in the new Socio-political Society

(University Sultane Moulay Slimane, Beni Mellal, Morocco)

Abstract:

Evident changes have occurred in the situation of women in Morocco since the early 1990s. Gradually, women have gained a greater presence in civil society and in the formal political system. They are actively engaged in politics, which allowed them to gain autonomy and express themselves freely and defend their rights more effectively. This obviously led to a series of institutional, legal and political reforms; as the reform of family law, in particular, which has been presented as a model for women's movements in the region.

The purpose of this article is to shed light on some of the opportunities and political changes that women have achieved by challenging the power relations in favor of their male partners and the nature of the underlying political settlement in Morocco.

Keywords: Moroccan women, reforms, political empowerment, new social status.

Introduction

The last five decades witnessed a slow but evident change in the status of women in Morocco in different domains. At the socio-economic scale, changes demonstrate a number of improvements that have empowered women’s situation, enabling them to engage and compete with men in the outside world, with self-autonomy and freedom to express their voices socially and politically. These changes include the socio-cultural life too that helped to reorganize the whole family structure and improve women’s education and better their opportunities for paid employment in society.

Actually, from the 80s and under the influence of different women’s organizations, the position of women in social and political life is marked with more force and vivacity. In this sense, the debate is crystalized vigorously around the project of the reform of the family code that began in the 2000s.

It is indeed a hard task to question the changes that have occurred in women’s life in Morocco, since these changes are multiple, complex and significant. To put on the fort some of these changes that have shaken the living conditions of Moroccan women, it is a priority to approach some major areas where women excelled the best. First and for most, the sector of women’s access to

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education, which is a guaranteed key to employment, the other major achievement for their comfort and health betterment, is the control of fertility, and finally the political and decision making sphere that has undeniably empowered them with a decisive framework to make further claims.

The main objective is, of course, to situate qualitatively the changes that have occurred in relation to gender equality/equity; considering that the roles invested socially by men and women are determined by different historical, socio-cultural and political factors.

**The Royal Impulse**

First and for most, the royal will and the king’s personal interest in promoting gender equality are, in fact, a key factor in achieving progress and building a modern and democratic society. These initiatives have, indeed, enabled the Moroccan woman to fully exercise her rights in all areas of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life. In the same way, women have taken important political and social steps, as they have emerged as a huge civic force pushing forward for democracy and fighting against injustice and various forms of discrimination. Moreover, the entry into force of the Family Code, adopted in 2004 and considered one of the most progressive in the Arab world, is another essential element that gave the Moroccan woman a better social status, and gave a strong impetus to the process initiated by Morocco to promote and consolidate the concept of the "family" and the protection of minors. It is truly a great step forward for women’s rights domestically and as a model for the broader MENA region.

The family code brought about significant progress and introduced a series of measures that strengthen women’s rights. It enshrines the principle of equality between women and men at the level of family responsibility, the rights and duties of both spouses and preserves the rights of the child by including in the Code provisions in conformity with ratified international conventions by Morocco. With the new family code, women are treated as equal to men before the law; divorce is no longer in the hands of the husband; polygamy is drastically restricted and the woman is free to marry a man of her choice. Not only that, but it promoted equality in marriage, accessibility to divorce, and other aspects of family life. This is a fundamental reform that has transformed the Moroccan society into a public dialogue on gender equality in the family.

The current socio-demographic data is there to testify to the profound transformations that have significantly changed the economic, social, and political profile of Morocco. These changes confirm the need to ensure an equal place for men and women in the human and social development of the country. First, we have to consider the urbanization of Morocco since the independence which is highly consolidating; hence, a strong migration to urban areas marks the mobility of the population. Additionally, the decline in the average age of little girls at marriage and the decline in the fertility rate are there to attest some considerable and significant social and cultural transformations in women’s lives. The best presentation of the evolution of women is observed in the areas of education, reproductive health, employment, and politics. This representation does not only reflect the progress made in terms of changing perceptions of the role and status of
women but also allows us to see the persistent gaps to overcome in terms of gender inequality.

**Education a Key to Women’s Emancipation**

Schooling has always been perceived as a force for the development of any country; and access to women’s education is basically recommended on the grounds that women are the educators of future generations. There is no doubt that women’s education plays a vital role in promoting their role in society; it is also a key to gender equality and a safe way for their participation in decision-making: educated women are more politically active and knowledgeable about their legal rights and how to exercise them. Hence, improved literacy amongst women and girls is likely to contribute to higher levels of agency. Furthermore, education gives them greater access to paid employment outside the home. Simply going to school exposes girls to new ideas, in addition, schools are places for increased awareness and broader influences, which can also lead to girls being more confident and empowered; ultimately giving them greater political voice.

On the whole, education is an important springboard for not only the categorization of the public space and its diversity but also the personal investment and the possibility of building a future outside the socially attributed roles. Indeed, women’s education is of paramount importance, for it enables them to meet the new challenges, and help them safeguard their rights and interests. In the same context, feminists and women’s organizations in Morocco, as in the rest of the world as a matter of fact, have early understood that their way out—for autonomy, economic independence and self-realization—was education. As a case in point, schools in Morocco trained the first generations of girls, who had subsequently gained access to paid work, as well as public and political responsibilities. Now we have educated elite engaged and aware of the social and political role to play in society.

Admittedly, considerable progress has been recorded from the part of women since the last five decades; nonetheless, the majority of the ten million illiterate people in our country are women, about(62%). The gap is not only about gender inequalities but also spatial, since rural women suffer more from illiteracy than urban women. Among illiterate children aged 7 to 15, (27.4%) are boys and (40.6%) are girls. But since 2003, an action plan to combat illiteracy for global development was introduced, and women are a priority target. Thus, several women’s associations for development have prioritized the fight for equal opportunities in access to education for women and children in their programs and action plans. These efforts attempt to reduce social and spatial gaps as well as gender disparities.

The difference between girls and boys in terms of urban-rural dichotomy reflects a long history of discrimination against rural children in general, and girls in particular. This penalization of rural girls is accentuated as soon as one moves towards the higher levels of education, posing in an urgent and crucial way the question of the persistence of the retention of rural girls at the end of the fundamental cycle. At the same time, barriers to girls’ education are not only found in school administrations but also in the home, in the marketplace, and in society at
large. Sad to say that in the 21st century many major constraints still persist and prevent girls from accessing school such as poverty, sexual harassment, geographical distance and accessibility of schools, adding to that the illiteracy of mothers, and early marriage of girls in these areas where approximately 80% of women are illiterate to some degree.

To this end, huge efforts must be done to improve women's education in Morocco and the involvement of policies and programs must prove measurable results. In the same vein, education needs to be more accessible to low-income families and rural population. Particular attention should be given to the quality of education provided and the need for girls to complete their studies. Definitely, with increased female education, fertility, population growth, and infant and child mortality decline and the health of the family improves.

Access to Employment, a Rightful Space

The growth of female employment is undeniable. The number of working women increased in Morocco from less than 1 million in 1960 to 2.4 million in 2000; at the same time, the employment rate of women has risen faster than that of men, some even believe that the question of female employment would be "settled" in a near future. Paradoxically and despite this development, female unemployment rates are in all occupational categories, among both young and long-term unemployed, higher than men's. Let's not forget that the female employment rate remains lower than that of men. Thus, women in Morocco represent 25.5% of the active population, but more than half of the unemployed. This paradox growth in women's employment and, at the same time, the increase in women's unemployment can be explained either by the very large number of women entering the labor market or the previous low rate of women's participation. Another probability may be attributed to the fact that women are often denied full access to information or resources with which to empower their civic or political agendas. To sum it up, we have to admit that the socio-political context – in particular women’s access to employment and social services – has both encouraged and constrained reform.

On the other hand, the paid work of women has almost become commonplace and is actually part of the feminine identity (girls, at school, prepare themselves for a job like boys). These trends give women greater confidence and agency, and ultimately higher levels of political voice; even though women's work is not yet considered equal to that of men, because it is actually perceived as different: men and women do not occupy the same jobs, and they do not perform the same tasks in certain sectors, due to many constructed considerations notably negative attitudes and lots of taboos against women. To better illustrate this, let’s take the case of the working class women who continue to face discrimination, poor working conditions, unequal access to training, lower pay and longer hours, which indicates limited negotiating power. Besides, they are particularly vulnerable to job loss and heavily concentrated in the textile sector, informal sector and agriculture. It is highly disappointing to notice that, even though women play a growing role in development, they still suffer from many social injustices, such as wage inequality and poverty.
In a nutshell, due to the nature of the jobs they perform and the fragility of the place they occupy, women are more affected by unemployment. It is equally because their place is still fragile in the opinion and the mentality that the mobilization is not stronger to tackle female unemployment. The female unemployment rate is both the consequence and the illustration of the places of men and women in employment, the different assessment of the work done by men and by women, as well as the unequal division of family responsibilities between spouses. In general, women's unemployment continues to affect young people between the ages of 25 and 34 particularly. Hence, it is in this age group that unemployment is the most worrying, where the occupancy rate is traditionally high. Moreover, regardless of gender, unemployment rates grow with education levels. Nevertheless, the situation of women is much more problematic especially for higher education graduates who find it more difficult to enter the labor market.

**Fertility Control, the Released Body**

Women’s agency increased both at the level of the family (including the choice of the husband) and in the public sphere. The shift has occurred alongside the long-run improvements in female literacy as well as towards a nuclear rather than an extended family. Obviously, these changes have helped to empower women with greater freedom of political expression. Thus, since the 1990s, the birth rate went down considerably from 7.7 in 1962 to 2.6 children per woman in urban areas, and from 6.9 to 4.3 in rural areas. This important change could be related to the sociological and demographic factors which mainly decrease the average age of marriage and the use of contraception.

Like their male counterparts, Moroccan women nowadays marry more and more lately compared to some decades ago. This fact attests to a qualitative evolution of the social status of women in terms of improving their health and strengthening their human capital towards a greater liberation for economic and political engagement. The latter are therefore less subject to the constraints of procreation (multiple pregnancies, education of children…). In fact, women’s health and social outcomes have improved dramatically: the fertility rate is now one of the lowest in the region; the maternal mortality rate decreased by two-thirds in just two decades; definitely, the use of contraception can be considered as the most important moment that has led to material psychological liberation that promotes women’s empowerment and capacity development.

In brief, it is necessary to emphasize that the symbolic value of fertility has changed. The social investment of the woman’s body is no longer so oriented towards procreation and safeguarding the male honour. This control of fertility had led women in a process of liberation and empowerment and influenced their access to outdoors responsibilities by making the most of the opportunities offered to them in the public sphere. This ultimately gave them legitimate access to the outside world and gave them money that can increase their negotiating power and autonomy in the home. Moreover, a greater social interaction can expose women to new ideas and offer them more opportunities for self-expression.
Access to Decision-making Positions, Towards a Sharing of Power

The status of women has always been a “political” issue in the sense that it has been the subject of discussion and debate - of contestation - among different groups or “publics” (in Fraser’s terminology). Actually, women already have a high degree of decision-making power in their families, communities, businesses and societies. Every day they show their determination to work, ameliorate and reduce political and social tensions. Presumably, women’s political participation is a question of central concern to democracy. Certainly, a sustainable society, and a thriving democracy depends on all of its citizens being included and involved in public debate and decision-making at every level. It is also a question that is of central concern to gender equality, justice and human rights.

In recent years, a number of measures have been taken to improve the status of women in Morocco and to ensure their political participation. Currently, we can testify that the Moroccan woman has already taken important political and social steps, and the realization of these precious assets in her favor is the result of the enlightened policy of the king Mohamed VI who has never ceased to work for the promotion of the role and place of the Moroccan woman in all the various fields of public life. This can be substantiated especially through the support and the encouragement of her effective participation in the decision-making process and her involvement in the management of public affairs. Certainly, the principle of equality is enshrined in the 2011 Constitution that asserts women’s equal rights and prohibits all forms of discrimination, notably gender discrimination. It also guaranteed the political rights and the exercise of public freedoms.

Yet, despite all these achievements, the reality is deceptively not always compatible with the declarations of principle; for the representation of women at the level of public authorities and decision-making at the national, local and regional levels remains so far very low. For the feminization of the civil service and the increase in the number of female officials do not mean the existence of equity and equal opportunities in access to big responsibilities and important functions, and as a matter of fact, a majority of women officials find themselves in average status. However, the public administration is opening up since a few years now to a minority group of women who are starting to occupy some high ministerial responsibilities. Indeed, a visible advent for women in parliament is worth to be noted, from 1% in 2003 to 17% today. Progression is slow but important in the face of long years of the exclusion of women in the field of responsibility and decision making; although their presence is insufficient in number only (five in the government).

As for the political field, it has remained particularly closed to women for decades, and women wielding political power are still a rarity in Morocco. For this reason and to enhance women’s political participation, the government implements Article 19 of the new constitution, as it is fervently demanded by the feminist movement in Morocco to ultimately foster women’s political participation and further promote her access to power. Likewise, a note from the European Parliament to the members of the Commission on Women's Rights and Gender Equality highlights the low representation of Moroccan women in political,
economic and social life. The document explains that despite the adoption of several laws and a substantial increase in the number of women in politics in recent years, their participation remains timid due to various structural, cultural, economic and institutional factors. In order to consolidate the democratization path of the country, women must be more socially, politically and economically integrated.

Apparently, despite Morocco's political commitment to women's rights, "awareness and prevention measures are insufficient", while "the Moroccan Penal Code does not guarantee effective legal protection for women against violence and discrimination". It is frustrating to note that women in Morocco have not yet been able to fully take their place in economic, social and political life, despite the legislative reforms that Morocco has experienced since 1998, thanks to engaged civil society and human rights movements, including the women's movement.

Given the above statements, and despite the important role played by women at different levels of public life and their active participation in political affairs; their official presence in legislative and executive institutions is slowly developing. At the local level, this representativeness is strongly linked to the adequacy of women's representation and political participation at the national level on the one hand, and the presence in political decision-making positions and public responsibilities on the other hand. As for municipal councils, representativeness of women in prefectures, provinces and regions remains derisory. Regardless of the advanced constitutional provisions, this clear discrimination is probably due to the Moroccan political parties that display a certain laxity and reservations with regard to women's political participation, since, despite the slogans they carry in their speeches, they give women neither the opportunity nor the necessary conditions to access to Parliament; many women did not have the privilege of being at the head of the lists of electors and in the assemblies elected, whether at the local, provincial or regional level.

Because of some persisting gender stereotypes, women are frequently perceived as lacking the 'natural' competence needed to succeed in politics. To implement the cliché, men's discursive strategies is to uphold the attitude that "politics" is exclusively limited to the formal political sphere (political institutions and parties) largely dominated by men. Indeed, men are reluctant to be led by a woman; even women are reluctant to vote for female candidates. To change this archaic mentality, or rather to destabilize the old patriarchal structures, and thanks to the introduction of legal reforms on women’s political participation, their presence as MPs is mostly requested/needed to help change the perception that women are not suited to politics, in the same way, to foster their acceptance in decision-making positions and redefine the whole social and political gender identities.

The advocacy of women's associations is focused on the meaning of women's empowerment with a view to the representativeness at the political level and a better redistribution of responsibilities in decision-making centres, the aim is to establish measures of "positive discrimination" or voluntarist with a view to reducing the differences between men and women to optimize the conditions for equal opportunities. Thus, following the advocacy and mobilizations of women's movement that played a major role in the advancement of women's political
participation and gender equality in Morocco, the political parties decided to reserve the national list for women’s candidacy, allowing, thus, the access of 35 women to the Parliament (30 elected on the basis of the national list and 5 based on regional lists). In this way, Morocco is today among the Arab countries that have the highest representation of women in Parliament (10%). All of these reforms in favour of Moroccan women could not have been possible without the long-run struggle and activism of the feminist movement and women’s organizations and their strong advocacy based on real expertise and linked to the reality and experiences of women.

**Conclusion**

Over the past decades, Morocco has made the integration of women, especially the improvement of their social conditions and their participation in the economic, and the socio-political circuits a strategic priority. Positively, women have gained an improved education, smaller families, better health and greater access to paid employment outside the home. Many factors have empowered women, making it more possible for them to claim their rights by engaging in political processes and social movements. Leading to further enhancement, the government has initiated significant changes and established the rule of law through various projects (development of civil society, ratification of international conventions by the Government, promulgation of the new Family Code, etc.). In collaboration with the Mohammed VI Foundation for Solidarity and the National Initiative for Human Development, the projects launched testify to the government's constant desire to equip women with tools and a high degree of social stability and successful economic integration to participate actively in the development of their country.

As mentioned above, one of the most noteworthy reforms to the Moroccan constitution in 2011 was its reinforcement of gender equality, including multiple measures that supported women’s political participation. These changes could not have been achieved without significantly affecting justice and gender relations. It is no coincidence that the struggle of women for equality and equity naturally took place in the movements and took the advantage of the context to affirm the necessity of the issue and place it at the center of the construction of democracy and a modern state.

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Laila Lalami is the only Moroccan American female novelist. She obtained a degree in Anglo-Saxon literature from Mohammed V University in Rabat. And after obtaining a Master's degree in Linguistics from University College in London, she returned to Morocco and worked as a journalist for the left-wing French-language newspaper Al Bayane, covering political and cultural events. She then moved to Los Angeles, and later, obtained a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Southern California. Lalami lives in Los Angeles and currently teaches creative writing at the University of California at Riverside.

In 1996, Lalami started writing in English and published literary reviews and political essays in various American newspapers. In 2005, she became the first Moroccan woman writer in the United States with the publication of her debut novel, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. The novel received immediate widespread acclaim and was translated into many languages. Her second novel, *The Secret Son*, appeared in 2009, followed by an historical novel: *The Moor’s Account* in 2014. Her most recent novel is *The Other Americans*, 2019, a novel on the suspicious death of Driss Guerraoui, a Moroccan immigrant in California.

Though a well established novelist, Lalami continues to entertain a deep passion for journalism and politics. She regularly contributes articles to the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation* magazine, and many other newspapers. Her journalistic writings focus mostly on issues of immigration, politics in the MENA region, Islam and Muslims, women, and Arab revolutions. She also discusses American matters such as race, politics, and Donald Trump. While her fictional writing has triggered considerable critical interest, her journalistic writing remains fairly unknown.

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2 The novel was published in America by Algonquin Books. Laila Lalami was keen to have her novel published in Morocco. It was eventually published by the Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, Fez, in 2008. The novel was translated into ten languages.

3 *The Secret Son* was translated in many languages, including Chinese in 2011.

MOROCCAN POLITICS

In several of her journalistic articles on Morocco, Lalami deals with human rights, Moroccan political system, State persecution of journalists, music festivals and their enormous budgets, rape and the culture of silence in Morocco, and Moroccan Spring, a topic Lalami accords special focus.

In 2008, two years before the Arab Spring, Lalami wrote about the case of Fouad Mourtada, a young Moroccan engineer who was jailed and tortured for creating a fake profile of a royal prince. His arrest, torture and trial, reveal in Lalami’s view, the state of human rights in Morocco. She writes:

In January 2007, the magazine Nichane was seized and its editor given a suspended sentence because he published jokes deemed offensive to Islam. In February, the editor of Le Journal, Aboubakr Jamai, was forced to resign from his magazine in order to protect it from an outrageously large fine …. In a May Day protest, a group of people who were calling for constitutional reforms were arrested, charged with the extremely serious offense of “undermining the sacred values of the state” and given two- to four-year prison sentences…. In June, protesters who were demanding the release of the May Day prisoners were also arrested and imprisoned.¹

The reign of Mohammed VI, is hailed as the beginning of a new era of democracy and human rights. Lalami argues that the case of Mourtada is an indication that “nearly ten years after his accession to the throne, the country is sliding back down a familiar road of abuse.”² Commenting on the situation of human rights in Morocco in an article published in New York Times, Lalami

A democracy cannot be established unless independent journalists, whatever their political beliefs, are allowed to work and publish freely. Without freedom of expression, Morocco’s reforms are merely a varnish. Underneath it lies the same old country.³

Lalami states that like in many countries in the Arab World, popular protests erupted in Morocco, calling for rights, freedom, dignity, and justice. In her article “Arab Uprisings: What the February 20 Protests Tell Us about Morocco”, published in The Nation, Lalami talks about the emergence of the 20 February Movement, a group of young activists from Casablanca who, inspired by the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolution, used social media to mobilize the masses for demonstrations against the regime. The 20 February Movement’s main demands include “constitutional reforms, the dissolution of the present parliament, the creation of a temporary transitional government, an independent judiciary,

² Laila Lalami, “The Fake Prince of Facebook.”
accountability for elected officials, language rights for Berber speakers and the release of all political prisoners.”

The reaction of the government was “predictable and depressing.” Lalami quotes the Youth Minister, Moncef Belkhayat, saying that this is a conspiracy “manipulated by the Polisario, with the goal of creating street clashes that will weaken the position of our country in the United Nations regarding the human rights situation in the Sahara.” While the Communication Minister, Khalid Naciri, explains that Morocco “has embarked a long time ago on an irreversible process of democracy and widening of public freedoms.” Other ministers simply denied that there are any big problems in the country or blamed foreign agents who try to instigate unrest in the country.

Lalami rejects such explanations and is angry at the State endeavor to stigmatize the organizers of the protests as “traitors to their faith and to their country.”

Laila Lalami does not write as a detached journalist who merely report news. On the contrary she expresses her sympathy and solidarity with the 20 February Movement. She writes explicitly:

I love my homeland. And it is because I love it that I want it to be a place where everyone is treated equally under the law; where the legislative, judiciary and executive branches are independent of one another; where human rights are respected; and where the government is accountable to the people. This makes me a supporter of the February 20 movement.

2. LALAMI’S CONFIGURATION OF GENDER

In “Chronicles of the Veil,” Lalami deconstructs contemporary Western academic construction of the Muslim woman. She attacks Western representation of the Muslim woman as being inherently Orientalistic. The Western writer confiscates the voice of the Oriental woman, who is submissive and powerless and in need of saving by the Western author. Lalami refutes this neo-Orientalist representation and observes that in Muslim women writings, women emerge as active and resistant to oppression. The authors explicitly critiques the laws, cultural customs, and religious beliefs that hampered Moroccan women and prevented them from achieving full equality.

Comparing the debate on Muslim women taking place in the West and the Islamic world, Lalami observes that while feminist activists in the Muslim world deal with local problems, struggle to change their condition and introduce reforms that would benefit woman and combat sexism and sexual harassment, the terms of the debate in the West “are global. One hears about arranged marriages, forced


veiling, honor killings, female genital mutilations, and punishment by stoning, the
narrative line always the same: Muslim women are victims, and they need Western
saviors.”¹ For Lalami’s fruitful conversation about Muslim women must begin by
rejecting the simplistic category “Muslim women,” a category that often results in
a denial of these women’s multifarious agency. There are thousands and thousands
of Muslim activists, men and women alike, working for gender equality in the
Muslim world, sometimes at great risk to themselves. Bringing them into the
debate — talking to them, not about some abject “representative” — is the only
way to advance it.²

In a long and well researched scholarly article entitled “The Missionary
Position,” published in The Nation in June, 2006, Lalami answers back, now not to
the West but to Muslim dissident female voices in the West, who claim to speak
from within Islam and against Islam.

Laila Lalami reviews The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for
Women and Islam (2006), a post-September 11 book by Hirsi Ali, a writer of
Somali origin.³ In this book Ali attacks Islamic “sexual morality,” the obsession of
Muslim societies with female virginity and is distressed “that the vast majority of
Muslim women are still enchained by the doctrine of virginity… experience of
love and sexuality before marriage is an absolute taboo. This taboo does not apply
to men.”⁴ Lalami agrees that “the burden of virginity weighs disproportionately on
females in Muslim cultures,” but criticizes Ali for failing “to point out that the
Koran emphasizes virginity and forbids both genders from having premarital sex.”
She explains that insofar as the issue of virginity is concerned “the Koran is no
different from the Bible.” The prevalence of the concept of virginity in Muslim
societies, Lalami explains, is “a matter of cultural practice.”⁵

Another social practice that Ali attributes to Islam is female genital
mutilation, FGM. Ali affirms that “these existing local practices were spread by
Islam.” While condemning this practice, Lalami reminds Ali that “according to the
United Nations Population Fund, FGM is practiced in sub-Saharan Africa by
Animists, Christians and Muslims alike, as well as by Ethiopian Jews, sometimes
in collusion with individual representatives of the faiths.” Lalami also refers to a
report by the US State Department that some Coptic Christian priests “refuse to
baptize girls who have not undergone one of the procedures.” Lalami is surprised
that “Hirsi Ali does not blame Animism, Christianity or Judaism for FGM, or
accuse these belief systems of spreading it. With Islam, however, such accusations
are acceptable.”

² Ibid.
³ Ali’s books include Infidel: My Life (2007 in English) Nomad: From Islam to America: A
Personal Journey Through the Clash of Civilizations (2011), Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation
Now (2016).
Equally significant in Lalami’s critique of The Caged Virgin is Hirsi Ali’s argument that “Very few Muslims are actually capable of looking at their faith critically. Critical minds like those of Afshin Ellian in the Netherlands and Salman Rushdie in England are exceptions.” Lalami refutes this statement by citing several Muslim scholars who have approached religion through critical thinking, authors such as “Khaled Abou El Fadl, Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed, Reza Aslan, Adonis, Amina Wadud, Nawal Saadawi, Mohja Kahf, Asra Nomani and the thousands of other scholars working in both Muslim countries and the West.”

Lalami is also shocked by Ali’s statement that “After the events of 9/11, people who deny this characterization of the stagnant state of Islam were challenged by critical outsiders to name a single Muslim who had made a discovery in science or technology, or changed the world through artistic achievement. There is none.” Lalami strongly rejects Ali’s denial of Muslim contribution to world civilization and knowledge by mentioning “the algebra of Al-Khawarizmi, the medical prowess of Ibn-Sina and Ibn-Rushd, or the music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.”

Lalami is very critical of the assumptions that inform the writing of The Caged Virgin. The first is that Muslim women are the silent natives who cannot speak up for themselves and are therefore in need of Western advocates to save them and speak on their behalf. The first is that Muslim women somehow cannot speak up for themselves. Ali writes in this respect “The [reason] I am determined to make my voice heard is that Muslim women are scarcely listened to, and they need a woman to speak out on their behalf.” Reacting against Ali, Lalami emphasizes the fact that “Muslim women are not, nor have they ever been, silent.” She cites the example of Aisha, the Prophet’s wife. She writes: a significant portion of hadith, the Prophet’s sayings that form the basis of the Sunna, are attributed to his wife Aisha. Here is a sample hadith: “Narrated Aisha: The Prophet said, ‘All drinks that produce intoxication are haram.’” But how did Aisha narrate this saying? Was it by sitting at home, in a cage, or by actively engaging with her community and teaching the hadith to the congregation?

This gendered Muslim activism “has continued, and Muslim women have made their marks in all fields—whether religion or science or medicine or literature. Over the past century, they have organized in groups dedicated to fight for the advancement of their rights. Even under the inhumane Taliban regime, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan remained active, providing literacy courses and medical services to women and girls.” Muslim women, Lalami concludes, have never been invisible nor silent.

The second assumption is that Hirsi Ali gives herself the authority to speak about Islam and Muslims solely on the basis of her Muslim origin, proudly cherishing the conviction that a “native informant knows best.” In her view, this is enough to qualify her to speak about an entire religion without scholarly training. For instance, Ali describes Islam as a violent religion and argues that this is the

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
reason why “so many Islamic men use violence.” Then addressing her audience, Ali says: “You are shocked to hear me say these things… you overlook something: you forget where I am from. I used to be a Muslim; I know what I am talking about.”

Lalami points out factual inaccuracies in Ali’s book, explaining that The Caged Virgin is a book that relies on the premises of “the native is silent” and “the native informant knows best,” and that it is not so much addressed to Muslims as “to Western advocates for Muslim women.”

Another audience of The Caged Virgin, implied in Lalami’s article, is anti-multiculturalism nationalists in Europe. Ali opposes vehemently what she considers to be an invasion of Islamic sacred texts to the secular space in Europe and fiercely criticizes the lax policies in Western European states toward their Muslim minorities.

Lalami is obviously shocked by Ali’s lack of intellectual rigor and sweeping generalization and inaccuracies; she is equally shocked that the Time magazine should rank Hirsi Ali as one of 100 “most influential people” of 2005, people with “the clout and power to change our world.”

For Lalami, Ali’s book The Caged Virgin is a piece of neo-Orientalist propaganda which illustrates how the discourse of freeing women was deployed by the West to justify the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. In contemporary discourse on gender, Lalami concludes, Muslim women are “saddled with what can only be referred to as the ‘burden of pity.’” They are the object of compassion of very distinct and radically opposed currents: Muslim religious extremists and evangelical and secular neo-colonialists.

3. **IDENTITY AND THE GRAY ZONE**

Laila Lalami published various articles that concern Moroccan affairs, but she was also interested in American and International events, political, religious and identity were all topics of interest for her.

One of the most noteworthy points that Lalami talks about is the Gray Zone. In her article, “My Life as a Muslim in the West's ‘Gray Zone’”, published in New York Times, she criticizes how ISIS sees the Gray Zone, clarifying that for this group, the world is either black or white and in the middle is the gray zone. ISIS claims that the Gray Zone must be eliminated because it threatens them and prevents them from reigning. Lalami situates herself in the Gray Zone, the space of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. She says:

Whose lives are gray? Mine, certainly. I was born in one nation (Morocco) speaking Arabic, came to my love of literature through a second language (French) and now live in a third country (America), where I write books and teach classes in yet another language (English). I have made my home in between all these cultures, all these languages, all these countries. And I have found it a glorious place to be. My friends are atheists and Muslims, Jews and Christians, believers and doubters. Each one makes my life richer.¹

Lalami defines the Gray Zone as a “place where people coexist and tolerate one another.” As a subject living in America, a Western Secular country that includes numerous ethnicities and religions, she says that “Terrorist attacks affect all of us in the same way: We experience sorrow and anger at the loss of life. For Muslims, however, there is an additional layer of grief as we become subjects of suspicion.”

Laila Lalami was interviewed on CBSN news channel about her article published in New York Times’ website, which she wrote after the 2015 San Bernardino attack in California. In answer to a question on her conceptualization of the Gray Zone and how it is understood by ISIS, Lalami explains that according to an article entitled “From Hypocrisy to Apostasy - The Extinction of the Gray Zone”, published by ISIS in their official magazine “Dabiq”, the world is seen in terms of two camps, that of Muslims, and that of the Crusaders. The Gray Zone as a site of religious and cultural in-between should not exist, and it should be destroyed. Lalami condemns such views and defines herself not only as a Muslim, but also as a woman, Moroccan, a writer and American citizen.

As a committed diasporic journalist, Lalami has indefatigably devoted herself to highlight and record human rights abuses and anti-democratic practices in her homeland in the newspapers of her host country. The English language has offered her the medium to express her political views and reach wide international audiences. Her intention is to see political and social reforms implemented in her native county. “I love my homeland,” she asserts, “And it is because I love it that I want it to be a place where everyone is treated equally under the law…where human rights are respected.”

Journalism and English have also given Laila Lalami the freedom and opportunity to define her identity as a cosmopolitan Moroccan woman living in a diasporic American Gray Zone and, as illustrated in her article, “Chronicles of the Veil,” to engage with Neo-orientalist scholarship in a postcolonial writing- back perspective.

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Salma Takky

Women’s Representation in Moroccan and international Law-CEDAW convention ,The Moroccan Family Code (Moudawana) and The Moroccan Penal Code as case studies

(USMBA, Fes)

Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate women’s representation and access to equality and justice in Morocco through the lens of family law (Moudawana) since it was reformed in 2004. It also aims at providing recommendations to increase women's benefits by improving the current mechanisms that provide access to justice to women. The present research examines whether some women experience access to justice differently than other women because of the way reforms are written and/or executed in practice. The emphasis is on discrepancies of women's access to justice between urban and rural areas, more particularly, in Berber indigenous populations. The research's legal framework will analyze the national and international laws that apply to the right of women to access adequate and effective remedies related to family law since the 2004 reforms were applied. Special attention was also given to the past amendments of the Moudawana and the penal code. This is, particularly, timely as Morocco reformed its Constitution in summer, 2011, and for the first time the new Constitution declares in its preamble the country's adherence to human rights as recognized universally, as well as recognizes the preeminence of international law over national legislation, standards that apply to women's rights to access justice through effective remedies as well under Morocco's national law, especially the Moudawana. As far as international commitments are concerned, I will refer to notable international and regional instruments, namely the United Nations (U.N.) conventions on human rights: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified respectively in 1979 and 1993 in Morocco. The Moudawana aspects that I will address in this paper are, mainly, related to: violence, marriage, and its dissolution.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Violence and Marriage in Morocco, Moudawana and the Penal code, CEDAW.

Introduction

This study seeks to analyze women’s portrayal and access to equality and integrity in Morocco through the lens of the family law (Moudawana) that was reformed in 2004. It further aims at providing recommendations to increase

women's benefits by improving the current mechanisms that provide access to justice to women. The present analysis examines whether some women experience access to justice differently than other women because of the way reforms are written and/or executed in practice. The emphasis is on incompatibilities of women's access to justice between urban and rural areas, more surprisingly, in Berber indigenous populations. The research's legal structure will spell out the national and international laws that apply to the right of women to access adequate and practical remedies applied to family law since the 2004 reforms were applied. Special attention will be again given to the past amendments of the Moudawana and the penal code. This is, principally, timely as Morocco reformed its Constitution in 2011, and for the first time, the new Constitution declares in its preamble the country’s adherence to individual rights as recognized universally. As far as international commitments are concerned, I will refer to notable international and regional instruments, namely the United Nations (U.N.) conventions on human rights: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified respectively in 1979 and 1993 in Morocco. The Moudawana aspects that will be addressed are, mainly, related to violence, marriage, and its dissolution.

The research paper presents a deconstruction analysis of legislative amendments targeting gender equality in Morocco. It then focuses on analyzing the status of women at the level of national and international law. With the aim of understanding the ups and downs with regard to women’s access to justice and equality in Morocco, a spacious locus of this analysis will be paid to the representation of women within the framework of legislative laws. Despite the various judicial advances that characterize the law, the lack of adequate implementation and execution is persistent. Some of the gaps are related to judicial oversight and accountability, urban vs rural policies. Even though, the decentralization policy has been implemented in Morocco; many of rural areas are blindly discriminated. To clarify, while both women and men extremely suffer from various challenges, linked to education, health, and infrastructure. The geographical discrimination of the distribution of wealth between rural and urban regions lead to a greater gender bias, depriving women from their basic rights which has constantly impeded the enhancement of equality in the region. As a result, economic needs and social traditions tend to favor antiquated feminine roles as early brides and domestic workers. Then again, education and literacy among girls are still not valued.

1. CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted on 18 December 1979 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, endorsed by Morocco in 1993. CEDAW reaffirms the principle of equality between women and men, it also provides an overall definition to the concept of discrimination through establishing solid a platform so as to achieve gender equality. CEDAW also aims at establishing a concrete action plan for women at political, economic, social and cultural spheres. CEDAW is composed of 30 articles. Its first article includes a definition of discrimination.
against women: "For the purposes of the present Convention, the term “discrimination against women” shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." (Art 1)

CEDAW aims to guide the action of states parties, in the sense of actively promoting women's rights and better gender equality. The introduction to the convention states: "By analyzing in detail the meaning of the notion of equality and the means of attaining it, the convention, in addition to being an international declaration of women's rights, also sets out an action for states parties to guarantee the exercise of these rights". (CEDAW permeable). The convention occupies an important place among the international treaties for the rights of the human rights because it recalls the inalienable rights of women. By analyzing in detail the meaning of the notion of equality and the means of attaining it, the convention, in addition to being an international declaration of women's rights, also sets out an action plan for states parties to guarantee the exercise of these rights. "Convention reaffirms the principle of equality by asking states parties to take "all appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to ensure the full development and progress of women with a view to guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men" (Article 3). By the same token, the convention draws attention to the fact that the status of women in terms of nationality was often linked to marriage and evolved according to the nationality of her husband. Articles 10, 11 and 13 respectively affirm the equality of women's rights in education, employment and economic activity and social. The convention places special emphasis on the situation of rural women, especially in view of their particular problems and important economic role referred to in Article 14. Finally, in article 16, the convention again considers the problem of marriage and family relations, affirming that women and men have the same right to freely choose their spouse, the same rights to decide freely on the number of and spacing of births, the same personal rights, and the same rights in property. In addition to detailed civil rights, the convention also devotes attention to a vital concern of all for women, namely their right to procreate. The preamble sets the tone by stating that "the role of women in the procreation should not be a cause of discrimination. "The relationship between discrimination and the role of women in procreation is discussed at several with concern in the Convention. Thus, in Article 5, it is recommended: "to make it clear that motherhood is a social function" and to make recognize the common responsibility of both men and women in taking care and raising their children. As a result, maternity protection are considered essential rights and taken into account in all areas covered by the convention. The convention even requires a society that it offers social services, in particular, child care children, allowing women to combine their family responsibilities with their participation in public life. States parties are recommended to adopt special measures to protect maternity; the convention
further specifies these measures "shall not be considered discriminatory" (Article 4). Back to article 16, the couple is allowed "to decide freely and in full knowing the number and spacing of births and to have access to information, education and the means necessary to enable them to exercise these rights “. Article 15 guarantees women, in civil law matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men. This, for example, implies equal treatment of women in court proceedings. Article 16 deals with the equal treatment of women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. The most important provisions of this Article are the equal right of women to enter into marriage, the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent, the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution; the same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and all matters related to their children. This Article also provides for the same personal rights for husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession, and an occupation.

What can be discerned is the fact that CEDAW was borne out of a deep understanding of barriers that manifest themselves in the form of stereotypes, habits, and norms which resulted in a multitude of legal, political and economic constraints to women's progress. States parties are therefore bound to change patterns of sociocultural behaviors in order to eliminate "prejudices and customary practices, or any other type, which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of one or the other sex or stereotypical role of men and women "(article 5). Taken as a whole, the convention provides a comprehensive framework to combat the various forces that have created and maintained discrimination based on sex. The implementation of the convention is monitored by the Committee for the Elimination of discrimination against women. The mandate of the Committee is set out in Articles from 17 to 30 of the convention. Articles 10, 11 and 12 deal with the elimination of discrimination against women in education, in the labor market and in the field of health care. Article 13 prohibits discrimination in other areas of economic, social and cultural life. Article 14 addresses the advancement of women in rural areas.

2. Moroccan family code (Moudawana) and the Penal Code

Since its independence from French colonialism, Morocco has become an open site for discussing women and family-related issues. Especially because during that exact period, Moroccan women have undergone serious gender inequalities because of the purely sexist and patriarchal mode of the country. This gender-biased perception had also to do with the Orientalist writings of Western travelers to Morocco at that time. Therefore, women’s identity was/is solely associated with vulnerability, oppression, and hegemony. Consequently, trends towards demanding justice, equality and empowerment have become a priority to make a clear cut with the deeply-rooted patriarchal system of the country.

In 1999, King Mohammed VI inherited his father's throne; this signified the beginning of a new era in Moroccan women's struggle for their rights. King Mohammed VI's advanced approach, emphasized protecting human rights as consistent with Islam.
On March 5, 2001, the king met with women representatives, from political parties and human rights organizations and announced the formation of a royal commission in charge of preparing the appropriate reform of the Moudawana. The commission headed by a Supreme Court Justice was composed of a cross-section of people, including women and men, religious scholars, political parties, intellectuals of traditional, liberal and independence orientation, human rights and women’s NGOs. Within the framework of independent Morocco, the Moudawana represents the second most important action of the Moroccan government. The family code was adopted in January 2004 and passed into legislation in February 2004. In point of fact, the new extended law constitutes a landmark reform in the history of Moroccan women’s struggle for equality. The Moudawa has seen light due to a rational understanding of the structure of the Moroccan society. While women carry out a dynamic role, fewer privileges were granted to them as their male counterparts who symbolized the primary source of responsibility in the family. It is noteworthy to highlight that in the Moroccan society, married women are respected and appreciated because they are fulfilling their expected roles. On the other hand, unmarried women are seen as useless, unwanted spinsters. Accordingly, these gender dichotomies could be more thoroughly in cases enhanced when women could not marry without the approval of their guardians; while men could marry as many wives as they wished without seeking the approval from their wives. Additionally, men were allowed to break up without their spouses’ constant while women were restricted from divorce. Such practices magnified the way society values women which resulted in a vaster gender conflict.

Stopping at the definition of the concept, Jacqueline Powers (2009, p.18) refers to Moudawana as a constitutional form that governs the rights and duties of families in Morocco. The Moudawana consists of 400 articles that organize rights and duties pertaining to divorce, the regulation of marriage, polygamy, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. In its preamble, Moudawana refers to the fact of doing justice to women, protecting children’s rights and preserving men’s dignity are a fundamental part of this project, which adheres to Islam’s tolerant objectives, notably justice, equality, solidarity, ijtihad (juridical reasoning) and receptiveness to the spirit of our modern era and the requirements of progress and development. (p 5).

In seeking to modernize Morocco through the rebalancing of women's rights towards greater equality, the action plan measures inevitably entailed a process of transforming gender relations within the family and society. This action plan does not only seek the emancipation of women from the male hegemony but, more broadly, the emancipation from social oppression. The Moroccan historian Abdellah Laroui observed this process in Maghreb societies: "Modernity wins and with it individualism. Old solidarities dissolve; those who want to save them need to believe in their longevity, and they do not care about the quality of the arguments. And no doubt, even lost, this battle will leave traces "(1987: 77). But, important tensions between the aspiration to the changes and the tension on the
ideology of the big family, reinforced by the Islamist political currents, continue to tug and insecure many Moroccans against these reforms.

We cannot highlight the importance of Moudawana in granting women’s rights without enhancing the amount of effort, struggle, and militantism of women’s rights organizations that gathered at one roof, defending women’s access to justice. These solid networks were reinforced with the foundation of Women’s Action Union. This group was established in 1987 as Union de l’Action Feminine and provides a valuable example of how the women's movement transitioned from a movement employed to generally advocate women’s issues in general to a women's rights movement that took on judicial reform as its primary emphasis. (Daoud 1996, p 312). To illustrate more on this idea, despite the multiple attacks of activists of women's rights associations and their moral disqualification by calling them "prostitutes, drunkards and old girls, unable to maintain a home ." (Laabi, 2000), they maintained the struggle and developed a strategy of action that led to the unanimous adoption by Parliament.

The main discriminatory provisions concerned he Moudawana is concerned with is the distribution of power within the family. The husband exercised the "head of the family”, and the wife was obliged to obey him, this sets out distinctly the rights of the husband and wife, thus indicating that they were not equal. The Moudawana claims that the husband's rights were also those of his family, relatives, and relatives to whom the wife owed "deference" (Moudawana, article 36). The bonds of marriage were established in an equally unequal fashion. Thus, marriage capacity was less protective for women as the legal age was 15. However, the judge could grant an exemption from age to the husband in Morocco, "if serious difficulties are to be feared" (Article 8). The article 11 provided that "the conclusion of the marriage for the wife is the responsibility of his marital guardian who is either his father or one of his close relatives". Admittedly, he specified that the wali cannot oppose the marriage of the person under his tutelage, "if it wishes and if it is profitable", except in the case where the guardian is the father, who can prevent the marriage, for the sake of her virgin daughter (article 12). Similarly, the wali could not force the person placed under his guardianship to marry, nor could he do without his consent (article 13). The principle of equality also applies to the marital capacity, which is acquired, for the boy and the girl, at the age of 18 in Morocco (Moudawana, art 19), in this case, the law maintains the possibility of age exemptions, granted by the judge. Moreover, the father abandons his status as head of the family for the benefit of a co-direction of the family by the two spouses (Moudawana, art 4) resulting in "a mutual consultation in the management of family affairs" (Moudawana, article 51) and by the disappearance of the obligation of obedience for the wife.

Following the same vein, polygamy is regulated from Articles 40 to 46 of the Mouddawana. The procedure is completely judicial, the second marriage can not take place only after the authorization of the judge. Polygamy is forbidden "where there is an injustice between wives" or the previous marriage contract provides for a clause according to which the husband undertook not to take another wife (Article 40). The court may, however, authorize it if an "exceptional objective
"reason" is established, which must be indicated by the plaintiff, who must also accompany his claim with a statement of his material situation. The latter will enable the judge to assess whether the applicant has the resources necessary to support the two families (sections 41 and 42). The applicant is under an obligation to inform the wife, whose appearance before the court is mandatory, with strong procedural precautions (section 43).

Having said that, it is also important to understand that despite numerous reforms, the phenomenon of violence against women has increased in the Moroccan society in recent years. Domestic violence against women doesn’t come necessarily from the husband. It can be perpetrated by the father, the brother, the relative, the employer. Also, violence is not only physical or verbal or psychological or economic, but it can also be sexual.

Because of the ravaging effects, sexual violence has on women’s psychology, it is considered rape when carried out by the husband, as recognized by the laws of many developed democracies around the world. Any sexual relationship not based on mutual consent, that is against the wishes of the wife or forced under any form of threat is rape indeed. Article 486 is a beautifully written, but in reality, it is on the one hand subject to the decision-making power of the judge. In the law, regardless of age, if the rape causes pregnancy. While in practice, if the victim is of age, the complainant spends most of the time as a debauchee ("Fassida"). If the plaintiff is a minor, the judge orders a DNA test to prove the rape and not for the recognition of paternity, assuming that "the child caused by a sexual act out of wedlock is not entitled to recognition". In addition, even if the rape is proven, the sentences of imprisonment have nothing to do with what is quoted in article 486. They generally vary between 18 months and three years.

Sexual assault includes several offenses (rape, sexual assault other than rape, harm to minors), the common point of which is the attack on the person of a sexual nature. Rape is the most serious sexual assault. The Moroccan Penal Code defines rape, in article 486, as "the act by which a man has sex with a woman against the will of the woman". This crime is punishable by five to ten years in prison. If it is committed on a minor of less than 15 years, the penalty is the imprisonment of ten to twenty years. If the culprit is an ascendant, guardian or servant of the person who is being raped, or if he is an official or minister of a cult, the offense shall be accompanied by an aggravating circumstance and imprisonment of ten to twenty years first case, from twenty to thirty years in the second case. The Moroccan government has passed a major new law that says sexual harassment is now a crime punishable with up to 6 months jail time. It is most definitely a cause for celebration, especially since this piece of legislation was originally drafted 3 years ago and it took that long for it to finally be voted on. The new law is a very progressive and important move in the country, and hopefully it will have a widespread cultural effect on women, knowing there is a system in place to punish sexual harassment, and for perpetrators who have too long hidden behind the anonymity of a patriarchal culture that in many places does not view gender violence as anything other than normal. This law introduces the new provisions
and the amendment of several articles in the penal code. Perpetrators of sexual harassment in public spaces, which includes the use of words, acts, or signals of sexual nature for sexual purposes, will be punished in accordance with Article 503-1-1 of the penal code, or “considered as a perpetrator of sexual harassment crime.

In a patriarchal society such as that of Morocco, where girls are raised to be mothers and wives, it is difficult for young women to give up such roles to look for alternatives. Nearly two years after Amina’s death, a young girl who was forced to marry her alleged rapist and then committed suicide through drinking rat poison, this widely-criticized get-out clause in Morocco’s Penal Code has finally been abolished. Although the decision came too late, the amendment of Article 475 is a significant step forward for women and girls in Morocco and a victory for women’s rights campaigners who lobbied heavily to amend the law following El Filali’s death.

**Conclusion**

The Moudawana has reinforced women’s rights within the public and the private spheres. Cases of such transformations include amendments directing marriage, divorce, alimony, and child custody. The Protection of children was to be increased through the inclusion in the Moudawana and endorsing international conventions such as CEDAW. On the matter of the age, Moudawa raised the age of marriage for girls to 18. However, child marriage is allowed if it is validated by the court. To improve implementation of the Moudawana, priority was given to establish a system of skilled family courts. These changes rectify the critical problems women face when they sought to claim their rights. Currently, the new code stipulates that the deadline for completing all procedures should not exceed one month. Another remarkable contribution to the "Nafaka" (alimony) component is the creation of the Family Solidarity Fund. For a more proper and effective execution, women's associations demand direct and indirect intervention by the state to force judges to apply the Moudawana. But this demand remains paradoxical.

Given the above, the experience of analyzing women’s status under national and international law suggests that the social and economic factors are unlikely to reduce instances of the implementation of the Moudawana. There are a number of factors behind failures of implementation. Social and economic impacts of minor marriage cases especially in the rural areas. Economic factors forcing parents to marry off their minor children; social factors, including attitudes around pre-marital sex; and lack of sensitivity of all citizens. This suggests that accountable and integral judiciary practices particularly for underage marriage should be implemented. Correspondingly, more rigorous criteria for determining best interests would be helpful. In the same way, the continual monitoring between local policies and social norms would trigger a more substantial discussion on the application of national and international law for promoting a more equal society.
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Women’s Political Participation in Current Islamist Government
(Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes)

Abstract: Women’s role in political participation is largely limited mainly due to the common culture that says leadership goes especially to men because they represent well the concept of za’im/leader. This work seeks to demonstrate that the case of women’s participation in Morocco’s multi-party system is marked by a male political dominance, and the existence of strong limitations on the role of women as political actors, and this goes to the distinct functions that political parties realize in respect of the monarchy. This work seeks to public space in Morocco is constructed as ‘male’ and this represents serious issues to women’s contribution to public affairs and electoral campaigns. This work will base itself upon interviews with PJDist female MPs and academics in political sciences along with a theoretical framework.

Keywords: Women’s political participation, leadership, Moroccan politics, PJD.

Introduction

Women’s political participation is a crucial constituent for paving the way to modernizing and democratizing public institutions, electoral processes and the state itself with all the related deliberations. Nevertheless, it is important to note that whether before or after the arrival of Justice and Development Party to the government, women’s contribution on the political scene has always been low given a number of factors, among which are the concept of za’ama or leadership that goes exclusively to men, as well as labor and gender divisions that relegate women to the private sphere instead of having to do with public opinion affairs or policy and decision-making.

The evolution of women’s political participation has, nothing much, to do with a given political party or another, still with the arrival of Justice and Development Party no significant progress has been materialized, the party only appoints the supposed number of women’s seats at the Parliament and there is no parliamentarian law that dictates women forefront men at the head of electoral lists. Politics is a male dominated space given the social, political and cultural structures in which it is constructed and chiefly ruled by men. This article will shed light at some of the reasons women’s political participation is problematically insignificant in a multi-party political system, and the disparities at the level of men and women’s roles in the political institutions.

Women and the Concept of Leadership/za’ama in Politics—Private/Public Spheres

The case of women’s participation in Morocco’s multi-party system is problematic, there are strong limitations on the role of women as political actors, and this goes the distinct functions that political parties realize in respect of the monarchy. According to James Sater, “Regime interference in political parties either through banning or co-opting individual leaders, ensuring loyalty and support to the regime, has been a constant feature”. Partly as an outcome of regime interference, partly as a consequence of a patrimonial leadership culture expressed in the Arabic concept of za’im, the introduction of a women’s quota may be an unlikely a contribution to substantive political change.¹(Sater 725) this demonstrates that women’s role in political participation is largely limited mainly due to the common culture that says leadership goes especially to men because they represent well the concept of za’im.

Despite that, an alternative proposition may be derived from the experience of women’s increased participation in Western countries. This proposition emphasizes the democratic potential that women’s participation nevertheless represents. It is based on the idea that women politicians have a particular style and particular concerns that change the way that politics develop. First, female issues such as reproductive rights, health, and education, tend to be overlooked by male politicians, given their different life experience, which ultimately builds political choices and agendas. A second proposition is that women embody a style of politics that is less competitive, and which changes the culture in which politics takes place. The ‘women and peace’ hypothesis postulates that women have a less aggressive attitude towards international conflicts and are more inclined to accept compromise. Third, it is claimed that ‘women speak in a different voice’, an assumption that is based on biological, sociological, and psychological gender differences.² (Sater 730)

The public space in Morocco is constructed as ‘male’ and this represents serious issues to women’s contribution to public affairs and electoral campaigns. In the words of a female MP, ‘In Morocco, women are not regarded as public figures or even as capable of taking on public responsibility, this is why political parties find it difficult to back up projects that boost the visibility of women and their political responsibility and participation. In addition, public affair is a domain reserved for men. Geographically, electoral campaigns take place in areas that are reserved for men: public (men’s) cafe’s. A woman may be able to enter this men’s domain and talk to a male audience; however, she leaves it as soon as the electoral speech is over and the cafe ‘is taken over by its original ‘male’ character. All of this has an impact on women’s and men’s self-perception and self-confidence

²Ibid.,730
when it comes to the decision to participate in elections and represent a constituency.\(^1\) (Sater 731)

The history of many women members of parliament (MPs) demonstrates the recurrent absence of voters’ support. Many of the women who were elected onto the National List in 2002 had started to come forward from the 1970s without success, to the extent that presenting themselves became a political means of showing to other women that they had not given up trying to become politically integrated. A major problem is that, especially in rural areas, candidates need the support of ‘intermediaries’ for elections.

In rural areas, these intermediaries are notables – traditional chiefs of economically and politically powerful families or clans – who ask constituents under their control to vote in favor of one candidate or another. Therefore, women candidates are not only faced with political parties that may think that a woman is not a suitable candidate – in fact, women’s candidacies are often confined to areas where a political party does not believe it has any chance of winning anyway – but also with a particular social structure that can act as an additional hurdle for a woman candidate’s ambition to reach out directly with a particular programme. Although there is one case in Morocco where this has played to the advantage of an elected female parliamentarian, this remains the exception. The existence of neo-patriarchal structures means that voters are attracted by candidates who are perceived as best capable of securing their material welfare within political circles: men.\(^2\) (Sater 731)

**Women’s Politics and an Islamist-based Government, Constraints and Stereotypes**

In the previous version of the Islamist government, there were eight female secretaries and one female minister solely. This poses serious questions on the actual role of women at the political scene, either for political parties or the state’s policy-making in general terms. There is no clear evolution of women’s political contribution with PJD, there is an absence of females at the head of electoral campaigns’ lists, and though the number of women’s seat has increased from two in 1997 to almost ninety in the current parliament—thanks to quotas, this does not say much about a genuine evolution of their political participation since the majority of political parties do not put women candidates at the head of their electoral lists, except of course for some other minority parties. Gender disparities and inequalities shape the implementation of quotas and that is defined in regional, socio-economic and generational differences that continue to make the Moroccan experience far from a level playing field for women in politics.

Once in parliament, women have felt both scrutinized by the media and sometimes completely ignored. Often, their participation in debates was followed closely, resulting from curiosity concerning women’s ‘value’ in politics. Their activities in parliament encompass all the commissions. In 2005, the presidency of the foreign affairs commission went to a woman, Soumaya Khaldoun from the

\(^1\)Ibid.

Islamist conservative party for Justice and Development (PJD). According to one MP, depending on the strengths of political parties themselves, women have had advantages over men because their level of education is generally superior to that of men.

Given women’s political constraints in men’s sphere, they are more active and better qualified. By comparison, the lack of interest of many male parliamentarians once they have gained office is evidenced by a lack of regular attendance regularly reported by the Moroccan press. On the other hand, when it comes to women’s public activities, women often feel ignored by the media. As the vice-president of the parliament from 2003 to 2004, Fatna El Khiel (Popular Movement) explains, ‘whenever the [male] president of the parliament received a delegation of XYZ all the media talked about it. “When I subsequently met with another delegation, there was no media coverage whatsoever, as if it was completely unimportant”. In her analysis, this well illustrates the role that women play in Moroccan society. In family matters, only women are blamed if anything goes wrong, and only women are subject to public scrutiny, whereas their positive contributions are hardly ever recognized.\(^1\) (Sater 733)

According to UNESCO, various challenging gender stereotypes introduce politics as a man’s sphere, in which a woman’s role is related to the family and the private sphere and the man’s role is oriented outwards towards the public sphere. Political affairs are still men’s arena which are conceived of as ‘deviant’ and involving the mixing of the sexes and eventually dangerous or not authorized for women. Given that, politics in general terms, is a sphere confined to men for certain; hence, the political

Islamist movements have provided women opportunities for political participation, swelling the ranks of the membership and leadership with women, and creating greater political space for discussions of Islamic feminism, but this remains relatively significant given the fact that it is impossible to imagine a female Secretary General at the head of PJD. The Party for Justice and Development (PJD) has offered women a number of opportunities, including the creation of a PJD Women's Committee, an emphasis on voting as an Islamic obligation, and the seating of a certain number of women in Parliament of any political party. But, despite the supposedly greater female participation as members and leaders within both movements, challenges to greater integration abound. The creation of separate women's sections serves to marginalize women participants and isolate "women's issues" to concerns only women should address. Some policy positions of both movements have been deemed antithetical to gender progress, including the emphasis on sharia law, the rejection of projects to integrate women into development, and the failure to challenge inequalities in the private sphere. Some Moroccans fear that the PJD, have embraced women's participation as a means of boosting membership and claiming their commitment to modern, moderate policies. Some fear they are "hiding their real ideas" about gender while

\(^1\) Ibid., 733
encouraging participation to legitimize the movements and disarm those who criticize them as being against women's rights.

Paradoxically, the statements about PJD’s boosting women’s membership and political participation only as a means to claim they have moderate policies, has been completely negated when we had an interview with Amina Elamrani El Idrissi a parliamentarian member affiliated to Justice and Development Party who asserted that women have always been strongly present in the political debate. The MP said that the principle of women’s political participation has always existed and that since the beginnings of Movement of Unification and Reform alongside with the Islamic Youth (Shabibaal’Islamiya). She added that the changes that have been brought about with the arrival of the conservative party, have not exclusively been at the level of the rhetoric and principle of women participating in political decision-making but probably at the level of women’s membership and their number at parliament which goes to eighteen MPs who can form a considerable number of governmental groups and whose number does not exist in any other political parties. When we asked her about her stance vis-à-vis the political performance of the party she replied that the PJDist government is a democratic government and that is based on coalitions with different secular and leftist groups that collaborate with each other for more genuine democratization of the state. Of course, this view remains confined to the very moral contract with the party, and does by no means negate the fact that the current political status-quo of female political actors would probably witness a shift following the recent declarations of head of the government, SaadEddine El Othmani, when he considered suppressing state secretary service from the government, which is a problematic given the fact it most gathers female actors.

During a Round Table organized by Takamul Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Friday July 10, 2015 at 22h in Merrakech (Kenzie Farah Hotel) on Politics and Women, we asked Maa El Aynayn Amina an MP affiliated to Justice and Development Party about her stance regarding the political performance of PJD and whether women parliamentarians who are affiliated to PJD have greater political participation, and the response was that she sometimes has clashing dissidences with AbdelilahBenkir in at some levels when it comes to the political action of the party but her stance is generally positive since PJD is one of the political parties that most integrate women into political work and women are the most voters for Justice and Development Party and are the ones that have close contact with other women voters when it is elections time.

During twos interview with ElalaamAbderrahim a Moroccan researcher and expert in political sciences, he said that PJDist women have always been present in the political scene. During elections there would be massive collective work gathering women and men and the appointment of the president of the Movement would take the votes of each side; women and men and the former have always the largest number of voters during elections. But, what Elalaam confirmed about the eighteen women parliamentarians, is that this number goes to their success in the quota and that this number is very small in comparison with the number of PJDist men parliamentarians. In the first version of the government in 2011, Justice and
Development Party elected only Elhakkaoui Nassima among twelve men ministers and in the second version of the government in 2012, they added one minister Benkhaldoun Sumaya which, in one way or another, proves that eighteen parliamentarians is not enough. Adding to that, the fact that women are fewer at regional offices affiliated to PJD. Finally, Elalaam declared that PJDist parliamentarian women are not very influential when it comes to decision-making regarding the main political action, and remained & remain as a democratic forefront to Benkiran and Saad Eddine El Othmani’s government, assuring that it is hard to imagine a woman Secretary General to Justice and Development Party. Clearly, the political participation of women is not as influential as it should be when it comes to decision-making, but they are making big moves.

**Conclusion**

This work has looked at the position of PJDist women and how they conceive of the party’s dealing with female actors, whether the latter has given more space to women for political participation or their role is limited. And realized that women have always been present in the political scene with different degrees of influence but very active in the political participation. Still, as we have discussed before; the number of women parliamentarians affiliated to Justice and Development Party is a small number in comparison to the number of men parliamentarians which poses questions on whether PJD has really succeeded in giving more space to women for political contribution and participation or it has put women as a democratic forefront to prove it has moderate policies with regard to women’s political participation. Women’s political participation is still hugely invisible regardless of quota implementation, and that is due to low media coverage of women during the electoral campaigns, which leads to invisibility that exacerbates the negative perceptions of women in politics.

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Gender and Development: the Case of Moroccan Women in Leadership Positions

(Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco)

Introduction

Inside or outside Morocco, women have brilliantly challenged all the social constraints, beliefs or stereotypes related to their ordinary traditional roles in society to successful leadership positions thanks to education, a supportive family, self-trust and perseverance. Moroccan females have proved that no elevated position is reserved to men and only men but have rather subscribed through history that women empowerment in the Arab world is a goal if not a project in which most Moroccan women are targeted to share the unique experience of leadership and be aware of their integrity in the process of development.

This paper, then, considers in-depth the issue of gender development shedding light on women leadership positions in education, politics, science, sport and business and the role these women play to assure a sustainable development in Morocco. In this context, the questions that this study tends to answer are: how much efforts are deployed to improve public accountability to women in the development process in Morocco? And how Moroccan female leaders take part in the process of a sustainable development?

The paper is organized as follows: section 1 is devoted to define gender development in Morocco. Section 2 covers women achievements in Morocco throughout history, while section 3 exposes some famous Moroccan figures that marked history so far. Section 4 is devoted to the methodology adopted in this study, taking as a sample five female leaders belonging to different fields in Morocco who were guests of the program ‘Mutaalikat’ (distinguished successful women) retrieved from ‘Aloula’ channel. Section 5 discusses the results and implications of the study. Section 6 constitutes a conclusion to the present study.

Keywords: Gender, development, Leadership.

Gender Development in Morocco: Definitions and concepts

Gender Development is based on gender analysis and mainstreaming denoting how women may have the same rights and opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere. It also denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. As a matter of fact, this cannot be operationalized without an organizational strategy to bring

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gender perspective to all aspects of an institution’s policy and activities through building gender capacity and accountability. In this case, gender development should abjure gender discrimination in a society where beliefs do not favour the role of women beside men. In other words, women and development concerns, in Morocco, are a peculiar anomaly since a proliferating number of policies and plans of action for women still fail to be translated into practice. In the same realm, the unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies their rights, opportunities or resources, systematically affect the hierarchical relations of power between women and men that tend to disadvantage women. At this point, Understanding the concept of Gender Development requires first to clarify the difference between Women in Development (WID) and Gender and development (GAD) since this study tends to highlight the role(s) of female leaders and their engagement in the development of our country. Women in Development approach calls for greater attention to women in development policy and practice, and emphasises the need to integrate them into the development process. In contrast, Gender and Development approach focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and emphasises the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations. In this investigation, however, our concern is not to analyse the dysfunctional patriarchal system in Morocco but rather to study gender achievements in different arenas to better identify and prioritise gender needs and therefore realize dignity and social justice at least for the coming generations.

Gender Achievements in Morocco: a Historical Background

Several decades ago, women in Morocco were referred to as ‘alharem’. The word ‘horma’ means that it is forbidden to any man (but not the father and the brother) to talk or have a look on a female inside or outside her home (See Azzouzi, 2018, for more details). Females were condemned to stay in their ‘Mesria’ own room or her husband room’ in the presence of men even relatives. Females got married in a very early age, give birth to many children (sometimes up to 15 children if not more). Their roles were limited to house chore and children’s and husbands’ care. They used to leave with and entertain the whole family in law and practically have no freedom to voice themselves or complain about their miserable conditions (Some females were satisfied with their situation as far as they have a husband). Few girls had access to schools at that time and may drop from school if they have to get married. In the period of colonization and thanks to the awareness and the support of some Moroccan families (especially the father), females started to integrate schools, excelled brilliantly in their studies, and even travelled abroad to further their studies. They started to get married lately, limited multiple pregnancy, and took decision freely. Integrating girls in education raised a significant psychological liberation among females. In this case, there is compelling evidence that the education of girls and women has promoted both individual and national well-being. In other words, poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, subordination and inequality have never been a hurdle to Moroccan women as traced back in history. It is true that women development suffered from several limitations but women’ empowerment and development in several fields,
today, gain much space compared to the previous decade. Before embarking in analysing the outcomes of gender achievements in Morocco and their impact on a sustainable socio-economic development, we will expose some of the most successful figures in Morocco and overseas.

**Moroccan Females in Leadership Positions**

Moroccan women in the position of leadership have always attracted the media and the public opinion about their accomplishments and the secret of their success, the following are top 8 female leaders in and outside Morocco as retrieved from happyknowledge.com:

*Asmae Boujibar:* The first Moroccan woman to integrate the prestigious American center of research NASA at an age of 27 years old.

*Touria Chaoui:* First Arab and Moroccan female as a pilot at an age of 16 years old. Despite all the social constraints, pressure and delicate conditions, she managed to impose herself in a male dominant society and be congratulated and supported by many political figures and organizations and, then, by the king Mohamed V.

*Nadia Ben Bahtane:* The first Moroccan woman who swam across the Detroit of Gibraltar. She exercised for about 6 months to realize her dream. This challenge shows females’ abilities and determination to overcome all the difficulties they may encounter in their curses of life.

*Bouchra Baibano:* The first Moroccan woman to climb the highest summit of the world the Kilimanjaro (5.895m), le Mont Blanc (4.810m) and l’Aconcagua (6.962m).

*Zineb El Adaoui:* First Moroccan woman Wali in the history of Morocco. The integration of women in such prestigious position was a starting point for Moroccan women to benefit from elevated positions in politics equally to men. Women, in their turn, demonstrated outstanding abilities to fulfill positions of leadership and succeeded brilliantly in their missions.

*Najat Vallaud-Belkacem:* A Moroccan female minister of national education in France. Achieving one’s dream starts by a good education, self-trust and setting objectives.

*Miriem Bensaleh Chaqroun:* the most influential woman in the Arab world, a successful businesswoman, and the CEO of Holmarcom and CGEM group. Mrs Chaqroun is a role model to any woman who wants to share the experience of leadership, challenges herself, and keeps faith in opportunities to accomplish her dreams.

*Nawal El Moutawakel:* the first African and Moroccan woman to win the 400m hurdles medal in the history of the Olympic games in the world. An active member of NGOs in Morocco.

These women have significantly participated in the change of the economic, social, sportive and political profile of Morocco. Other successful female figures are exposed in this study with a more profound discussion.

**Methodology**

The study adopted the qualitative methodology to collect data on female leadership and development in Morocco. Data is composed of 5 face to face TV
interviews recorded from a TV interview show ‘successful women’ directed by the host Asmae Benfassi, on the Moroccan channel Aloula. The interviewees are all female professionals from different domains such as authors, actors, researchers, doctors, politicians, entertainers among others in order to have varied interviews as far as backgrounds, roles, and identities are concerned.

The sample is consisted of five leading Moroccan women in different fields. All TV interviews were conducted in the Arabic language. Furthermore, the recorded videos of the TV show which last from 19:17 min to 27:19 min were retrieved from YouTube and then translated into English. The sample includes a case study of five women leaders from Morocco as demonstrated in the tables below:

Table 1. Demographic data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Philosophy of life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loubna Mouna</td>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Married (3 children)</td>
<td>Ait Benhaddou</td>
<td>Be courageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila Sadikki</td>
<td>Scientist</td>
<td>Married (2 children)</td>
<td>Khoribga</td>
<td>Be ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houda Farah Kssous</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Married (2 children)</td>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>Self confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asmae Elmrabet</td>
<td>Author and a doctor</td>
<td>Married (1 child)</td>
<td>Tafraout</td>
<td>Be curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia Benyahya</td>
<td>Jewelry Designer</td>
<td>(Not mentioned)</td>
<td>Fes</td>
<td>Be creative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This qualitative case study is an attempt to understand the factors leading to the success of Moroccan women in leadership positions. It is also an exploration of the actual relevant categories that can form the basis for further detailed quantitative studies. The sample of five women is sufficient to fulfill the aim of the study, considering the redundancy of the answers after the fifth interview (Ritchie et al., 2003, p. 84; Morse, 2000, p. 4).

Results

During the interview, many general questions and answers were given, which were very informative about the participants. They were almost asked four general questions. First, to give a general background knowledge about their achievements. Second, to share an unforgettable memory of their childhood. Third, their role models in life. And fourth, their philosophy in life. The present study focuses on four different main concepts which are family commitment, gender role, and role models.

All participants were described by their families and friends as confident, powerful, unbeatable, courageous, ambitious, leaders, hard workers and problem solvers. Their motivation to have their own businesses or excel in their domains is merely challenge, gain autonomy, voice themselves socially and politically and
simply achieve their dreams. The answer to the study’s main questions, and understanding the effect of social status, challenges, gender role and role model on the participant’s road to success, can be summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Summary of the Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Gender role</th>
<th>Role model</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Loubna Mouna</td>
<td>Acceptance and care</td>
<td>support</td>
<td>Grand mother</td>
<td>Less mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leila Sadikki</td>
<td>Support and pressure</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Investment in research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Houda Farah Kssous</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Access to career-making roles as men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asmae Elmrabet</td>
<td>Pressure and support</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Family or work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sofia Benyahya</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Grand father</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family and Social Status

Most participants, notably (1, 3, and 5), expressed positive feelings about the family status effect, describing it as supportive, balancing, and providing opportunities. Participant (1) described the family status effect as acceptance, which is considered positive, without criticism. The other two participants (2 and 4) described the effect of their social status as a source of pressure because they need to give priority to their children and husbands, but still it is not considered negative because participant 2 stated in the interview that:

On the weekends my husband volunteers to join me to the university lab and help me with everything which need physical strength while our two girls are playing in the universities garden, so I do believe when you do things with love you won’t feel the pressure anymore.

Similarly, participant 1 reported that her husband’s support allowed her to progress in her career and she said:

I have a job that requires long hours, evenings out, and a lot of trips and therefore I can’t rely on my husband who has the same job as mine to take care of the children while I am away and the same thing for him.

Worth mentioning here that the role of men in the life of these successful women is pertinent because of their understanding, love and support that should be considered as an awareness that have helped to reorganize the whole family structure of the new millennium.

Gender Role
Most of the participants did not mention anything about gender role effect on their professional life which means that there is a gender role prototype in our society and male leaders tend to accept females in certain careers. However, for participant (3), there are not enough females in the field of entrepreneurship:

*In this field, we were only two females who applied to this position and I was selected because of my high qualifications, skills and competencies in this domain.*

We can deduce from what was claimed earlier, that the main motivation of female leaders to succeed is ultimately to achieve a global progress toward the millennium development goals.

**Role Model**
Two of the participants (2, 4) named their fathers as their role model, participant (1) cited her grandmother and participant (5) referred to her grandfather and one of the participant had no role model (3), maybe she doesn’t need a role model to achieve her goals as far as she trust her own abilities as a female.

**Challenges**
According to the interviews, the participant female leaders claim that they have managed to defy all social expectations and constraints by fulfilling their dreams. The host and the guests altogether preferred to avoid the topic of gender equality, because complaining about inequality can be seen as a threatening to gender development. As a pilot, participant (1) claims that distance remains a constraint. It is quite difficult for women to pursue employment outside home. They have to work nearby their home and avoid a lot of trips per week, as she stated “I fly a different plane now because I need to be close to my family”. Therefore, spending long hours at work might result in having a difficulty in meeting the demands of the family.

To most participants, it is difficult to decide to choose between family and work. Both choices are difficult and both require sacrifice. For that reason, a woman has to be self-confident, maintain her goals in being a wife, a mother and a leader.

For participant (2), female scientist researchers are not sponsored enough by the government and the sponsors to attain high-visibility. Sponsors’ job is to use their influence intentionally to help others advance forward which is essential to ensure career advancement and professional development. She also believes that researchers get enough help from their supervisors and administrators at the universities; but they need sponsors who will give them visibility, talk about their accomplishments behind closed doors, and promote them for stretch opportunities.

**Implications of the Study**
The development of women in Morocco is one of the most remarkable revolutions of the past 50 years. More precisely, millions of women who were once dependent on men have taken control of their own economic, educational, and political fates. Nevertheless, if the empowerment of women was one of the great changes of the past 50 years, coping with its social consequences will be one of the serious challenges of the next 50 years. The present study has explored the stories of five successful women to illustrate their perceptions of what it takes to become a
woman leader. As a matter of fact, leadership in any particular field requires unique competencies to navigate the complexities involved in managing social or gender changes. Lived experiences of women leaders can help understand how to unlock this potential by identifying the challenges and sharing successful strategies used to become effective female leaders. Lessons learned from the female leaders in this study have identified some of the key ingredients to a sustainable development, recognizing that in addition to individual competencies, governmental systems can be enhanced to provide supportive context and background to improve women’s potentials in different fields. In this context, four recommendations are made, based on the challenges aforementioned by the interviewees in this study. However, further research on the effectiveness of these mechanisms in different contexts is required, but they are presented here for further research:

To organize conferences, workshops and training for female students in schools of medicine, law, economics, education and other fields. Training should include mentorship elements that connect young women leaders to established leaders and help broaden their networks.

To create time and space for females and males leaders alike to discuss a shared vision of the future and understand the processes to be undertaken in order to achieve mutually beneficial goals. Dialogue and discussion should be facilitated by communication specialists who are sensitive to providing equal opportunities for engagement by both men and women, taking context-dependent cultural factors into account.

To pair young girls with existing women leaders to serve as role models and mentors and help develop young potential leaders.

To develop a career development curriculum in schools where girls would visit role model's work environment and engage in a related project over several months.

**Conclusion**

The study has answered all its questions, on the four aspects of family social status, gender role, role model and challenges. The study has also answered its central question on the factors affecting women leaders’ success in Morocco. It has, also, found a combination of factors affecting success in Morocco. However, the most significant factor is the woman herself: her personality, the need to achieve her aims, the need for independence and achievement. Regardless of background and family status, women have shown very strong self-confidence, abilities, and determination to reach their goals.

**References**


