

Identity Construction Amongst People of North African Descent Living in Europe

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Mediterranean Migrations

Professor Borges and Professor Rose

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Since the 1900's, the Mediterranean has seen dramatic shifts in human migration patterns resulting in questions of identity amongst host nationals and immigrants. French decolonization and labor recruitment during both World Wars encouraged an increasing migration trend in France and Spain. During the 1980's Spain changed from an immigrant-sending nation, to a receiving one. At first, most North African immigrants came to Europe for temporary work, but when labor recruitment slowed they began to establish permanent residency. As residents, immigrants and their families must construct transnational identities. This identity construction can be very challenging given the differences between Africa and Europe, including economic inequalities, religion, language and culture. While people may acquire European nationalities or residency, they may still have connections to the Maghreb ¹ They must make choices about how to maintain their traditions while integrating into European society. Some assimilate, others create hybrid identities and still others resist the dominant culture.

Though immigrants have some ability to self construct their identity, Europeans impose labels on them as well. They may wrongly assume that someone with Maghreb family roots is an immigrant, illegal, or threatening. As researcher Joane Nagel explains, the construction of identity is a "dialectic between internal identification and external ascription." ² Identity theorists recognize that when society's perception of an immigrant's identity does not match with the immigrant's self perception it causes stress and confusion. Children with an "identity crisis" struggle to decide where they belong amongst two cultures, religions, and nationalities. ³

The Dickinson College Community Studies Center organized a group of 11 students and

¹ Johnson, Cathryn and Killian, Caitlin. "I'm Not an Immigrant!': Resistance, and the Role of Resources on Identity Work," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 69,1 (Mar. 2006): 61.

² Falah, Ghazi-Walid and Caroline Nagel. *Geographies of Muslim Women. Gender, Religion, and Space*. New York: Guilford Press, 2005. 63.

³ Killian, Caitlin. "The Other Side of the Veil: North African Women in France Respond to the Headscarf Affair," *Gender and Society* 17, 4 (Aug. 2003): 580.

two professors to conduct ethnographic field research on immigration with migrants and nationals in France, Spain and Morocco. Interviews, observations, and lectures gave insight into the challenges of constructing a transnational identity. This paper will explore how identities are self-constructed and externally imposed in France and Spain.

Historical Contributions to Identity Construction

“ The very right to travel, to journey, to migrate today increasingly runs up against borders, confines, and controls of a profound “unfreedom” that characterizes the modern world. Of course this does not touch the touted liberty of market forces and economic policies monopolizing the globe; rather, it refers to the gathering dusk that envelopes the refusal of rights and resources, leading to the eviction of so many into no-man’s land without legal status or even recognition beyond that of being a nameless guest worker or “illegal” immigrant, condemned to inhabit the discarded regions of the abject” – Chambers

Even before people with Maghreb origins determine their own identity in the host country, Europeans politically and socially construct their role in Europe. As the demographic characteristic of immigrants has shifted from European to North African, anti-immigrant practices and policies have arisen in both France and Spain. Some natives fear immigrants as a threat to their jobs and sense of national identity. To this day, French and Spanish histories affect how Europeans receive people from the Maghreb.

Morocco became a French-Spanish protectorate from 1912 until French independence in 1956. France actively recruited Maghreb laborers during both World Wars and continued recruiting during the post war industrial booms. Following decolonization came the 1973 Oil Crisis, which decreased manufacturing and thus the need for migrant labor. Suddenly, France did not want or need migrant laborers from her former colonies. Subsequent halts in labor recruitment encouraged permanent settlement and family reunification instead of hindering migration. Starting with Minister of the Interior, Charles Pasquas’ “zero immigration policy” of

the 1990's, France has displayed a trend of anti-immigration policies⁴. Though Maghreb immigrants have a history of colonial ties with France, their different religion, language and culture challenges the French Republican ideal of secularism and one collective national identity. Accordingly, France has historically encouraged assimilation and recognition of one's French identity before one's religion or heritage. Laws like the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools are intended to promote integration, but may also hinder personal expression. French xenophobia and laws can hinder one's ability to express their Maghreb identity freely. Additionally, memories of cultural imperialism during colonization encourage some Maghreb people to resist assimilation.

Similarly, Spanish history with the Maghreb effects the social construction of its people and can hinder their ability to self-construct their identity. Throughout history, Spain has been both a victim and a conqueror in Africa.⁵ In AD 711, the Moors invaded Spain and ruled for over 800 years⁶. Spanish folk tales characterize the Moors as violent, threatening brutes that kill and rape Spaniards.⁷ In actuality, the conquest was relatively quick and ended in peaceful negotiations between the Spaniards and the Moors, who were fellow monotheists.⁸ Despite the reality of the conquest, the idea of an invasive and threatening, "Moor" exists to this day. Some Spaniards equate North African immigration as a modern day version of a Moorish military invasion.⁹

⁴ Engler, Marcus. Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies, "Focus Migration Morocco." Accessed May, 2013. <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/France.1231.0.html?&L=1>.

⁵ Encarnación, Omar Guillermo. "The Politics of Immigration: Why Spain is Different," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 15, 4 (Fall 2004): 171.

⁶ Flesler, Daniela. *The Return of the Moor: Spanish Responses to Contemporary Moroccan Immigration*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2008. 56.

⁷ Flesler, 66-74.

⁸ Fleser, 56.

⁹ Flesser, 91.

Both France and Spain have created social and political constructions of migrants. Labeling people “illegal” and criminalizing those who travel clandestinely is more challenging when one understands the European barriers to legal migration. For example, France responded to the increase in non-European immigration with a series of laws that preference European immigrants and specifically restrict North African immigration. In 1974, France suspended immigration except for members of the European Community and in 1977 family reunification was suspended. There was not much dissent to this huge move from an open door policy to a policy of exclusion. The 1980 Loi Bonnet Law made entry more difficult and expulsion easier. Such policies were successful and prevented Asian and African immigrants in France from outnumbering European immigrants until 1982. Increased African and Asian attempts to seek asylum led to declining acceptance rates instead of increased entries.¹⁰ France seems to have less room for immigrants of color.

Like France and the rest of the European Union, Spain also discourages non-European immigration. During the 1980’s, immigration laws tightened as the demographic characteristics of immigrants changed from European to African. European fear of the “third world” results in strict anti-African immigration policies in both Spain and France. In 1985, the EU pressured Spain to create stricter immigration laws and selectively limit non-Europeans. The refugee policy became stricter and it became much harder for Maghrebis specifically to obtain visas.¹¹ As in France, more obstacles to legal migration simply led to more illegal passages. Today, irregular immigrants desperately find other ways to enter, sometimes by seeking asylum, overstaying their visa, or sneaking across the borders.¹²

¹⁰ Schain 40-65.

¹² Cornelius, 336.

¹² Cornelius, 336.

External Ascription

“Self meanings develop in the context of meanings of roles and counter roles” – Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke

Before considering how immigrants and their children choose to identify, one must acknowledge that they face many external barriers to integration in France and Spain. There they have to negotiate their own self-identification with their legal and social status within the host country. The very language used in the media and in everyday speech to represent people with Maghreb origins reveals natives’ attitudes towards this minority. This includes calling people “illegal” whether or not they traveled clandestinely or “immigrant” whether or not they immigrated. Properly used or not, “immigrant” and “illegal” hold negative connotations.

One externally imposed image is that of a violent, invasive and threatening Moor. The media contributes with stories such as a gypsy robbing someone or a black person involved in a shooting. Such stories transmit negative images of the “other” and instill fear in the public. For example, one headline in *El País* reads, “Three immigrants try to steal food from a store in Palos.”¹³ The fact that the attempted robbers were immigrants is irrelevant, yet the story chooses to vilify migrants by including this identifier in the headline. The media often portrays immigrants as criminals, though in reality, they do not commit a disproportionate amount of crimes.¹⁴ Even *El País* photographer Julian Rojas, who portrays migrants sympathetically, focuses on clandestine migration. His pictures include bloody hands cut on barbed wire fences

¹³ Huelva, L.V. "Tres inmigrantes intentan robar comida en una tienda de Palos." *El País*, April 03, 2009. http://elpais.com/diario/2009/04/03/andalucia/1238710927_850215.html (accessed April 20, 2013).

¹³ Huelva, L.V. "Tres inmigrantes intentan robar comida en una tienda de Palos." *El País*, April 03, 2009. http://elpais.com/diario/2009/04/03/andalucia/1238710927_850215.html (accessed April 20, 2013).

¹⁴ Cornelius, 357.

and crying woman who have lost their husbands to the sea. By telling their story, he attempts to show the gross inequality and struggles that migrants face while crossing. Unfortunately, viewers usually do not see stories about people traveling legally to study, seek asylum, or reunite with family.

Instead, many Europeans misidentify “legal” immigrants as “illegal” or clandestine immigrants. The perception of Moroccans as “illegal immigrants” or the “other” may be caused in large part by media representations. Several professors and government employees in Spain expressed that Spanish media represents impoverished migrants traveling clandestinely without portraying skilled migrants. Sensationalizations include clips of undocumented immigrants scaling fences drowning in pateras. When the media associates immigration with criminals, it makes even documented people seem questionable.¹⁵ In actuality, migrants must have a relatively high enough socioeconomic status to be able to afford the cost of migration, meaning that the poorest individuals cannot emigrate.¹⁶ University of Málaga Professor Duran explains the reality that most or about two thirds of immigrants in Spain are documented.

When labeling people “illegal,” consider that the entire concept of legality in regards to migration is a social construction. While the media represents “illegal immigrants” sneaking across frontiers and stealing jobs, several Moroccans pointed out that these borders were invented. Professor Victor Manuel Martín of the University of Malaga explained that the concept of restricted borders is relatively new. Before World War I, people could move much more freely across borders. Moroccans, for instance, could overstay tourist visas in Spain. Spain only began requiring visas for Moroccan migrants starting in 1981.¹⁷ In France, some Maghreb people are

¹⁵ Cornelius, 337.

¹⁶“Morocco’s Migration Transition”, 1271 and 1278.

¹⁷ ?? webcite

also called “illegal”, though they were once colonial subjects of France. No person is actually “illegal”.

Today, North Africans question the justice of migration barriers biased against North Africans. Near the impoverished neighborhood of Diza, in Martil, a town outside of Tetouan, Morocco, Dickinson’s Professor Rose and Professor Borges sat on a panel to discuss immigration. When the conversation opened to the largely Moroccan audience, the commentary was emotional and tense. One middle-aged man expressed his frustration at frontiers constructed across ideological, political and religious lines. He passionately expressed that even if immigrants may meet their basic needs while abroad, receiving countries deny them of their spiritual and cultural needs. Another man questioned why Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans have a much easier time entering Europe than Moroccans. This alludes to questions of Islamophobia and racism within Europe. While this audience questioned the legitimacy of bias borders, European media and political discourse tends to criminalize North Africans who cross. If borders are a social construction, than identifying migrants as “illegal” is socially constructed as well.

Just as the label “illegal” has various negative connotations, so does the label “immigrant itself”. In his lecture, historian De la Odra Sierra pointed out that Western Europeans or Americans living in Malaga are called “foreigners”, while Moroccans are called “immigrants”. Using the word “immigrant” as opposed to “foreigner” connotes low status and the possibility of illegality. As an historic example, during the 1930’s, the Front National political party rose to prominence on an anti-foreigner platform and labeled all French-Algerians “immigrants”.

Immigration continued to climb after 1947, when Algerians attained French citizenship¹⁸.

Ironically, although Algerians were “internal” immigrants, the French treated them as more foreign than other Europeans.¹⁹ Today, the term “immigrant” is still misused and even applied to subsequent generations who were born in France or Spain and never emigrated.

Interviews with two second-generation women, Fouzia Touna and Miriam reveal how Europeans sometimes misidentify people as immigrants who were actually born in Europe. Both Fouzia Touna and Miriam described how they were born in France, yet others identify them as Moroccan. Both of Touna’s parents were Moroccan, but she was born and raised in France. Though she visits Morocco each winter with her family, she thinks she would have trouble adjusting to the Moroccan lifestyle if she were to move there. Despite how foreign Morocco feels to her and despite the fact that her entire family has dual citizenship, people in France insist that she is Moroccan. Europeans noted that she was an Arabic-speaking Muslim and overlooked that she also spoke fluent French and had lived there her entire life. As she explains, “I never said that I was French, before leaving France”. Though France promotes a unified national identity, Fouzia did not feel included or “French” until moving to the United States. There she worked as an aupair and was almost surprised when Americans called her French.²⁰

Similarly, in an interview, a young woman named Miriam told another story of conflicting identities. She too was born in France to Moroccan parents. She explained that when she tells people that she is French they ‘look at her funny.’ While pursuing her graduate

¹⁸ Blanck-Chaléard, Marie-Claude. “Old and New Migrants in France: Italians and Algerians,” in *Paths of Integration: Migrants in Western Europe (1880–2004)*, ed. Leo Lucassen, David Feldman, and Jochen Oltmer. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006, 52-53.

¹⁹ Schain, Martin. *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain, and the United States: A Comparative Study*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 48.

²⁰ Touna, Fouzia. Interview by Kathleen Lange. Video recording. France, February, 2013.

education in Spain, she likes to play a game, making people guess her nationality. They are often shocked when she explains that she is French.²¹ Both Fouzia and Miriam have French nationality and know more about French culture and norms than Moroccan ones. Even so, outsiders tend to identify them based on their family origins and religious ties.

Self Constructed Identity Strategies- Assimilate, Create a Hybrid, Resist

“Identity includes membership in groups and social roles as well as individual character traits”
 – Caitlin Killian and Cathryn Johnson

Though European society and politics impose an identity on people with Maghreb origins, individuals also make choices about how to shape their identity within these confines. In the past, migrants tended to assume an assimilationist strategy during their temporary stays in Europe. First generation migrants came as laborers, and did not necessarily intend on staying in Europe. They willingly assimilated and acted almost like guests within the context of European culture. Fouzia’s father went to France in 1964 and worked harmoniously in a factory with peers from several different countries. He said, “I liked everyone. I spoke with everyone, we all worked together. I laughed [and enjoyed myself].” Fouzia explained that, “When the first generation of Moroccans came, they were respectful of the fact that they were in a different country with a different culture and religion. They did not want to force on others their own religious beliefs. They did not want to bother anyone. I think that they lived how they did in Morocco, but they adjusted themselves [to French life] as they didn’t have a choice.” She continued, “Our parents always taught us to be respectful, and to not impose on others. I think

²¹ Miriam. Interview by Catherine Turvey. Malaga, Spain, March, 2013.

that it's a question of education as well. We are in France; we are not in a Muslim country. It is necessary to learn to adapt oneself and respect others."²²

As migration patterns have shifted and more families decide to stay in Europe permanently, assimilating during a temporary stay in Europe is no longer as common. While people build their lives in Europe they must make choices about how to reconcile their European and African identities. Some create an hybrid identity of both North African and European characteristics. As an example of dual identity, the Touna Family maintained their religion and cultural traditions, but mixed them with French customs. They believe in and celebrate Ramadan, but also participate in Christmas traditions. People like the Tounas choose to maintain a dual identity. Professor Killian of Drew University administered a survey, which demonstrates how women of Maghreb origin who live in Europe often create hybrid identities. Killian's survey asked, "Do you feel more Algerian/Moroccan/Tunisian or more French?" Twenty out of thirty five woman answered that they feel both.²³ This hybrid identity is common in subsequent generations as well. People must navigate between their own values, those of their family, and those of the dominant culture. Fouzia Touna's older sister, for example, explains that she spent her childhood in Morocco, but moved to France as a teenager. She says, " I feel as much Moroccan as French. I am 'French' in quotations. I am not 100 percent Moroccan. I am not 100 percent French. Therefore, I think I am the best bits of both." Like his daughter, Mr. Touna also feels he is both Moroccan and French²⁴. Such people can choose how to construct their hybrid self-identity in many ways, including through language, customs and dress.

Another strategy of adaptation is to emphasize or deemphasize aspects of one's identity

²² Touna.

²³ Johnson, 66.

²⁴ Touna.

according to the reaction one expects. For instance, immigrants may hide their identity if it could result in racist attacks, but not if they can use it to earn scholarships. Still others may embrace their heritage as a way to maintain their culture's memory and have a sense of belonging.²⁵ Some second-generation children create what Professor Zaragaza of the University of Malaga describes as a "camouflage identity". In the presence of their parents, they employ or adapt to their family's values, but adopt a more western identify when apart from their parents. This allows them to maintain respect for their parents, while integrating into the dominant country's culture²⁶. They neither embrace nor reject their minority identity, but rather vary their actions depending upon their company.

In recent years, many more people are refusing to assimilate and instead assume a resistance identity. Resistance identities are especially prevalent among second and third generations. They are native Europeans, but are not accepted by Europe and may face job, housing and other such discrimination²⁷ Valentín González, leader of the Movement Against Intolerance, explains that when people feel the host country will not accept them, they will not accept the host country. Professor Killian studied French youth reclaiming their identity. She found that if European society rejects second-generation youth who attempt to integrate, they will sometimes embrace their ethnic identity and resist European cultural imposition.²⁸ J.P. Nunzi, the mayor of Moissac, France reiterated the observation that first generation immigrants tend to be more integrated, yet second and third generation immigrants are less willing to

²⁵ Johnson, 64.

²⁶ Esteve Zarazaga, José Manuel, Ruiz Román, Cristóbal, and Rascón Gómez, María Teresa. "La construcción de la identidad en los hijos de inmigrantes marroquíes," *Revista Espanola de Padagogia* (Sept- Dec 2008): 501-502.

²⁷ Lazar, Marius. 2009. "Islam and Islamism in Europe. Representations of Identity and Projects of Action." *Eurolimes* 7: 84.

²⁸ Killian, 579.

assimilate or hide their religion.

When interviewed, Fouzia commented on youth who are born and raised in France, yet identify with the Maghreb. According to Fouzia, some say for example, “I am Algerian and not French”. She says, “Frankly, I don’t understand that at all. I think they haven’t found their place”. Social identity theorists would address her confusion by explaining that people without the resources to gain higher status often choose to feel pride in their minority identity.²⁹ Profesor Zarazaga studied immigrants’ children and found that many had created a minority or resistance identity by maintaining their parent’s culture instead of assimilating to the host culture. They show that their culture has value and legitimacy.³⁰

Because resistance identities are more common amongst second and third generation immigrants, it is more common identity strategy amongst people in France than in Spain. France has a longer history of migration than Spain, and therefore also has more second and third generation immigrants. González wonders if with time, minority identities will become more common in Spain as well. Lecturer, Dr. Abdelhay Moudden offers another reason that resistance identities may be less common in Spain. He believes that because many of Spain’s immigrants are first generation, they tend to be lower class or lack citizenship and therefore make themselves less visible.

As France addresses how to integrate second and third generation youth, they must acknowledge the existing prejudices against Maghrebis and Muslims. The government tends to ignore race and religion and has largely interpreted minority resistance as the result of poor education and urban social issues. The French did not include racial inequality in their explanation of the 1981 urban riots in Lyons, though race clearly concerned young Maghrebis.

²⁹ Killian, 579.

³⁰ Esteve Zarazaga, 500.

Beginning in the 1980's North African youth began to demand the right to express their culture instead of adopting a French identity³¹. Though second generation youth tend to mediate between the "old world" and the "new world," the French right often blames Maghreb youth for creating conflict. The anti-immigrant group, the Front National problematizes Maghrebi youth and claims that allowing multiculturalism threatens French identity.³² Instead of acknowledging the value of diversity, Spain and France fear Maghreb influences threaten a cohesive national identity.

Resistance Identity Expressed Through Religious Revival

Apparently we have more room to make our own identities than we previously thought. - Caitlin Killian and Cathryn Johnson

Whether one is a parent or child, first generation or third, one of the most challenging differences to address between a European and North African identity is that of religion. Because the majority of Muslims in Spain and France are foreigners, Europeans link them with immigration and "otherness". Some Europeans assume that immigrants have both a Muslim and Islamic extremist identity. Linking terrorism and Muslims like Osama bin Laden with Islam has created a worldwide anti-Muslim trend³³. The 2004 Al-Queda led train bombings only heightened anti-moro sentiment.³⁴ Some Spaniards view terrorist attacks and immigration as the modern day return of the Moor.³⁵ Of those who are Muslim, in reality, only a very small population are involved in illicit activity (just as is the case for all world religions). Europeans

³¹ Blanck-Chaleard, 1989.

³² Creamean, Letitia. 1996. "Membership of Foreigners: Algerians in France." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 18 (1): 1989.

³³ Rogozen-Soltar, 612.

³⁴ Rogozen-Soltar, 614.

³⁵ Fleser, 56.

sometimes conflate and impose a Muslim and extremist identity on people of North African heritage, regardless of their practice.

One strong contributor to the European social construction of Muslims is Spanish and French history. Post-Facist Spain sees Islam as a backward and foreign religious influence.³⁶ Though Islam has been a presence in Spain for years, Spaniards still seem to reject it as foreign. Viewing Islam as a threat contradicts how historically, cities like Granada were known for embracing multiculturalism and religious tolerance. In contrast, today Muslims, and Moroccan Muslims in particular, rank the lowest on opinion polls regarding immigrants in Spain. Their accent and foreign appearance make their “otherness” especially apparent.³⁷ Some Spaniards fear Muslim visibility in Spain and suggest that their foreign religion and “otherness” will prevent them from fully integrating.³⁸ France also fears that the increasing visibility of Islam threatens integration. The French emphasize the “laicism principle” or belief that public spheres must be secular spaces, free from the divisiveness of overt religious and cultural displays. Many schools prohibit students from wearing crosses, the hijab, Yakimas and other such religious displays.³⁹ French emphasis on a collective identity and the Spanish concept of post-Franco modernism contribute to Islamaphobia.

Karima Ouald, the President of the Moroccan Association in Malaga, told a story that exemplifies how Europeans can have a narrow understanding of what it means to be a North African Muslim. Sometimes, her peers would say negative and hurtful things about immigrants

³⁶ Rogozen-Soltar, 13.

³⁷ Rogozen-Soltar, 613-614.

³⁸ Agrela, Belén. *Spain as a Recent Country of Immigration: How Immigration Became a Symbolic, Political, and Cultural Problem in the “New Spain*. Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California at San Diego. Working Paper 57. San Diego, Cal: August 2002. 15.

³⁹ Green, Nancy. “Le Melting-Pot: Made in America, produced in France,” *Journal of American History* 86, 3 (Dec. 1999): 1198.

in her presence because they mistook her for a native Spaniard. When she uncomfortably explained that she was Moroccan, they acted confused and asked why she wasn't wearing a headscarf. Karima's peers revealed their negative understanding of immigrants and association with Islam.⁴⁰

In general, immigrants in Europe struggle to express their Muslim identity in the face of hostility. Intolerance forces Muslims to create relatively hidden prayer rooms, intended for private worship. For instance, the mosque in Moissac, France is housed in a plain European building with no other indication that it's a mosque other than a small plaque above the door. Spanish anthropologist Jordi Moreras challenges Islamophobic attitudes by asking, "Are we Spaniards trying to convince ourselves that certain expressions of a cultural or religious minority must remain invisible in the social realm so that our majority is not made to feel uncomfortable by them?"⁴¹ Europe's negative reception of Islam encourages some Muslims to be very private about their religion.

Another way that some Muslims combat prejudice is by trying to represent Islam in a positive light. For some, buildings like the Mezquita Mayor in Granada, are especially important because they represent Islam positively. The Mezquita is a peaceful, beautiful place, contrasting the stereotypes surrounding Islamic extremism. In addition to sharing their architecture, many Muslims find themselves sacrificing some privacy for the sake of good publicity for Muslims. For instance, women may be stopped on the street and asked to explain the burkah. Other times, people stare into mosques as the people pray. Beyond patiently enduring others' curiosity, some Muslims face open hostility. According to Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, many Muslims in Spain feel

⁴⁰ Ouald, Karima. Interviewed by Sarah Goslin. Tape recording. Tetuon, Morocco. March, 2013.

⁴¹ Moreras.

they must try to remain calm and agreeable in order to convey that Muslims are “nice and reasonable”.⁴² Some Muslims are trying to combat ignorance by maintaining positive social relations with non-Muslims.

Despite prejudice, over the past thirty years, Islam has seen a global renaissance, which is especially powerful and visible in Europe. Several individuals expressed to the Dickinson Mosaic students the value of retaining religion for immigrants. For example, the speakers at the photo exhibition discussed how religion helps people maintain their sense of community. Mosques serve as religious spaces, but can also be social spaces for ethnic communities. During an open forum discussion in Diza, Morocco, several Moroccans discussed how religion is a way for people to stay in touch with their roots, just like how people may choose to continue eating couscous out of a communal dish. Dr. Abdelhay offered the same example, saying that people may learn a new language, but they retain traditions like religion and eating couscous. Sometimes even generations that grow up in Europe try to stay connected to their family’s heritage and celebrate their roots. In an interview, Ahmed Kalifa explained that some woman in Malaga, go so far as to wear the burkah, something he had never even seen in Morocco. “This never existed in Morocco, but with changes in Afghanistan and changes in fashion, it became fashionable. People started adopting the dress from there, knowing that is has nothing to do with religion. They wear it as if it had to do with the religion.”⁴³ Second and third generation youth have a particular affinity for minority identity and Islamic ideology in particular, whether it is extremist, political or religious.⁴⁴

Though pride and cultural revivals are usually positive, disempowered and vulnerable

⁴² Rogozen-Soltar, 616-617.

⁴³ Kalifa, Ahmed. Interviewed by Catherine Turvey and Marcelo Borges. Tetuoan, Morocco. March, 2013.

⁴⁴ Lazar, 82.

youth can also be susceptible to Islamic extremism. A 43-year-old Tunisian woman named Leila explained that if French schools do not integrate students better, fanatics might take advantage. She explained that extremists “try to manipulate young people ‘see you are rejected by France, by the school, by French society; they don’t like you, they hate you, they’re racist, so you better turn to religion”.⁴⁵ Even subsequent generations with university degrees may find they are unable to integrate or have equal opportunity as compared to other Europeans⁴⁶. Fouzia expressed her feelings regarding today’s youth with Maghreb origins. “I don’t say that it isn’t good to be proud of your origins, but I think that the parents don’t tell them that you have to be proud to be French as well. Maybe it is because they don’t feel comfortable [in France] and they transmit this to their children,” she explained. Militant Islam recruits such agitated and vulnerable individuals.⁴⁷ Fouzia explained, that youth “don’t respect anything anymore. If you don’t agree with them, you will have problems”. As Fouzia noticed, the minority of Muslims who fail to integrate into Western society sometimes become involved in criminal or terrorist activity.⁴⁸ The Iranian Islamic revolution and strengthening Jihads in Afghanistan have radicalized Islam internationally.⁴⁹ Though the majority of Muslims are peaceful and innocent, Islamic militantism and terrorist attacks fuel Islamaphobia.⁵⁰

Immigrant Parents and Intergenerational Relations

“Produced within Maghreb immigrant families are conflicts that are the fruit of differences that exist between the values that many parents want to instill in their children with the socialization that children receive from western culture” --Sociologist José Manuel Esteve Zaragoza

⁴⁵ Killian, 579.

⁴⁶ Lazar, 89.

⁴⁷ Lazar, 89.

⁴⁸ Lazar, 82.

⁴⁹ Lazar, 84.

⁵⁰ Lazar, 82.

Considering that various generations tend to address identity construction differently, it is not surprising that immigrant parents find it particularly challenging helping their children integrate their religion and culture into European society. A study done by Professor Zarazaga reveals that parents are specifically concerned that their children will not maintain their religion.⁵¹ General European Islamophobia and French suppression of religious displays makes it challenging for Muslims to practice. Lecturer, Dr. Abdelhay explained how his own daughter is concerned about her son's continued religious affiliation in Europe. She moved to Paris after graduating from a prestigious Moroccan University. According to Dr. Abdelhay, the only two things that she does not like about Paris are the weather and her son's relationship with his religion. He is embarrassed when his grandmother visits his elementary school, because she dresses in clothes that indicate that his family is Muslim. Like many immigrant parents, his mother struggles to raise him as a Muslim within a secular world and worries that he will abandon his religion.

The cross-cultural differences between Europe and North Africa exacerbate intergenerational conflict within immigrant families. Along with religious concerns, parents worry about certain European cultural norms that vary from those of the Maghreb. Children often learn European norms and social codes from their peers as opposed to their less equipped guardians. Though parents appreciate how children help others acculturate, certain European norms concern immigrant parents. For one, European culture tends to be more individualistic and include more female sexual freedom than Maghreb culture. One of Zarazaga's second generation

⁵¹ Esteve Zarazaga, 496-498.

interviewees explained how Spanish children love to watch soap operas, though Moroccan parents often object. “Soap Operas! We watch them, and he [my father] knows we watch them, but he doesn’t want us to watch them in front of him. Because the Spanish soap operas are a thing one must not see.”⁵² Maghreb parents might object to soap opera’s sexual content, women’s dress or other such western portrayals.

As another example of intergenerational conflict, Fouzia Touna explained that her parents were uncomfortable with her having friendships with boys, as other European children had. When Monsieur Touna would remark to Fouzia that he did not like these relationships, she responded, “Sorry, but it’s like that.” One Moroccan woman interviewed at Bel Arc Ciel also described conflict with her parents. She says they were much stricter than other teenagers’ parents and did not allow her to go out for things like the movies. Now that she is a parent herself, she feels she is less strict with her children than a typical Moroccan mother. She allows her eighteen-year-old daughter to do things like go to Paris for a concert. A young woman traveling like this would be shameful in her Moroccan hometown where family honor and modesty are highly valued. Clearly, parents struggle to transmit their values to their children, while allowing them to integrate into European society. Children must also choose which aspects of their parent’s culture to retain and which to neglect.

Using the Veil as a Symbol to Construct Identity

That headscarf, once it is freely chosen, is a sign of cultural identity, a symbol of the difference between her and us, a difference that nobody, under any excuse, should attempt to make Fátima forget, because her past, her origin, her culture, are the values that will sustain the new woman born of the fusion in freedom of everything she will receive here – El País editor María Esperanza Sánchez

⁵² Zarazaga, 501.

This paper has considered how European society and politics construct the identity of people from the Maghreb, and how this in turn may influence immigrants' self-identities. It has explored how a Muslim identity can connect people with their roots or isolate them within a host country. Now it will explore how woman can use the veil as an identity marker to construct their transnational identity. Europeans have trouble reconciling their secular understanding of feminism with the Islamic tradition of the veil. Studying the hijab reinforces that one's self-identity can vary greatly from their externally constructed identity.

French and Spanish histories both effect how Europeans understand the veil as a symbol of identity. In both France and Spain, some perceive the veil as an affront to female sexual freedom. The history of sexual repression and constraining patriarchy during the Franco period make Spaniards averse to the veil. For Spaniards, the veil seems to align with Francoist virtues of female purity and subservience. Therefore, some see it as a reversion and step away from feminist gain.⁵³ In both France and Spain, the veil is also linked with Islam and sometimes with Islamic fundamentalism.⁵⁴ This connection with Islam challenges the French "laicism principle" which separates religion from the public spheres.⁵⁵ Some people in both France and Spain identify women who wear the veil with Islamic extremism and sexism.

While Europeans can see the veil as a religious symbol, ethnic marker, or symbol of oppression, women of Maghreb origins do not attribute any uniform symbolism to the veil. In another study done by Professor Killian, older, uneducated woman did not see the veil as a symbol at all. Accordingly, their arguments for or against the veil ignored its possible symbolism. Instead, some argued that it hinders integration, is not a religious requirement, or that

⁵³ Taha, Maisa. "The Hijab North of Gibraltar: Moroccan Women as Objects of Civic and Social Transformation," *Journal of North African Studies* 15, 4 (Dec. 2010): 474.

⁵⁴ Killian, 572.

⁵⁵ Killian, 567.

immigrants should simply adapt.⁵⁶ In contrast, younger, educated women recognized the veil's potential for symbolism. Veiled women use it to express varied identities. Some wear it according to religious conviction, others to appease parents, and others as a form of ethnic pride. Clearly, homogenizing Muslim women as a group and suggesting they have consensus regarding the veil is problematic. Age and education affect the worldview of these women, though they may share a religion.

Women who understand the veil as an ethnic symbol may use it to embrace their minority identity or resist against the dominant culture. During the 1970's, French colonizers urged Muslim women to assimilate by abandoning the veil. In rebellion, some women embraced it as a symbol of national identity. Today, France continues to encourage assimilation because she fears multiculturalism leads to ghettoization.⁵⁷ Unfortunately as Muslim women in France attempt to assimilate, some still feel rejected or ostracized. Some of these women even have French nationality and were born in France, but to immigrant parents.⁵⁸ Wearing the veil challenges French insistence on assimilation and loss of ethnic culture⁵⁹. It asserts the legitimacy of the minority culture as compared with the dominant one. Embracing their family's values allows women to remain accepted within their family, but may create conflict with the dominant culture.⁶⁰ Therefore, only some women use the veil as part of a resistance identity.

Other woman may act differently depending on their company or geography. They may adapt a "camouflage identity" wearing the hijab in the presence of their parents and not when they are away from home. In addition to acting differently depending on their company, some

⁵⁶ Killian, 580-584.

⁵⁷ Killian, 570- 571.

⁵⁸ Killian, 579.

⁵⁹ Killian, 570.

⁶⁰ Esteve Zarazaga, 500.

women may act differently depending on their location. Author Amy Freeman's term "moral geographies" refers to the "social construction of women's morality and the specialization of moral codes of behavior".⁶¹ As Freeman explains, values and norms vary across geographic regions. For instance, while the Maghreb emphasizes sexual morality, Europe stresses sexual freedom. Freeman studied women in France specifically and found that many Moroccan women struggle between their desire to be "good daughters" and "modern women".⁶² One way to reconcile these desires is to act differently within different moral geographies. For instance, Freeman quotes a Moroccan woman, Halima, saying, "Once I'm in France I can take off the hijab and even wear a miniskirt, but once you go back home, you have to respect the people of the village and their traditions".⁶³ In other words, some women decide whether or not to wear the veil depending on the constraints of their family and society.

Young, educated women defend others who chose to wear the veil. They assert one's right to cultural expression and the ability to maintain dual identities as both Muslim and French.⁶⁴ They argue that the French specifically "target their culture" by allowing yarmulkes and crosses in the classroom, but not hijabs.⁶⁵ Some woman pointed out the value of a diverse classroom and viewed hijabs as an opportunity for classroom discussions about religious and cultural diversity.⁶⁶ In both France and Spain, even Muslim women who do not wear the hijab, assert a woman's right to chose how to express herself.

To be clear, though women have various ways of self-identifying, as previously explained, identity is also an external construction. For most Maghreb woman, their hair, skin,

⁶¹ Falah, 147.

⁶² Falah, 157.

⁶³ Falah, 165.

⁶⁴ Killian, 573.

⁶⁵ Killian, 577.

⁶⁶ Killian, 578.

and features make it difficult to hide their background. Others may consider them low status because of their gender, ethnicity or immigrant identities.⁶⁷ Aversion to the hijab alone can be so strong that it can prevent woman from gaining employment.⁶⁸ For women who can “pass” as a member of the dominant group because of their physical features or language skills, most do so.⁶⁹ Even so, most women of Maghreb descent cannot hide their roots. As members of a minority, their ability to determine their own identity is limited.

The following story of Fatima Eldrisi serves as a concrete example of how people can contest the symbolic meaning of the veil as an identity marker. Fatima was a young Moroccan, Muslim who lived in Madrid. In 2001, school officials barred Fatima from entering both Catholic and then public school while wearing the hijab. A year later, a ruling by the Education Councilor of Madrid allowed Fatima to return to school wearing the veil. Press coverage of Fatima’s return portrayed her father as controlling and patriarchal. He was shown covering her eyes with his hands, a gesture that the media presented as dictatorial. Her father, Ali Eldrisi may have felt he was protecting his daughter’s privacy and comfort.⁷⁰ News coverage continuously portrayed him as the stereotypical male chauvinist.

While Fatima insisted that her choice to wear the veil was autonomous from her father, the Spanish public viewed her as oppressed. In a 2002 interview for *El País*, she stated, “I want to wear the headscarf, no one makes me do it”. Even this comment came under scrutiny because Ali had translated. For Spaniards, Fatima was not free to express her identity, but was instead coerced by her father. They linked the hijab with Islamic fundamentalism and gender oppression. By 2003, Fatima had returned to school and could speak for herself in Spanish. She explained,

⁶⁷ Johnson, 64.

⁶⁸ Taha, 475.

⁶⁹ Johnson, 67.

⁷⁰ Taha, 469.

“Now I can speak for myself and say that I wear the headscarf because I want to and not because my father tells me to”.⁷¹ Clearly, Fatima’s self perception as an autonomous young woman clashed with the public’s perception that that she was oppressed.

This illustration shows how the veil can convey messages about a women’s gender, ethnic, and immigrant identity. Though the example is Spanish, France had a similar “headscarf affair” in 1989, in which three young woman were expelled for insisting on wearing their veils. The school viewed the hijab as a divisive religious symbol and sign of female oppression, as opposed to a cultural expression.⁷² Ironically, while the Spanish and French value liberalism, they fail to understand or accept a woman’s choice to wear the veil. They equate the veil with oppression, pre-modernity, and Islamic fundamentalism. While Europe may view the veil as oppressive, veiled women may self-identify as quite autonomous and often seek employment and education outside of the home.⁷³ Some see the veil as a symbol of religious devotion, ethnic identity, or rebellion. Women often intend to identify one way, but have other identities imposed upon them.

Conclusion

Deciding to wear the veil is just one choice that people can make when constructing their identity in Europe. Both first generation immigrants and subsequent generations face the challenge of reconciling the differences between Maghreb and European customs. Do they attend mosque services? Do they eat traditional foods? What kind of music do they listen to? Even before making these choices, Europe imposes labels like “immigrant”, “illegal”, “threatening” or

⁷¹ Taha, 470-472.

⁷² Green, 1198.

⁷³ Taha, 476.

“extremist”. Just as in the United States, an individual’s life course varies according to one’s race. People with Maghreb origins face housing, job, and social discrimination. Because of the prevalence of Islamophobia and racism, people must carefully decide how to express a Maghreb identity.

When choosing how to identify, individuals have many considerations. Do they value staying connected to their roots? Are they concerned about prejudice? Some may assimilate and abandon Maghreb culture and values in an attempt to integrate socially. Others create a hybrid of the two cultures. Still others may rebel against the dominant culture and celebrate their own with pride. With the rise of ethnic ghettos and Islamic militantism, Europe needs to consider how to best help people integrate. Insisting on assimilation and assuming Western cultural superiority only isolates vulnerable populations of people and encourages them to resist. Integration should not rely on one culture dominating another. Rather, it should allow for interculturalism, in which the expression of multiple identities enriches instead of divides the nation. Openness to the “other” helps individuals find understand commonalities and feel a sense of national unity.

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