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Religion and Identity in a Globalized Morocco

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Religion and Identity in a Globalized Morocco

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Abstract

The focus of my independent research project is on the variety of religious identities among Moroccan youth, with youth being defined as people under 30 years of age. Prior to my interactions with human subjects, I consulted numerous literary resources to establish the context of my study. I investigated religious identity, globalization, individuation, the phenomenon of the Arab “youth bulge,” and youth culture. After this literature analysis, I constructed an interview guideline of about 20 questions for my youth subjects with the help of my advisor. I used all of the questions on this guideline in my four in-person interviews and my four online surveys. Although there are many similarities among the education levels and socioeconomic classes of my respondents, I have been presented with a large variety of responses to my questions, which were designed to understand how the respondent came about forming his or her individual religious identity. I also inferred about my respondents’ opinions on the religiosity of Moroccan youth in general. Furthermore, I asked two older people about their opinions of the degree of religious commitment in Moroccan youth. Although I am interested in how the older generation of Moroccans perceives youth culture, time constraints and other limitations pushed me to focus on my younger subject population.

My varied findings supported my hypothesis of individualized Islam being at the forefront of religious identity in the young people of Morocco. I found differing opinions concerning the difference in religiosity between generations--some respondents see a clear generational divide in the religion of Moroccans, while others profess that Islam is not confined to a specific age group and that there is unity among all Moroccans in their beliefs. The study also found concrete support for the notion that globalization plays a role in informing individual

ideas about religion, identity, and culture. Many of my respondents acknowledged the role of globalization in reshaping society, but most of them did not see how their own connections to the world have influenced them personally. From their responses, I can speculate (but not conclude) how globalization and the spread of mass media and technology may have been an underlying factor in the development of their individualized religious identities, and how the lack of such exposure among the older generation affects their general perceptions of religion in young Moroccans.

Acknowledgements

I received a substantial amount of assistance prior to and throughout my independent research project, and I cannot imagine I would have been able to complete this assignment without the support of three individuals. First, to Taieb Belghazi, who has been a constant source of guidance during my time in Morocco: thank you for your unyielding encouragement of my interests in identity and globalization and for your help in narrowing my focus to religious identity. Thank you for validating and supporting my ideas and for providing me with the beginnings of my literature review. To Moukhtar El Harras, my advisor during the research period, thank you for your genuine engagement with my topic and for the contacts and resources you provided me with. Your insights helped me perfect my interview guideline, and our productive discussion of my topic inspired me to consider how education informs individual religious ideas. I would also like to acknowledge my translator and dear friend, Med Bakkari. Words cannot express how thankful I am for your commitment to helping me establish and reach out to contacts, and for all the time you have devoted to translating my in-person interviews and surveys. I can say with full confidence that my project would have not been nearly as successful without you.

I would also like to acknowledge my Moroccan family, for they are my primary source of inspiration in my exploration of this topic. Finally, of course, I must acknowledge the people I interviewed or surveyed. Thank you for your participation, patience, and enthusiasm. I am extremely grateful to everyone who encouraged me and supported me as I pursued this area of study, one that may not be so profound to those I worked with, but one that I have been enamored with since the first few weeks of the program.

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Research Question

The formation of an individual identity within greater society is a fascinating process influenced by a myriad of factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, culture, and geography. This list has expanded with current times as the spread of media and technology brings people in contact with other forms of identity from around the world. As such, globalization plays an increasingly large role in individuation, defined by psychologist Carl Jung as “the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’” (Jung 1969). The focus of my study is religious identity in young people, and how the factors that influence new individuation processes are informed by the phenomenon of globalization.

Justification

I was inspired to pursue this project by observing the generational divide in religious practices in my host family. Although the parents and children all identify as Muslim, there is a very clear difference between their outward displays of religiosity. To my outside perspective, the children did not appear to be religious, nor did they perform any physical practices that would implicate them as religious. They appeared to be desensitized to the religion of their parents, and this is a trend I have observed in the general youth public. What surprised me more was that the parents did not seem to be concerned about the lack of religiosity in their children. This was an alien concept to me due to my own positionality, biases, and experiences.

As an American, I am provided with certain images of Islam and the Arab world that colored my expectations of the Moroccan familial structure. I had assumed that religiosity would be uniform across Moroccans of all ages, seeing that Morocco is a Muslim country. Thus, I figured that the parents, to some degree, would impose religion on their children, and I expected the children to have similar displays of religiosity as their parents. Although this expectation was primarily constructed by media representations, it was not a foreign concept to me given my personal experiences in America, where Christianity can be used by many families to reinforce hierarchies and restrict the behavior of children. In my experience as a young member of an Evangelical-Presbyterian church in a suburb of Philadelphia, religious practices such as going to Sunday morning services are often enforced by the parents. It was extremely uncommon in my area to see very religious parents unconcerned with the faith of their children, although very religious families were not widespread. I expected families in a Muslim country to take the same, if not a more involved approach. My biases were quickly overruled as I settled in with my host

family, where the difference in piety did not appear to bother either generation. My independent research project seeks to explain these observable differences in religiosity among Moroccans of different age groups.

Throughout my stay in the L'Ocean neighborhood of Rabat, I took note of the cultural globalization at work in my Moroccan household. These observations ranged from my family's media consumption to the brands of their belongings. The presence of Western culture was exceptionally present in my homestay, and so I wondered if this was common among urban Moroccan families. I was especially curious if factors of cultural globalization influenced the profound the profound differences in religiosity between the parents and children, and so I incorporated this question into my study of identity.

My independent research project is an exploration of a topic that I personally find to be compelling, but it is an equally important area of study for both sociological and political purposes as the issues of religion and youth demographics in the Arab world are gaining greater relevance in American foreign policy. Also important is understanding the ways in which globalization is reshaping traditional cultures and what the social and political implications of these reconfigurations may be.

Argument

In Morocco, religion is inherited. One becomes a Muslim as soon as they are born into a society where Islam is omnipresent, where one can find a mosque on every street corner, where the call to prayer infiltrates the privacy of one's home and interrupts conversation in public spaces. In a sense, Islam is easy to identify with in Morocco because it is so accessible that it is almost inescapable. The constant presence of Islam in daily life serves to reaffirm an individual's faith and to normalize devotion to that faith. In this context, religion is a prominent feature of individuals. It is well documented that religion affects one's sense of identity, their ideological and intellectual orientations, and their attitudes towards society and family (United Nations 2016). However, the world is changing, and Morocco is changing with it.

In an increasingly globalized world, identity formation is becoming more and more complex, particularly regarding religious affiliation. Although globalization has facilitated the assimilation of Arab cultures and economies with the Western world, the crucial role of religion has been maintained in the public and private spheres (United Nations 2016). However, throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there is a visible difference between the performed religious identities of younger and older generations. In Morocco, traditional ideas and identities are being challenged as the “spread of mass media and satellite technology... [brings] Moroccan youth in contact with the imagery of a global youth culture, [which] may encourage them to choose non-traditional patterns of behavior and define new sources of identity” (Obermeyer 2000). Religion in young Moroccan Muslims is now largely characterized by individualized ideas of Islam as youth “break from the notion of traditional Islam transmitted by their parents, textbooks, or mosques” (Bekkaoui , Larémont, Rddad 2011). Thus, “processes

of youth identity formation and negotiation are taking place in less conventional ways under neoliberal globalization” (Skalli 2013). I have thoroughly explored the concept of individualized Islam through Shahab Ahmed’s “What is Islam?” and have looked into the broader idea of individualized religion as it is described by Ulrich Beck, who argues that “the individualization of religious belief means...that the legitimacy of one’s faith resides in personal commitment rather than any conformity to pre-existent truths, with the truth of one’s faith established by way of individual effort” (Speck 2012).

There is no one way to describe the religion of Morocco's youth. It is easy to refer to them as young Muslims living under the rule and influence of a religious monarchy, but like all youth populations, there is infinite variety in religious identity, beliefs, and practices. I argue that religion in Morocco's youth has become individualized as a result of globalization, and that an observable distinction in religiosity exists between young and old people due to the differences in each generation's exposure to globalization and its effects on individuation processes.

Context

The Arab World's Youth Bulge: a Demographic Phenomenon

As the issue of demographics becomes increasingly important in American foreign policy towards the MENA region, the term “youth bulge” is popularly used to describe the large population of young people living in the Arab world. Young people in MENA are often described as politically radical and prone to violence, and there is a general belief that youth are homogeneous both within individual Arab countries and throughout the region as a whole. This type of harmful but subtle discourse falls under the category of Orientalism--more specifically, Cynthia Weber's concept of civilizational barbarism--and it is employed as an easy way to shape public opinion of the "other."

International organizations, political analysts, and policy makers tend to characterize the phenomenon of this large youth cohort as either a “demographic dividend or a demographic bomb” (Lin 2012). More often than not, however, the youth bulge is described as a threat to global security, harboring the potential to “unleash a flood of instability and violence” and “generate waves of migration for decades” (Lord 2016). This is explained by the fact that young people are marginalized by widespread unemployment throughout the MENA region, and although there is no solid evidence of a relationship between joblessness and terrorism, many analysts argue that economic grievances are factors that "can drive young people to commit acts of violence" against the state (Lord 2016).

American author and political analyst Graham E. Fuller published a particularly othering analysis of MENA demographics in the Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World. The Brookings Project describes itself as a bridge between scholarship and public policy

as a source of new knowledge for “decision makers and opinion-leaders, as well as offer scholars, analysts, and the public better insight into a diverse range of policy issues” (Brookings). The publication describes Fuller as “one of the most experienced and astute analysts of American policy and the Muslim world,” yet his contribution to the project only serves to further polarize the discourse surrounding the youth of the MENA region. Fuller describes many of MENA’s political, social, and economic problems that have developed as a result of leadership and policy failures. However, he declares that the youth population exacerbates all aspects of these issues, translating “broader social problems into an explosive and radicalizing mixture” (Fuller 2003).

Fuller describes Middle Eastern secondary schools as "a training ground for dissenting politics in early adolescence" (Fuller 2003) but depicts this emerging diversity of political thought as a threatening trend. According to Fuller, the youth bulge is a force not easily controlled by the state, and the high levels of dissatisfaction and the long list of grievances that burden this population create "more grounds for taking violent action" (Fuller 2003) against the regimes of the Arab world. This revolutionary potential to overturn oppressive states, according to Fuller, poses a threat to global security and stability.

Fuller also explains why Americans, in particular, should fear the youth bulge: these "new generations [are] becoming socialized into an attitude of hostility to the U.S. and its policies. The certain increase in the size of an increasingly youthful Arab population may be destined to translate such feelings into expression and even action" (Fuller 2003).

Fuller, like many other American conservatives, characterizes Arab youth agency and action as a threat to U.S. interests, and warns that the "empowerment of this youth cohort, even

in democratization will initially open the gates to public articulation of much pent-up anti-American hostility" (Fuller 2003). Anti-American sentiment does exist throughout the MENA region--and with good reason. Animosity towards U.S. foreign policy that adversely affects the Arab world is not irrational. Furthermore, Fuller's piece was published in 2003 as Bush's War on Terror was in full swing. Instead of explaining the context of Arab hostility towards the U.S., Fuller presents unfounded links between youth and violence, radicalism, and terrorism, and he is certainly not the only political figure--nor the most influential one--who does so.

Fortunately, not all discussions of this demographic phenomenon are negative. It is becoming increasingly clear that Arab youth present extraordinary potential for enacting institutional change throughout the region, and that it is the youth who will be the drivers of democratic change. The Arab world as a whole is evolving with modern global trends, and this was made clear by "the ideological foundations and social drivers of the Arab uprisings of 2011 [which] represent a departure from the ideologies of the past and may be ushering a new cultural epoch in the region" (United Nations 2016). Young people are becoming generally more open-minded and inclusive towards ideological differences as media and technology brings them in contact with different cultures, trends, and values.

Globalization

The integration of global economies and cultures is a phenomenon known as globalization. Globalization is presumed to have had a significant effect on the development of religious identity in Muslim youth, for it "enables unprecedented interaction and communication,

yet in doing so it undermines solidarity and commonality, making religion into a highly individualized matter, hence a low-intensity proposition” (Tobey 2014). This argument supposes that young Muslims, due to their contact with the rest of the world, do not have as much of a need for the sense of communal religion embraced by their elders. Without the pressures that come with membership to a communal religion, these youth are less stringent in their beliefs and do not put as much emphasis on adhering to the practices valued by the older generation, thus making their individualized practice of religion a "low-intensity" commitment.

Many past scholars of modernity predicted that the social and political significance of religion would decline with modernization and economic development (Thomas 2007). Norris and Inglehart's existential security thesis describes a modern era in which traditional religion is confined to the developing world, where the lack of existential security and high risk to individual and social well-being pushes people to seek comfort in religion. However, modern times have witnessed religion used as a tool of mobilization rather than a source of consolation, and “the resurgence of religion is overcoming the alleged separation of religion and politics as a defining condition of modernization” (Thomas 2007). Of great importance in this regard is the visible return to Islam in many parts of the world. This "global Islamic resurgence is a genuine Islamic revival and it is more wide-ranging than Islamic fundamentalism" (Thomas 2007). Conventional religiosity can no longer sufficiently explain new ways of thinking, imagining and representing reality (Thomas 2007) as the religion becomes individualized and more easily adaptable to changes in global and local circumstances (United Nations 2016). Religion is diversified by the global labor markets, where migration and global religious competition transport new modes of religious thought around the world (Barbalet, Possamai & Turner 2011).

Despite this rapid and widespread development of individualized Islam, which is a positive and progressive move towards modernity, globalization "today means American ideological, cultural, and economic hegemony" (Abu-Rabi' 2004). Both cultural and economic globalization have proven to be damaging to the traditions of many societies, where "some religious developments arise in opposition to globalization and are reactive defenses against what are taken to be despoliation of existing religious and cultural values" (Barbalet, Possamai & Turner 2011). In the Muslim world, particularly, globalization has pushed many to embrace a maximalist mindset which posits the West as Islam's enemy: "globalization, a concrete expression of American arrogance, is an aggressive form of cultural invasion. The Muslim world must protect its culture and ethical values from globalization's harmful effects" (Abu-Rabi' 2004).

To be clear, globalization does not directly produce religious reinvigoration, but this often "arises as a consequence of distributional struggles subsequent to certain structural consequences of globalization" (Barbalet, Possamai & Turner 2011). Reflexive traditionalism often inspires a return to fundamentalist religious beliefs, which can eventually lead to religious extremism. The spread of advanced media technology has allowed for the expansion of extremist ideologies, and the internet has unfortunately become a place of recruitment for terrorist groups.

Reflexive traditionalism has significant social and political implications which can have negative consequences, but "perhaps the real effect of globalization is the triumph of heterodox, commercial, hybrid popular religion over orthodox, authoritative professional versions of the spiritual life" (Barbalet, Possamai & Turner 2011). The individualization of Islam, especially in young people, has the potential to successfully combat extremist ideologies and offset the appeal

of conservatism. The interpretation of the Qur'an as a living text is compatible with modernity, and it is the young people of the Muslim world who harness the potential to incorporate Islamic values into progressive policy and cultural change.

Youth Culture

The globalization of Morocco has, in many ways, created a generational divide among its citizens. The older generation of Moroccans did not experience exposure to the world in the way the current generation is, and young Moroccans are facilitating "a convergence of the region's cultural space with global culture" (United Nations 2016). It is especially clear in urban areas how "the emergence of mass communication has led to the creation of a more vibrant cultural space open to the influence of global ideas" (United Nations 2016), and this has a visible influence on performed religiosity in young people. Moroccan youth are clearly inspired by Western culture, specifically that of Europe. Morocco is often sensationalized as the bridge between the West and the East, the intersection of Europe and Africa, the gate between Christianity and Islam...indeed, these statements have clear Orientalist tones, but the presence of European culture in Morocco really is quite profound. Visible among all age groups but highly concentrated in youth, European influences (and colonial legacies, of course) are presented through dress, hair styles, music, language, leisure, and consumerism. The openness, and even preference, of Morocco's youth to outside cultures and influences has had an impact on religiosity: "there is widespread agreement in the sociology of religion that one major trend in contemporary religious life is towards 'spirituality' which is defined as post-institutional, global, hybrid, and post-orthodox (Hunt 2005). It is partly a result of the growth of online religion, and

partly a consequence of consumer youth cultures that have an experimental attitude towards religion (Hulsether 2000)" (Turner 2010).

Individuation and Religious Identity

Individuation describes how people ameliorate the conflict between one's natural inclination towards individuality and the desire for membership to a larger social group: "the interiority of the group serves as a zone of participation for the individual. And it is through it that the individuated individual remains inextricably attached to the pre-individual (obviously, pre-societal) reality" (Scott 2014). By identifying with Islam, the religion of the surrounding society, but by doing so in a way that deviates from what is standard, Moroccan youth are navigating the formation of their religious identities through new individuation processes. They become separate individuals and pursue their own ideas about faith and devotion while still maintaining ties to greater society through the shared embrace of Islam as God's most perfect religion.

Surveys and statistics of Moroccan youth claim that "although religion seems to be practiced more by older generations, Moroccan society is witnessing a striking 'return to religiosity' as religion becomes more political and more dominant in the lives of the youth" (Bekkaoui, Laremont & Rddad 2011). It is true that Moroccan youth highly value religion, seeing it as an important part of identity, but for a lot of young people, "the strength of religiosity is not the main determinant of identification" (United Nations 2016). Overall, they tend to be less pious than their elders. Piety refers to an expression of religiosity and involves more visits to places of worship and listening to sermons (United Nations 2016). Moroccan mosques are

dominated by older men, and I have noticed that many older men who cannot go to the mosque at times of prayer, such as shopkeepers, will stop what they're doing to pray on time regardless of where they are. In contrast, young people do not seem to be as concerned about strictly abiding by the ritualistic aspects of Islam, even if their convictions mirror those of the older generations. Individualized Islam emphasizes a personal relationship with God, one that is not exclusively defined by physical practice or appearance, and consequently "the youth observe Islam generally as a quotidian practice above and beyond any ideological structures" (Bekkaoui, Laremont & Rddad 2011).

Methodology

I began my independent research project with thorough literature analysis of subjects relevant to enhancing my comprehension of my topic. I consulted a variety of source types ranging from blog posts to academic journals in order to develop a well-rounded understanding of my topic. Long before I knew what I was going to pursue for this study, I wrote down observations of and questions about religious practices, and I referred to these notes and ideas throughout the process of researching my human subjects. In fact, some of the questions I had about the dynamics of my host family were indirectly answered by my subjects in their discussions of the generational divide in religious practices.

My subject population is men and women between the ages of 18 and 30 living in urban areas. I did not travel outside of Rabat for my research. Many live in cities which are not at the heart of Morocco's capital but still qualify as urban areas. All of my respondents are university students in a variety of academic fields, and although this occupation is not representative of all of Moroccan urban youth, university students are the most accessible for research. I was put in contact with many of these students through my advisor and my translator, and I also worked with personal connections I had made prior to the research period.

My engagement with my respondents occurred by means of in-person interviews and through online surveys. My youth sample includes four men and four women. I interviewed four people in person and had four other people respond to the same questions online. Each respondent is a university student from an urban upbringing. For my engagement with the older generation, I only conducted one in-person interview with a married couple and inquired about their opinions on religiosity in Moroccan youth through my translator.

For my study of young people, the in-person interviews were my preferred method of engagement. Three of them took place in English and one was conducted in Arabic through my translator. My one female interviewee chose to speak with me in English and consulted my translator when she needed to. Two of the male students I interviewed are fluent in English, but this did not guarantee that they would give me longer or more detailed responses than those provided by the non-English speaker or the student who is proficient in English but not fluent.

I used the survey method in order to gather a more diverse pool of responses in the short amount of time allotted, for meeting with eight university students individually requires more planning and coordinating schedules than I was capable of. The online surveys were completed by three female students and one male student, all in Arabic. The surveys were by no means less informative than the in-person interviews. Although it's possible that my survey respondents were less inclined to give more detailed answers since they were not being prompted by an interviewer, it is just as possible that the respondents felt more comfortable responding to the questions in greater detail as they can do so in private and on their own time.

Because I had spent so much time on the interviews and survey responses of my younger subjects, I did not speak with as many older people as I was hoping to. I only spoke to one married couple, and this was done through my translator. The discussion was rather informal but the couple was aware that I was asking them specific questions for my research project.

I found my methodology to be successful in completing my objectives. I believe I made the best use of my time by using the survey method for half of my youth subject population, and the survey also allowed me to engage with non-English speakers in a way that did not put as

much stress on my translator. Of course I would have preferred to speak with each of my subjects in person, but this was not feasible in the given time frame. I also would have liked more educational diversity in my subject population. I do not believe that uneducated youth would have any drastically different opinions about religious identity, but they may have had different ideas about the general culture of Moroccan youth. I am also somewhat disappointed that I was not able to focus more of my attention on the how the older generation of Moroccans perceives religiosity in youth, but my priority was clearly my youth subjects. Overall, I am satisfied with amount of people I was able to engage with during the short research period and the broad range of ideas and insights to which I have been exposed.

Findings

“T”

T, 24, was my first interview and my first genuine discussion of religion with a Moroccan youth. Naturally, I was constantly finding myself surprised throughout the duration of our conversation. The surprise came as my own biases were challenged--I had made plenty of assumptions about him and his religious convictions based on his clothes, which were Western, and on his favorite pastimes, which include watching Western movies. These assumptions were quickly dismantled as we progressed in our discussion.

T was raised a Muslim and was exposed to certain religious habits by his father throughout his childhood. However, his parents never imposed religion on him. He told me that he is fully convinced of Islam by himself and that Moroccan culture did not influence the development of his religious identity, nor does he seek out the guidance of religious scientists. He described the biggest influence on his religious beliefs as simply observing the wonderful behavior of people during Ramadan.

For T, being a good Muslim means being good to the people around you and having a good relationship with God. His everyday religious practices include giving money to the poor and praying five times a day, and he often watches videos on YouTube that talk about Islam in a way that supports positive, uplifting thinking.

T thinks that most people his age share aspects of his religious identity, but he sees a big distinction in the overall religion of young people and the religion of older people in Morocco. "Older people are more religious," he said simply. "They pray more, their religious practices are different." Globalization has reconfigured Morocco's youth, according to T. He said that Moroccan youth are now like any other country's youth. "Everyone appears the same," he said of

young Moroccans. He also believes that global influences are erasing Moroccan culture, as youth are following the global trends and becoming more Western rather than preserving their own culture.

I argue that T is an active participant in this erasure of Moroccan culture, and because I know him personally outside of the context of this research project, I feel comfortable arguing this. T is very Western--he wears Western clothes, listens to Western music, and speaks English fluently. He has watched far more American movies than I have (and probably ever will), and although he told me that the media he consumes has no impacts on his religious beliefs, I think that his exposure to and embrace of Western culture and values has informed the way he views religion, specifically in terms of morality. I think T has adopted a more Western moral code that goes against some traditional Moroccan values. He incorporates this into his religion, which makes him an excellent case of individualized Islam as a product of globalization.

“J” & “Z”

J and Z are two female sociology students attending university in Rabat. J's interview was conducted in English, and Z completed a survey in Arabic. Though both pious, hijab-wearing young women with similar beliefs and daily practices, Z and J have had very different experiences with Islam that have shaped their perceptions of religiosity in Morocco.

When I asked J to describe her religious identity, she laughed, pointed to her hijab, and said “isn't it obvious?” She told me that she can't live without Islam or imagine life without prayer—religion is in her spirit. “Islam is my happiness, my life...myself.”

J told me that she came to her beliefs on her own, primarily through modes of independent scholarly research. Her parents never told her to act a certain way or perform certain

religious duties, and she told me that they have no influence on her individual ideas about religion. Consequently, J believes religion, particularly Islam, is easy, as “everything is a choice you make for yourself.” She and her family are equal in their religious beliefs but differ in practices, but this is quite common in Morocco, according to J. “In any house, there is a difference between the practices of the parents and the practices of the children.”

The physical aspects of Islam are very important in J’s personal practice of Islam. She made the decision to wear the hijab despite the disapproval of her parents, and it “feels great!” She also prays daily, gives to the poor, and fasts on Mondays and Thursdays. She also described visiting relatives as a cultural practice that carries religious value. Being a good Muslim, in J’s opinion, requires honesty, speaking with good intentions, communicating with people, and wishing the best for others. J admitted that it is hard to always be good to other people, but she strives to follow these moral guidelines as much as possible.

For Z, however, religion is not a part of her identity. “I think it is necessary for me to be religious because it is something we need in our life like eating and drinking.” She describes herself as having a body that needs food and water, a mind that needs science, and a soul that needs Islam. “I think there is no relation between my identity and my religion. I can describe [my identity] as a human being...completely devoid of any subordination.”

Similar to J, Z believes that being a good Muslim includes showing respect and kindness to other people, which she sees as forms of religiosity that she displays in her everyday life. “My relationship with Allah should never stop,” she says of her daily practices. She also places importance on praying on time and tries to read the Quran every day. Z has the same religious beliefs as her family, and unlike J, Z's family has a strong influence on her personal practice of

religion. Her parents taught her how to pray and how to be a good person, and emphasized the importance of praying on time. She attributes many of her current religious ideas to the guidance of her parents, and consults her brother, who is a Faqih, if she needs any insights about Islam. Z does not look to religious scientists for guidance or knowledge, as her only role model is the Prophet Mohammed.

Although Z recognizes a difference in practice between herself and her parents, she does not see this as a factor of age. Her parents are adamant about praying on time, but Z is unable to always do this because of her classes. In general, she sees no difference between the religious practices of Moroccan youth and those of the older generation. This is in stark contrast to J, who believes that young people care less about religion. "Society is changing. It will be difficult to build a good society in the future. They take, they don't give," J said of Moroccan youth. J argued that parents are not imposing religion on their children--a child is more often told to be a good person than to be a good Muslim, and there is more emphasis placed on excelling in studies than on being pious. Additionally, J believes that young people are more interested in fashion, traveling, relationships than religion. They want "just to live" as they please, not by following any particular set of religious values.

A likely explanation of these clear differences in thought is the difference in upbringing of J and Z. While Z was heavily influenced by her parents, J had the freedom to seek out Islam independently. This may explain why J identified a difference between the religiosity of youth and their elders, as her familial structure does not include religious conformity. Neither believe that the media they consume has had any impact on their religious views, but I can say with confidence that J's connection to the outside world and its abundance of scholarly resources on

Islamic ideas and principles has shaped her experience with religion and has had lasting impacts on her perceptions of religiosity.

“D” & “A”

D, 21 and A, 19 are siblings living in Temara and attending university in Rabat. Their shared upbringing has produced similar experiences with and perceptions of Islam, but I was surprised by the difference in their views of Moroccan youth. D's interview was conducted in Arabic, and A's survey was completed in Arabic as well.

D sees Islam as "the perfect way for the perfect life. Islam is the most perfect religion in human history. It brings peace and you give all your soul to Allah and the people around you." Being a good Muslim means striving to do what is commanded by God and by following the Prophet Muhammad, in D's opinion. His sister A stressed the importance of commitment to religious rules in order to avoid taboos. The most important religious principles to the siblings are praying and fasting, as well as forgiveness, kindness, and helping others by giving money to the poor. D and A both attributed the development of their religious identities primarily to societal influences, but also acknowledged the morals instilled in them by their parents. D received many of his religious ideas from his grandfather, with whom he spent much of his childhood. A says that many of her religious ideas came from her independent reading, research, and follow-up of religious programs. Her greatest influence has been the Quran itself, and the siblings both consider several religious scientists to be models for their beliefs and practices.

Both D and A point out the differences between their daily practices and those of their parents. D admitted that he only prays when he is in the mood to, whereas his parents pray every

day on time. A also believes that she is less committed to physical practices than her parents, and describes this as unfortunate.

Despite their shared religious experiences and beliefs, D and A have very different ideas about the religiosity of Moroccan youth. A does not see a distinction between the religion of youth and old people, and she believes that all Muslims of her age share her religious beliefs and practices: "I am sure that all young people, or most of them, have the same Islamic convictions and know the halal and the haraam." Proof of this, she believes, is illustrated during Ramadan, when all young people are fasting. "There are no different theories. Our religion is clear," she responded when asked about the differences in religious views between generations.

In contrast, D believes that Moroccan youth are moving away from Islam. "They are more open-minded than the older generation," he said of Moroccan youth. Unlike his sister, D sees a generational difference in the practice of Islam in Morocco. "The older generation cares more about religious beliefs and they perform more everyday practices, such as praying and giving money to the poor. The new generation does not place as much emphasis on these things."

I believe that D and A are two fascinating cases of individualized Islam. Growing up in the same household, with the same familial influences and similar societal pressures, it is interesting to see how different they are from one another in terms of their religious practices. D has manufactured his Islam to be a "low-intensity" commitment and has no qualms about this, while A strives to be as religious as her father. D is not very concerned about the ritualistic aspects of Islam, whereas A prioritizes Quranic rules. I lack a concrete explanation of these differences, as our language barrier leaves me unable to thoroughly communicate with D and A, but I was excited to see such individuality in their responses. I think it would be a reach to

directly connect their religious beliefs to the external factors of technology and trade, but certainly individualized Islam as a product of cultural globalization is evident here.

“S”

S, 24 of Temara is the only respondent who fully acknowledged how media and technology have impacted her ideas of religion, which I found to be compelling. Her religious identity was developed through her family teaching her about Islam throughout her childhood, as well as through school and societal influences. She describes no difference between her practices and those of her parents, except she wears the hijab while her mother does not. All influences on her personal daily practice of religion come from the Qur'an and from what the Prophet Mohammed said and did in his life.

Similar to Z and A, S does not see a difference between the religion of young people and the religion of older people. Although she describes the culture of Moroccan youth as "bad," she also believes that other people her age share aspects of her religious identity and that "religious youths have the same beliefs as the older generation."

When asked about the formation of her own religious ideas, she said that in addition to the influence of her parents and society, she reads and follows Islamic pages on social media. She follows people who talk about Islam and enjoys hijab-styling tutorials. “I got many ideas and information about Islam from social media,” she said, such as the way to wear the hijab. She also said that her religious media consumption helps her to notice and correct mistakes in her own practices.

S's case is a good example of how media and technology can reconfigure the means by which many young people are exposed to religion. S uses online resources to reinforce the

Islamic values and principles she adopted throughout her life, and refers to certain media outlets to help strengthen her daily practices. She exercises individual agency in forming religious ideas through her use of resources and personal reflection, and it is clear how globalization has facilitated this process.

“B”

B is a 28 year-old university student who has a lot of ideas about religion and actively writes about a variety of topics online. Regarding religious identity, B refers to himself as "normal," in that he performs his religious duties but he is not strict about doing so. He values openness to the rest of the religious books and religious thought which attempts to move away from jurisprudence and heritage in favor of social sciences and academia.

B sees himself as more free from the restrictions of fatwas and the opinions of jurists and elders than his family is. He is not as strict as his family members in his religion and seeks out more rational religious practices. Although his introduction to Islam was initially by virtue of culture and inheritance, he later began pursuing religious truths independently. Many of B's religious ideas have come from learning about social sciences and by reading the works of great thinkers such as Abed Al-Jabri, Hisham Gujait, and Mohammed Arkoun. He also took some religious ideas from the media, such as "rationality and delineation of all the books of jurisprudence and heritage, and the need to match the content [of the Quran] with the [current time period]."

In B's opinion, there is a visible generational difference of religion in Morocco. He says that youth are generally non-compliant with the strict requirements of religious practices, and that "young people are more inclined to liberalize and 'modernize' practices." He is a clear

example of this tendency, especially given that most of his religious ideas developed through independent inquiry. The process of independently researching and analyzing religious principles and thought has allowed him to manufacture his individualized Islam, which in his case, is a product of the globalization of knowledge and technology.

“N”

This next interview was by far the longest, lasting more than two hours, and I am grateful for the insight I was provided with by N, a 25 year-old university student.

N describes himself as above average in his level of religious commitment, and a Muslim by birth. For many like N, the transmission of religion is informal and inherited. When religion is part of the tradition and culture, young people observe the religion of society and accept it as their own. In Morocco, religion is omnipresent--there is a mosque on every corner, a sermon every Friday, religious language in media outlets, etc. In the Moroccan context, religion is something that one is born into.

N lived in Algeria from ages 10 to 16, so when he moved to Morocco, he felt like he had to start his life over. During this transition period he searched for his identity and analyzed himself, and found solace in books which helped him to understand the religious values he had grown up with.

Regarding differences in religious practices between him and his parents, N told me that his parents do more “religious stuff” because of their position in the family. The parents generally have more responsibilities. For example, his father is in charge of preparing for the sheep holiday, a religious celebration. As the man of the household, his father is also responsible for giving a certain amount of money to charity each year. Additionally, he is obligated to pay

visits to relatives, and encourages N to come with him when he does so. In terms of everyday religious practices, however, N believes he and his parents generally do the same thing.

Although his parents and did not have much overt influence on his religiosity, N mused that perhaps "all parents, to some extent, have influence, whether it's direct or indirect."

Regarding religion in the media, N argues that "there are not enough religious shows circulating to educate people, to give them authentic values." While there are a lot of good religious television programs aired during Ramadan, religion is not present enough in the media.

N believes that Moroccan youth are less conservative because of the ways in which social media and globalization produce a mixture of identity--lots of youth have identity crises as their cultural roots and global influences clash. "If you don't produce your image, others will produce it for you." The power struggle between the "dominant" and "weak" cultures plays out in economy, politics, military, and the media. "America is everywhere," he says, and "youth don't fight to understand their Moroccan identity." Some of them don't care about Moroccan culture, and N referred to this as an educational problem in which both elders and the school system are at fault. He told me that urban parents don't really try to implement identity in their children, and that values are stronger in rural areas where people tend to stay more faithful to their religious and cultural identities. He argued that every generation is getting worse in terms of overall respect for others. However, N does not see much difference among youth in religious practice--everyone does the same thing because "no one argues with the basics." The religious differences among youth are theoretical. However, N sees a significant difference between the religion of youth and the religion of the older generation. "This generation does less," he says. Views on alcohol and drugs are less strict in youth because there is this idea among young

people that other individuals are free to choose to do the “wrong thing.” Older people, on the other hand, care more about influences and do not condone others doing the “wrong thing.” The dress codes are different between generations as well. N believes that modesty is not important to young people even if they are religious. For example, a young woman in a hijab may not necessarily be dressing modestly, which makes an interesting case for how individuation is manifested in clothing choices. It is clear that young Moroccans are heavily influenced by Western fashion, particularly young men. In every part of Morocco I’ve been to, including rural areas, I see young men in the same repeated styles of Western dress. These styles are commonplace throughout the country and they illustrate how young people are embodying new cultural influences and expressing their identity in ways that deviate from those of the older generation. Young women who dress “immodestly” do so because they prefer newer clothing styles over traditional dress. This distinct break from tradition in the form of clothing is quite profound in Morocco.

According to N, older people have a stronger sense of identity because of the period they grew up in. The previous generation of Moroccans did not experience the influences of globalization due to the lack of TV and internet access. They tend to have stronger beliefs but this doesn’t necessarily mean they are more informed, N argues. Youth are generally more informed and educated about religion due to increased resource accessibility, which is why there is greater variety in belief and practice among young people. However, he thinks that half of young people don’t care about religion, and this is visible in the disparity between belief and action. The universal idea that youth is fleeting is present in young Moroccans, who chose to do what they want instead of allowing religion to restrict them.

As a cultural studies major, N follows everything from news, politics, and movies to the NBA. He follows a few religious figures but says they are not very active. Most of N's time spent on social media is dedicated to the maintenance of his popular movie page on Facebook. N is always exposed to outside cultural influences through his studies and in his leisure activities, and I believe this is why he is so accepting of other worldviews while still holding onto his own identity. He is a full-fledged supporter of letting people do the "wrong thing" as long as they are not hurting anyone else, which is something he believes the pious older generation is hesitant to do, and yet he still maintains his "above average" level of religious commitment. His exposure to the rest of the world through the globalization of technology and culture has facilitated the construction of his individualized Islam, and has allowed him to think critically about the varied behaviors that characterize his generation.

“H” & “M”

H and M are a married couple living in Temara. Their interview was brief and took place with the help of my translator, and although short, I find their responses to be quite valuable.

My inquiries were about their opinions of the religion of Moroccan youth. They believe that young people generally do not practice religion as much as the older generation, and that there are only a few young people who are as pious as their elders. They spoke of the fact that almost all youth are fasting during Ramadan, but do not believe that is a legitimate determinant of religiosity. "It's like they become religious just for one month because it is the most important," H said of young people fasting during Ramadan. He mentioned how globalization has made young people more open to other things and as a result, they tend to put more time into non-religious activities such as music, clothes, movies, and going out.

The couple described the culture of youth in Morocco as being heavily influenced by Europe in terms of taste in music and dress, as well as the newfound interest in drugs and alcohol. When asked if they see a difference in the levels of religious conviction between their generation and young people, H and M declared that the youth "are different in everything, especially religion--it's like they don't care about religion anymore."

When I was drafting my proposal for this independent study project, I was not completely sure of what I thought I was going to learn from my older interviewees. I predicted that there would be more unity across generations, given the literature I reviewed which described a "return to religiosity" in Moroccan youth. What I found throughout the remainder of my research is that this "return to religiosity" manifests itself in more individualized ways, which creates a discrepancy between the performed religion of young people and that of the older generation. This contributes to the negative view of youth held by many older Moroccans.

Furthermore, it seems that from the perspective of Morocco's older generation, there is a general lack of morality among the young people of today. A Moroccan national who now works as a political analyst in Washington, D.C. expresses his thoughts on this imbalance:

"Social ethics seem a thing of the past, and it appears very clear that there is a huge gap between generations, or shall I say a misunderstanding between all components of the society... We all noticed a dramatic change in the Moroccan culture within the last two decades. Many social morals, values and ethics have vanished from our streets. We seem to be in hunt for our true identity as a nation. There are many alien and unfamiliar customs taking over the Moroccan streets, I can even say that those customs are outlandish and destructive" (Beni-ich 2015).

As an outsider, I cannot speak to the truth of these statements. However, I can say that I have observed a generational divide among Moroccans, and I have testimonies from both sides to affirm this. I do not personally believe that young people are less moral than their elders

(although my personal morals may differ from those of the typical Moroccan), but I think that cultural globalization and the emergence of individualized religion has indeed created a "misunderstanding" between generations.

There is only one pattern to be extracted from my research--that each student has their own individualized experience with and practice of Islam. Many similarities exist among my respondents, but none of them, not even the siblings, have had the exact same journey in actualizing their religious identity.

Conclusion

My findings lend significant support to the notion that globalization has sparked a return to religion while simultaneously contributing to the liberalization of religious practices. I firmly believe that these new religious practices, in the context of a culturally-integrated modern world, are materialized by young people, whether they are aware of it or not, into a myriad of individualized Islams.

Future research in this field would benefit from an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of Moroccan youth with specific regard to the relationship between religiosity and morality. It will also be productive to contextualize the religiosity of Morocco's older generation and analyze how their experiences with globalization, or lack thereof, shape how they view the religiosity of their children and grandchildren.

For me personally, my findings answered the questions I had about the observable difference in religious practices between my host parents and host siblings. Perhaps young people are turning away from religion, as my two older respondents believe, but it is just as important to acknowledge the statements by several of my student respondents that parents are no longer imposing religion on their children. This is not a bad thing, in my opinion--I think religion is best pursued as a personal choice. However, I believe that it is counterproductive to consider the liberalization of Morocco's youth and their religious practices as a move away from morality. Granted, liberalization of thought calls traditional values into question in every cultural context and will always be met with resistance, but I believe it is important for outsiders to recognize this as a progressive step forward in Morocco's social development.

This area of research has important implications for how Western policymakers understand the youth bulge of MENA. The social, political, and economic implications of religious identity are becoming a growing inquiry in the study of international relations as social movements and political upheavals grounded in religion are capturing worldwide attention in every corner of the globe.

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