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Memoirs of a Mother: Life between an Islamic fantasy, Cultural Patriarchy, and the Startling Reality.

Nicole Fauster
SIT Study Abroad

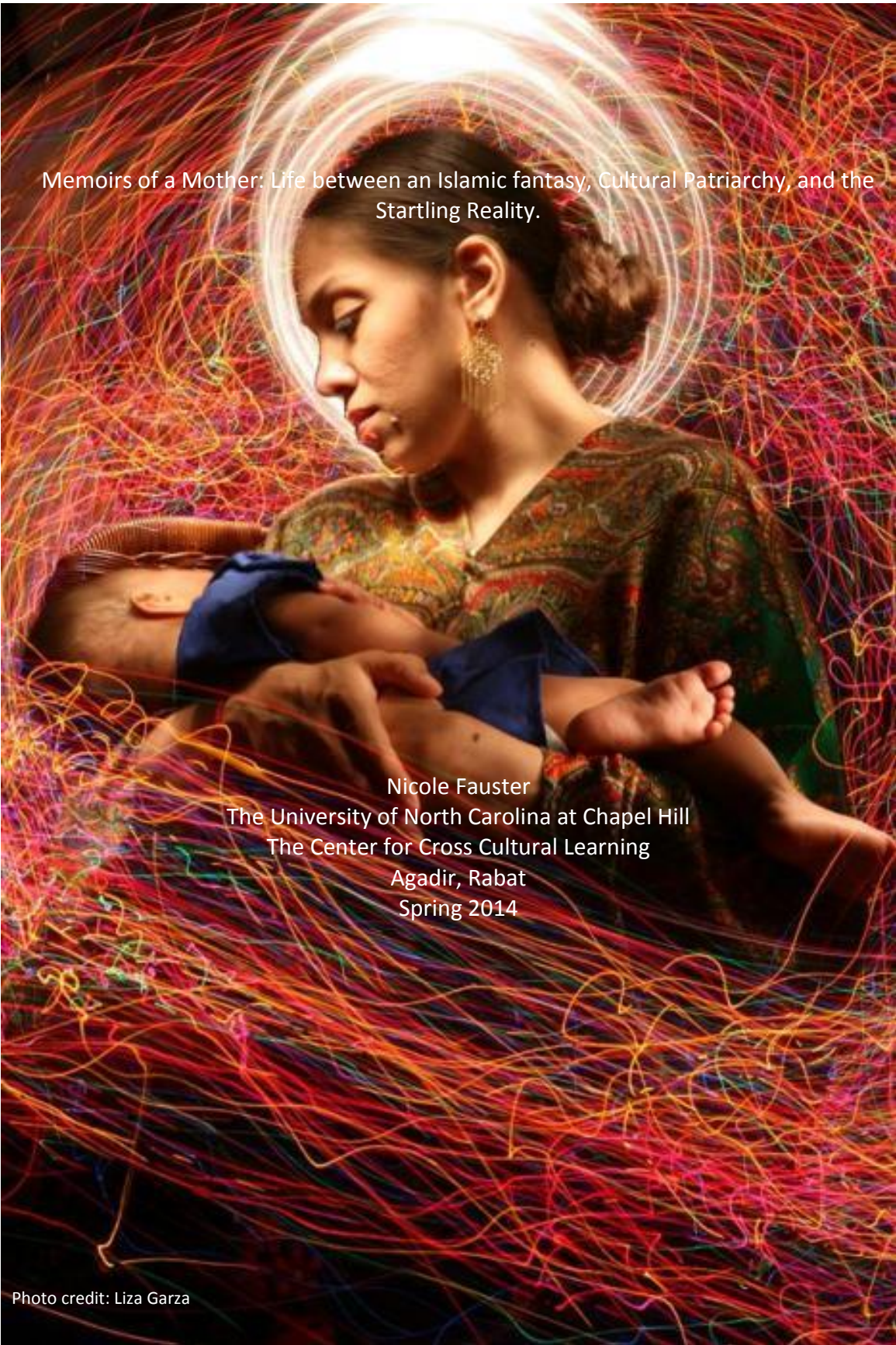
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A photograph of a woman in profile, looking down at a baby she is holding. The woman has her hair in a bun and is wearing a patterned, dark-colored top. The baby is wearing a blue shirt. The background is a dense, chaotic field of thin, multi-colored fiber optic strands that glow with various colors like red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. A bright, circular halo of light surrounds the woman's head, suggesting a spiritual or divine presence. The overall mood is contemplative and ethereal.

Memoirs of a Mother: Life between an Islamic fantasy, Cultural Patriarchy, and the Startling Reality.

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Spring 2014

Photo credit: Liza Garza

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Abstract:

Article 490 of the Moroccan Penal Code deems sexual relations outside of marriage illegal and punishable by one month to one-year prison time. But in a society where marriage is often delayed due to financial restrictions, premarital sex is common and pervasive. Though premarital sex is the norm amongst many, if a lady becomes pregnant, the tables turn she is labeled a “whore” or a “street woman”. If a man fathers a child out of wedlock; he can simply deny affiliation and walk out of the picture. The woman is marginalized, and the father of the child does not bear any cultural or legal responsibility for the child. I asked important questions like who are these couples and what are their circumstances, what does society have to say about them, and what does religion say about them?

After researching, I have found that these single mothers fit very diverse profiles, but most come from impoverished backgrounds and entered into consensual relationships with their partners. After speaking and observing over thirty individuals on the topic of single mothers, I have concluded that Moroccan society does not have mercy on these women, and they are flung to the outer edges of Moroccan society. Lastly, I looked at what Islam, the inspiration behind Article 490, has to say about sexual relations outside of marriage. I find that Moroccan society lives between three differing worlds: the Islamic mentality, the cultural mentality, and reality. People are able to move between differing worlds and switch their mentalities depending on the situation. But in the end I find that women get the short end of the stick when the final chess piece has been moved into position.

Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me this opportunity to even be in Morocco to conduct this fascinating research, and then I give thanks to my mother because she gave me honest feedback in the early stages of the research and development process. I would then like to thank my professor, Souad Eddouada for introducing me to the topic. A very special thanks to Abdurrahim Anbi for advising, encouraging, answering all my questions and emails, being very patient with me, and introducing me to my contacts. I would like to thank Samira, Izzana, Rebab, Rukaya, and Hakima for embracing me as their new roommate, allowing me to live with them in their dorm in Agadir. I truly felt like their sister, and I will cherish the long nights we talked about religion, love, the future, and politics. I consider these ladies the best cooks in Morocco! I would like to thank the lovely, genial, and kind Jamila and Oum El-Banine for being a guiding hand in my project and in my search for information. Many thanks to all who participated in the interviews and the filming of my documentary. Jazakum Allahu Khairan.

Introduction:

On an unusually hot day in November 2013, I found myself wandering around Casablanca's industrial hub, Derb Omar, endlessly searching for what some would call an artificial hymen. This is a vaginal insert, brought to us by Chinese ingenuity, which can be placed in a (non-virgin) woman's body on her wedding night. Since her hymen has already been broken, this artificial godsend will act as a biological hymen does when pressure is applied. However, instead of real blood, the contraption releases synthetic

blood. Last year, as I delved deeper into my research topic of virginity, the hymen, sex, and honor in Moroccan society, I came across a closely connected phenomenon known as “al-ommahat al-‘azibat”, which translates to “single mothers”.¹ Though this could connote a wide range of women like divorcees and widows, the connotation in Moroccan society is more specific, women who have had sex and become pregnant outside of the framework of a legally recognized marriage. The latter meaning will be the focus of this paper.²

Within Moroccan society, having premarital sex is forbidden legally, religiously, and culturally. This makes the single mother phenomenon extremely sensitive, and it is treated as a taboo.³ As a result, these women are pushed to the extreme margins of Moroccan society. That is why this topic should be relevant to Moroccan discourses, because a large group of women and their children are being disenfranchised. This topic should also be relevant to migration discourses because many of these women are migrants, having left their homes, their douars (clan- affiliated neighborhoods), and cities, after finding themselves pregnant out of wedlock.

Research Goal:

My research goal is two-fold. The first goal is finding out who these women are, where do they come from, what socio-economic classes do they come from, how do they get pregnant, what are their future prospects like, what is their legal and social status, and who are the activists who help these women? The second goal is to find out

¹ Fauster, Nicole “Memoirs of a Virgin – An analysis of how Moroccan virginity Intersects, Interacts, and Amalgamates Culture, Religion, Globalization, and Personal Choice” ISP. Rabat, Morocco Winter 2013

² Legal Perspective- Bordat, Stephanie W., and Saida Kouzzi. *Legal Empowerment of Unwed Mothers: Experiences of Moroccan NGOs*. Rep. Rabat: IDLO, 2009. Print.

³ See footnote 2

how Moroccan citizens view these women, and where do these ideas come from (epistemology)? I specifically focus on and analyze the opinions of average Moroccans (men, women, educated, uneducated, city-dwellers, and small town inhabitants) and those with more specialized fields like Islamic studies, law, sociology, economics, philosophy, NGO services, etc.*⁴

Hypothesis:

I predict that those with more direct connections to single mothers like NGO workers will be the most knowledgeable about single mother's cases, and women may be more sympathetic to single mothers' situation by virtue of sharing the same gender. Overall I think that those with lower education levels will be more likely to consider these women "street women" or "prostitutes" because of their sexual activity pre-marriage. Additionally, I think there will be an overall lack of attention or a downplaying of the male's role in the single mother phenomenon due to a level of patriarchy found in Moroccan culture.

Literature Review:

Societal View- Jay, Martin. "Study Reveals Alarming Hike in Unmarried Mothers in Morocco." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 03 May 2011. Web. 17 Mar. 2014.

This article gives hard facts about the growing problem of single unwed mothers in Morocco, citing that the number increased over two fold from roughly 11,000 to 27,000 from 2008 to 2009. The article mentioned that 60% of these women are younger than 26 years of age and about 30% of them are under twenty years. Many of the women

⁴ *- indicates a name has been changed.

work vulnerable professions like domestic cleaners and others believe that their sexual partners will give into their demand of marriage. Once they are pregnant, the boyfriend flees leaving her to fend for herself and her baby. These women and their children are often seen as baggage, and it is difficult for them to remarry. As a result many find themselves at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder and find themselves in the field of prostitution to make ends meet. I agree with the ideas presented in this article, and I saw the economic struggle myself went out in the field. I visited two single mothers in their homes, and it was appalling to see. The smell of mildew filled the small living room of one woman's home, and the smell of an over flowed Turkish toilet filled the living room of the other's. The paint on the walls were chipped exposing the concrete underlay. And in both homes I sat on rigid concrete floors only covered with a thin piece of fabric.

Religious Perspective - Thomas, Amina, and Alison Lake. "Unwed Mothers and Their Children Slowly Gaining Rights in Morocco - The Atlantic Post." *The Atlantic Post*. N.p., 25 July 2013. Web. 17 Mar. 2014.

This source gives great background information on the topic of single unwed mothers in Morocco. It also makes the distinction that in Islam, children of unwed parents should not be stigmatized due to, what some societies may deem as, their lack of legitimacy. However, she goes on to say that though the religion says one thing, this notion of compassion is not carried over, particularly in Morocco for cultural reasons. The authors go on to list issues these women and their children face. Of the repercussions, social reintegration is made very difficult since marriage is no longer an option for these women, and their children do not have the right to the financial support

from their fathers. The article praises civil society for trying to uplift this marginalized group of women by fighting on their behalf to get the “respect of their identity, . . . name, nationality and registration in the civil record”, as guaranteed by Morocco’s Family Law. The article mentions activists including Aicha Ec-Chenna, who has been working since 1983 to help relieve the social stigma and pain that single mothers in Morocco have to deal with. I agree with the assessment that it is unislamic to stigmatize these “illegitimate” children or their parents. As many interpret Islam to be a “deen it-tasamuh” (religion of pardon), I do not see how it is justified for a deed to brand someone for life. On the contrary, from what I have seen and heard from the interviews, Moroccan society does not have mercy on these women and they are indeed branded for life.

Legal Perspective- Bordat, Stephanie W., and Saida Kouzzi. *Legal Empowerment of Unwed Mothers: Experiences of Moroccan NGOs*. Rep. Rabat: IDLO, 2009. Print.

This is a great source which gives a detailed report of the legal situation of single mothers in Morocco and how NGO’s are working to help this disenfranchised population. The report highlights the importance of “legal existence”. If a person does not exist, then by default, the law does not entitle them to any rights. Additionally, the laws which deal with extra-marital sex are directly related to religion, which make the laws difficult to contest due to their sacred nature. As it currently stands, article 490 of the Penal Code outlaws premarital sex. It is considered “fasaad”, which translates to “corruption”. Whether correctly or incorrectly, the outlawing and punishing of fornication is attributed to religious precepts, which adds to the taboo.

Within Moroccan legal tradition, there are only two categories when it comes to sexual relations. A couple is in a legal sexual relationship, which is marriage, or they are in an illegal illegitimate relationship. In the first case any child born out of this union will be financially tied to the father, will bare his name, and be able to inherit from him. In the latter case, the child will be financially tied to the mother, will bare her last name, and inherit from her. One could then pose the question of DNA testing to confirm the paternity of the child since there is social stigma attached to carrying the mother's last name and being considered illegitimate. But DNA testing in Morocco is court-ordered, which the judge only issues in certain circumstances. DNA testing is ordered if the couple is married, but the husband accuses his wife of being unfaithful and denies fathering the child in question. The second circumstance is when the couple is engaged, and the fiancée denies fathering the child. It is also ordered during cases of rape, but the DNA test results are used to determine if the father in question is the perpetrator, not to ensure that the child gets social benefits, like carrying the father's last name.

The report also discusses the importance of the Civil Status Laws which deal with identity, death, marriage, divorce, etc. A birth has to be registered with a Civil Status Office where the child is born. To register one needs an attestation from the medical professional that delivered the child; this can come from either the midwife or the doctor. After all the necessary paperwork is successfully filed, there will be a judicial declaration of the birth. If this is not done within 30 days, then fines will be incurred. Single mothers are able to declare the birth of their children, and under the "father" designation, they choose a fictional name which begins with "Abd" (Ex: Abdurrahim or AbdulAziz). This is a new addition which came with the 2002 reforms. Before, the "father" designation

would be listed as “unknown” or simply noted as “XXX”. Though this reform is a step in the right direction, single mothers still have issues obtaining the birth attestation. Many single mothers run away to give birth in secret and do not do so in hospitals, so obtaining this attestation can prove to be nearly impossible. If they give birth at the hospital and do not know to ask for an attestation of birth, getting one can be very difficult down the line.

Another important document in Moroccan daily life is the Family Booklet, and it has information pertaining to marriage, divorce, births, and deaths of all family members. This Booklet is necessary to obtain important documents like the “National Identity Card, a passport, a driver’s license, free medical care and other social services, legal aid assistance in courts, and a vaccination booklet....without a family book people do not exist.” One of the main problems is that this book is issued to the husband and it is considered his property. Any divorcees or widows are simply entitled to a legalized copy of this book. A central question is if a single mother is entitled to have one of these books. The authors of the report carried out many interviews with legal professionals, and they asked the question: are single mothers entitled to this book? Many answers were simply, “I don’t know”. Because the law does not directly say single mothers can or cannot have a Family Booklet, the civil servants in charge of issuing books do as they please. A civil servant in Tamara issues Family Booklets to single mothers, while one in Ait Melul does not, both citing the law for their actions.

The report then goes into how relevant institutions look at single mothers. The most important player in this phenomenon is the single mother herself. Many women, once they get pregnant out of wedlock, may remove themselves from their friends and family out of the shame and fear associated with being a single mother. They may also

face difficulty when trying to seek help from institutions like NGOs for fear of retribution or their community finding out if she openly talks to people. Her family is another important player, and unfortunately, many families reject their daughters upon learning that she has become pregnant out of wedlock. Hospitals are another institution involved, and when hospital personnel realize that a woman has come to deliver a baby without a husband, they may interrogate, humiliate, verbally abuse her, and eventually call the police. Once the police gets involved and they realize she is a single mother, the reaction differs depending on where she is located. If they are in a larger city, the police will mostly work to ensure she does not abandon the baby and that she registers the child's birth. They even call NGO's to help the young woman in these cases. But in more rural areas, the police will most likely open up legal proceedings against her for having had illegal sex, which is punishable by one month to one year jail time. Additionally, it is reported that local authorities keep tabs on single mothers, recording her movements and whereabouts. It is still not clear to many what the end goal is with such surveillance. When it comes to civil status authorities and civil servants, many report that they are verbally abused, humiliated, and taken advantage of; because they do not know the system, they are often the victims of extortion. This is a serious hindrance to single mothers obtaining important paper work like the Family Booklet.

NGO perspective - McTIGHE, Kristen. "Help for Unwed Mothers in Morocco." NY Times. NY Times, 9 June 2011. Web. 18 Mar. 2014.

This source places the limelight on the work of Aicha Ech-Chenna, and the initiatives she has undertaken in Casablanca. The article describes her endeavor as a multifaceted project which includes many businesses (restaurants, salons, and

hammams), child-care services, and even training centers where mothers can learn skills. The article also sheds light on how activists have been targeted, citing abuse that has been directed toward Aicha Ech-Chamma. She says that religious extremists have called her out for aiding “the haram” the forbidden. There is a lot of progress that has been made, but still a lot needs to be done to change the way women are viewed in this society. I slightly disagree with the point which said that those who disagree with these organizations are “extremists”. I conducted interviews with many people on the subject of Aicha Ch-Chinna and generally organizations which help single mothers. And there was a level of disapproval even emanating from people who I would not consider “an extremist”. Though the term “extremist” is very relative and problematic, one sociology student expressed that these organizations, which give housing and daycare opportunities to single mothers, are “encouraging” this type of bad behavior. She believes the solution lies in family re-education instead of aid associations.

Overall, I think these are great sources which give really good insight to the single mother phenomenon in Morocco. However, it looks like there has not been as much of an attempt to delve into the minds of average Moroccans to understand how they view these women. These sources blanket how “Moroccan society” views these women – with a harsh unforgiving eye– but I want to dissect what different members of society have to say. The report issued by MRA (Mobilizing Rights Associates) comes close to analyzing what society members have to say, but they only interviewed those directly related to the single mother phenomenon like hospital workers, policemen, and civil servants. I want expand this scope of interviewees to include students, mothers, fathers, professors, painters, housewives, economists, philosophers, etc. I hope by adding these opinions into

the single mother discourse, I will be able to broaden the understanding of how and why society thinks the way it does. Because in the end these people are just as important to the lives of single mothers because it is them who make up Moroccan society, and it is with these people with whom they interact with on a daily basis.

Methodology:

My overall research experience was very positive, and I obtained a lot of information. For that, I am very grateful. I used many methods to conduct my research; the primary method was conducting interviews. I conducted interviews with about thirty participants in the cities of Rabat and Agadir. I found it to be very important to conduct interviews with people from all walks of life not only privileged university students. With that in mind, I interviewed single women, married women, divorcees, single mothers, single men, single sexually active men, NGO specialists, social workers, daycare workers, painters, sociologists, economists, mathematicians, law students, and Islamic studies students. In addition to interviews I conducted focus groups, participant observations, empirical research, site visits, and I attended conferences. I also accessed scholarly publications, documentaries, and social media.

Most of the people I met were either contacts I made in Rabat or they were introduced to me via my advisor Abderrahim Anbi. I am very grateful for the connections he helped me establish in Agadir. After being in contact with three initial individuals Jamila (advocacy and awareness project manager for Oum El-Banine), Samira (recent graduate in the field of sociology), and Lubna (a current sociology undergrad in her last

semester), my network increased to their coworkers, family, friends, and classmates, to which I had the pleasure of interviewing.

I maintained the integrity of my data by ensuring that my consent forms were fully explicated to my participants and were always on my persons. I only disclose the names, faces, and identities of those who wished these aspects to be disclosed. I conducted most of my interviews in Modern Standard Arabic, and to avoid misunderstanding, I recorded all interviews either with a hand-held voice recorder or via camera. This would help me during the writing process, so I will be able to go over the interview as many times as necessary to gain full clarity.

-Obstacles within carrying out Methodology-

I also prepared a short film which includes important interviews that I conducted, and filming was a bit of a challenge. Some participants did express a bit of hesitation when I asked about filming, but as soon as I explained I was compiling clips to create a film, these misgivings vanished. I also faced a linguistic challenge. Though I speak Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) well, some of my participant's vocabulary was very advanced beyond that which I am familiar with. But I was able to overcome this by simply asking for a definition. Additionally because I recorded the interviews, I am able to look up complex words after the interview for further clarification. In Agadir all of the twenty interviews, save for two, were in either Arabic or Darija. For those that were in Darija the interpreter would translate their words to back to me in MSA. The translating somewhat distorted the meaning I was trying to convey. For example, the first question I would ask all participants was, "what does the term 'single mother' mean to you?". I

would ask this in MSA, but then the interpreter would not just translate, they would also explain what a single mother was in Darija to the respondent. The goal of the question was to illicit an unadulterated response from the participant, so in those interviews with Darija speaking respondents, their understandings of what a single mother is may have been influenced by the interpreter's meaning.

Also as a part of my research methodology, I also conducted site visits to organizations which help single mothers and their children in terms of societal reintegration, child rearing, family reunification etc. to better understand who these women are, their struggles, and who the people are that help them. I was in close contact with Oum El-Banine which is located in Agadir, Morocco. Every one of the personnel was very kind and willing to help me conduct my research; I was able to interview the President of the association, social workers, project managers, and childcare providers. I gained information that helped me in answering the first part of my research question "who are these single mothers" and additional "why's", "how's", "when's" etc. All were genial to work with except the president of the association, Madame Mahjouba, and interaction with her proved to be an obstacle in and of itself. During the first interview I conducted with the project and advocacy manager, Jamila (who was my main contact), Mahjouba entered the room clearly upset demanding my letter of attestation. I had it on hand, and presented it. That did not stop her from expressing her frustration in Darija to Jamila. Being able to pick up some of the Darija, I knew this the conversation was about me and the research I was carrying out. In MSA, I asked her if there was a problem. She said no but continued to speak about me in Darija to her colleague, which was frustrating. From what was translated, she was afraid I would misrepresent the organization. Previous

researchers had blamed the marginalization of single mothers on Islam and portrayed them to be the victims of rape, misrepresenting Moroccan society.

As time passed I was gathering useful information about the single mother's cases and the association, but after my third week in Agadir, I still had not spoken to any single mothers. Relying on the association to put me in contact with single mothers, I asked Jamila when I would be able to see them. Jamila asked Mahjouba's permission for me to speak with them, and she said no. I asked why, and she said that single mothers tend not to tell the truth surrounding the circumstances of their impregnation. They will blame it on rape, because in their minds that is more socially acceptable than having been in a consensual relationship, which is often times the case. So she did not want me to talk to them because they would lie to me, and then I would publish this inaccurate information. After some persuasion on Jamila's part, I was able to spend the following day with the social workers who listen to the cases of single mothers. There is also a safe house single mothers live in. When I asked when I would get to visit; I was strictly told that visitors were only allowed on Wednesdays.

On Tuesday, I spent the day with the social worker, a family came in looking for their daughter who had run away and was in the safe house. She had given birth to a baby, and her family did not even know she was pregnant. The family made their way to the safe house, and I stayed behind, under the impression I was not allowed to visit since it was not a Wednesday. When all had been settled with this family's reunification with their daughter, Mahjouba made it very clear that she was upset I did not go to document the reunification, again concerned I would misrepresent the association. But I had received conflicting information on what days I was allowed to visit the safe house. Over

all, it was a pleasure working with Oum El-Banine staff, and they were more than helpful. But working with the president proved to be a challenging obstacle.

I was also in contact with another organization in Ait Melul, called the “Markaz At-Tadamoun”, Solidarity Center, which also works with single mothers. They are located in the Tafakul complex which also serves as an assisted living home and social work center. The Markaz At-Tadamoun, which can better be described as a project or a sub-organization, mostly works with women who become pregnant via consensual relationships, like Oum El-Banine. They are not as big as Oum El-Banine (which has a daycare center, workshop space, and kitchen facilities); Markaz At-Tadamoun is a modest two-room center. The first room is a small office; the second is a larger hall with beds for run away mothers and mothers-to-be. On my initial visit these bed were empty because there was a lack of funding to sustain overnight stays. I made an appointment to come back the following Monday, but it proved to be very hard. My base was Ibn Zohour University, it took a 6 dirham grand-taxi ride to get to Ait Melul, which was not a problem. But finding transport from where the grand-taxi dropped us off to Markaz At-Tadamoun was nearly impossible. I waited for petite taxis which did not stop and for a bus that never came. Though I got many offers from random cars with male drivers that were willing to take me wherever I wanted to go. I had carpooled with Jamila to the center a few days before on my initial visit. I remembered the general area, so I asked for directions and ended up walking to the center. I have never received so much sexual harassment, walking down that two to three mile road. The center is tucked away into a rich residential part of Ait- Melul in a construction zone near farms. Had I not been there a few days before, I guarantee I would not have been able to find the center. I finally get

there to find the office locked and no one able to receive me. I called my contact from the center and even the two emergency numbers listed on the door. One phone was shut off and the other rang into oblivion, needless-to-say, no one answered. This really presents the question of accessibility. If I was a single mother who heard about the center and was in need of help, I would have to face finding the secluded office, transportation issues, sexual harassment, and a possibly unresponsive staff. Accessibility is a very serious question which boils down to whether someone receives assistance or not.

Another methodology I utilized was participant observation. I remember in one of the research methods classes, it was highlighted that participant observation does not just mean sitting in some corner and taking notes. But it also means interacting with the subjects and doing what they are doing as well. That is exactly what I did. The first observation session I conducted was with single mothers. I sat in the lobby of Oum El-Banine from 5-6pm, right when most mothers are mingling and picking up their children from daycare. I helped mothers tie their babies on their backs and secure the cloths used to make sure they do not slip and slide. I also observed the babies and the toddlers in the daycare center. Again I was an active participant and fed, burped, sung to, and played with the babies and toddlers. I also took note to what people have had to say about the topic of single mothers in my daily life. It has added to my knowledge of the subject. For example, I attended a conference on women and NGO support systems in Ait Melul and the topic of single mothers came up in a very heated debate. During our village stay in Beni Melal, hearing what men and women have to say about the topic opened my eyes to how sensitive it is.

Findings:

Chapter 1: The Harsh Reality

The first portion of my research was finding out the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘how’, and ‘why’ as it pertains to single mothers and the social reality. The case of single mothers in Morocco is first and foremost not a new phenomenon. In general, Morocco has a long history of sexuality outside of the framework of marriage, whether we are talking about hetero or homosexual relationships. For the purposes of this research, the analysis will start during the time of Mohammed V and Hassan II. Schools were segregated, women did not travel alone (always escorted by a male relative called a mahram), and most of the country was rural. Women did indeed have sex and get pregnant out of wedlock, but it was not at the level it is today. During this time, if a woman were to get pregnant she would be called “hajala” and her child would be called “weld al-hajala” meaning “fornicator” and “bastard” respectively. But when Morocco gained independence from the French in 1956 the government actively attempted to urbanize and organize the society. That meant many things: registering marriages, establishing schools, and creating universities. This sets the stage for the explosive single mother phenomenon we see today and in the past few decades.

In 1961 the Moroccan population was 11 million, and in 1981, the population was close to 20 million. The majority of people in Morocco were very young, just 6% of the population was considered elderly. By the 1980’s the urbanization plans instituted after independence were taking off, and we see that by this time, cities were getting bigger and schools were taking off. The government had made plans for economic growth, and like many of its contemporaries, Morocco signed an agreement with the IMF and was

obligated to go through structural adjustments.⁵ Of course, when a country goes through this process, this means mass privatization and major scale backs on public services and subsidies. This hits countries hard, specially the people which were already lower on the economic hierarchy. Additionally, during this time Morocco was hit with a major drought which added to the pressure of survival. In the in 1980's we see that social norms begin to change.⁶

Women were now allowed to travel alone away from their families with the goal of making money. Women of all ages migrated to the big cities to work in private homes, factories, fishing harbors, and farms. These women were in sexual relationships, consensual and nonconsensual, and that is when the single mother phenomenon increased exponentially. Unfortunately, there are many different avenues that cause women to become single mothers. But in general, it is seen that many of these women come from impoverished households, and a good number of them have not completed education past the baccalaureate level.⁷

Profiles of Single Mothers:

-Secret Girlfriend-

This is the most basic and popular case whereby a girl is in a relationship with a guy, and he pressures her for sex. We see this universally, where he promises her marriage in the near future. But in the meantime, she should have sex with him because he loves her etc. She ends up pregnant, and he leaves her rejecting any affiliation with her or her child, citing that the baby is that not his. If she is sleeping with him, she is a “street

⁵ Paloni, Alberto, and Maurizio Zanardi. *IMF, World Bank and Development*. Rep. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2006. Print.

⁶ N. Fauster, Personal Communication, April 19, 2014

⁷ N. Fauster, Personal Communication, April 19, 2014

woman”, sleeping with other’s as well. Because this couple knows they are doing something wrong, socially and religiously, many couples do not use protection or contraception. There is also the belief that a condom reduces the quality of sex.

-Domestic worker-

Young girls from 10 years to 15 years moved to far cities to work as maids in private homes, and these young women were raped by a member of the family. They were kicked out of the home, and there were social repercussions if they came back to their original families pregnant. They found themselves on the streets, engaging in prostitution to make ends meet and to financially provide for their children.

-Pseudo Wives-

All which was needed for a legally valid marriage at this time was the reading of Al-Fatiha, the first chapter of the Quran, and witnesses. Many couples got married with a recitation of Al-Fatiha, but the problem was many marriages lacked the number of witnesses needed to make it legal under Moroccan law. If the girl’s parents, her, and her fiancée were the only ones present at the reading of the Al-Fatiha, the marriage would not be valid. There had to have been other witnesses.

The fiancées knew that one had to have a sufficient number witnesses, but they ensured that the ceremony remained small, limited to him, his girlfriend, and her parents. Men would made use of this modest marriage ceremony to coerce their girlfriends into having sex with them under the guise of being their legitimate husbands, knowing full well it was not a valid marriage. Once the girl gave in and had sex with the boy and

became pregnant, he would leave her alone with the child, claiming to have no affiliation with her or having been married to her.

-Farmworker-

There is a group of women who left home to work on the farms of larger cities like Agadir. The farm's manager or other workers rape these women, and they become single mothers. They are similar to the case of women who work as domestics in private homes, and they end up on the streets engaging in prostitution.

-Incest-

There are cases where incest takes place between the father and the daughter or between a sister and brother. These relationships can be consensual or nonconsensual, and the girl ends up pregnant. There was a case in Ait Melul whereby a brother and a sister were engaging in sexual activity willingly, and when they appeared in front of the court. They admitted they were in love.

-The Sugar Daddy-

When students leave home to study in the big cities, they need spending money for clothing, transportation, and food. Young women will date a man who is rich and typically older. He would take her to nice restaurants and give her spending money in exchange for sex. This lifestyle is very desirable especially if she comes from an impoverished background. Some women even go to the extent of failing their classes to extend their three-year college stint to continue living this luxurious life. When she becomes pregnant, the same story replays, and she is left alone.

-Ourfi Relationships-

This is a relationship similar to a typical boy-friend and girl-friend relationship, which is accepted by some societies. For example, there could be a boy and girl who grew up in the same small town; everyone knows they are in a relationship, love each other, and are having sex. The marriage negotiations will soon be in the works. When people moved to the larger cities, people brought this small-town social practice with them. More specifically, men used this mentally as a type of coercion tool into getting the girl to have sex with him. He would say that they are in an Ourfi relationship, and it is acceptable to be together and have sex. But when she gets pregnant, it is the same story. He will leave; believing that if she gives into sleeping with him before marriage, she is probably willing to sleep with others as well.

-The ill woman-

These are mentally ill women who were, unfortunately, in the wrong place at the wrong time. These are mentally ill women who live on the streets. The man could be a professor or a have a stable job, gets drunk, and rapes a woman who does not have all her faculties. She becomes pregnant and becomes a single mother.

-The Prostitute-

This a woman who has come across hard times and has chosen to engage in prostitution for money. In this case, she ends up pregnant. A tangible example would be a woman who comes from a small town to work on a farm in Agadir. The farm work is seasonal, and the money stops flowing after the growing season is over. It is easy for such

a woman, due to the pressures of needing to support the family, to go into prostitution. According to a statistic by Oum El-Banine this constitutes only .01% of single mother cases.

-Sub-Saharan Mothers-

There are reports that Sub-Saharan women are also engaging in sex, but it is a lot less stigmatized in the Sub-Saharan communities. Professor Anbi reports that in some cases there could be a Sub-Saharan woman who is living with multiple men in the same household; when asked, all men will answer that the lone woman is all their wives. She will become pregnant, and become a single mother by Moroccan definitions because she is not married to any one of these men.

-Sub-Saharan Prostitutes-

There are also cases whereby Sub-Saharan women are forced into prostitution to survive in Morocco. As we have delved into, the journey to Morocco is not easy, and it is riddled with hardships. Many women are forced into prostitution during the journey long before they even get to Morocco. When walking in Agdal or on Mohammad V, we see sub-Saharan women with small children, and they too are single mothers.

-Desirers of “Warm” Sex-

There is also a perception in Moroccan society that people who have darker skin are “better” sexual partners, in that they can change positions on a whim and go for longer periods of time. There are cases where Moroccans want to have sex with Sub-

Saharan migrants because they are “skhoun” or “hot” in bed. While whiter people are considered “cold” partners in bed, and are less desired. We find that there are some single mothers who have children which are half Moroccan and half Sub-Saharan for this reason.

-The Tourist-

There are some women who get pregnant after having sexual relations with tourists. The possible impetus would be that they would be able to have sex with a person who does not know their family, their friends, is not a member of the community, and cannot report back about any of the affairs because he will soon be leaving.

-The rich mother-

These could be young women who come from richer or secular families, and when she gets pregnant the families protect and accept her and the baby. Not much is known about these women because they have the abilities to keep the situation under wraps, whether it is paying for abortions or providing financial support.

I had the privilege of meeting ten single mothers, and the four I interviewed fall into one or more of the aforementioned categories. For privacy purposes these mothers will be labeled A, B, C, and D. I met “A” in Agadir at Oum El-Banine. She was telling her story in Darija, but it was soon translated into MSA for me. She is from Casablanca and her family wanted her to marry her cousin. Her family gave her an ultimatum: either she marries her cousin or she stays confined at home. She refused this union and ended

up staying in her home for eight years. A family member in Houribga invited her to stay with her for a few days, and thus she was able to leave the house. She took the opportunity to run away and ended up finding work on a farm in Agadir. She entered into a consensual relationship with an employee and became pregnant. The goal was to marry, but he died in a freak-accident and left her alone to raise their child. She heard about Oum El-Banine and is currently receiving their support.

I met “B” in the modest home she shared with her family in Tikiwine. The smell of an overflowed Turkish toilet filled the small living room. The paint on the walls were chipped exposing the concrete underlay, and I sat on a rigid concrete floor only covered with a thin piece of fabric. “B” worked on a farm where she met the father of her baby. They were going to get married until her family found out that he was already married with children. The family did not allow her to marry him because of his current marital status. Now the father has run away and will not acknowledge fathering the child because that would mean that he is confessing to adultery, which is illegal. Oum El-Banine is currently trying to intervene to get him to acknowledge his child, but attempts at communicating to him via telephone are risky because the wife is now in possession of his phone.

“C” is another difficult case, and I was able to visit her modest home in Ait Taimia. Her apartment resembled “B”’s a lot in terms of the concrete floors, peeling paint, and strong mildew smell. She showed me pictures of her husband who wasted away from an undisclosed illness. He died without leaving anything behind save for memories, a couple of children, and the responsibility of making ends meet. She was forced into prostitution to feed her family, and bore a beautiful daughter who is now in

primary school. She broke down into tears when she explained how she would always have to live with the shame of her actions. She says men aggressively sexually harass her on a daily basis because she prostituted herself. When asked “what is a woman without a man in this society”, she replied without hesitation, “walou”... “nothing.” She is currently supporting her family as a vegetable vender.

“D” is a very disheartening case. I met her in Agadir when she was nine months pregnant, and one could immediately tell she had a mental disability. She has the communication skills of maybe a one-and-half-year-old or a two-year-old child. She was not able to speak, but she was able to sign. When I asked the social worker how she got pregnant, she looked at me and said the same way most of these girls get pregnant. Some boyfriend was able to convince her to have sex with him. What saddened me was that, unlike other women who have their full mental capacities when making the decision to sleep with a man or not, it looked as if she was completely taken advantage of sexually because of her disability.⁸

-The Fathers-

Now that the profiles of these women have been explicated, it is important to understand who these fathers are. These men, like all human beings, have “shahwa” or sexual desire. But because Moroccan law and Islam permit sex only within the framework of marriage, this leaves many between a rock and a hard place. Before a man can typically propose marriage to a woman, he has to have a level of financial stability. With the recent economic crisis, jobs are harder to come by over all; this delays the marriage age. As of 2007, the average age for losing virginity for males was 16.7 years and for females was 18.2 years. The average age for getting married for the first time was

⁸ N. Fauster, Personal Communication, April 19, 2014

30 years.⁹ So many who are having sex are not financially or mentally ready for marriage.

Most of the men who impregnate these women are boyfriends or lovers who have, in a lot of cases, smooth talked their way into convincing their girlfriends to have sex with them. As we have seen, the father profile also varies, he could be a rapist, a sugar daddy, a prostitute's client, a drunk passerby, a sub-Saharan migrant, a family member like a brother, or a European tourist. Though the profiles vary, a good number of these fathers are boyfriends who achieved their goal of sex. A common thread amongst many of these profiles is that when the woman becomes pregnant many of these men do not bare any of the responsibility. In some cases, the guy and girl could be dating for years, and this is common knowledge amongst the community. But when the girl gets pregnant, the man and his family completely deny knowing her. Often times claiming she is a street woman, and some other guy is the father.

It is very easy for the man to get away, leaving the woman with the baby. One reason is because the laws pertaining to DNA testing are not in the woman's favor. DNA testing in Morocco is court-ordered, which the judge only issues in three circumstances.¹⁰ It is ordered in cases where there is a legal marriage, but the husband denies being the father to the child. They are also issued in cases of rape for conviction purposes. When there is no physical or DNA proof a certain man is involved it is easy to deny. However, it is impossible for an unmarried woman to deny her "sin" because she carries it with her for nine months. The level of patriarchy in Moroccan culture also makes it easy for man to get away with denying responsibility. This will be delved into further in the analysis of

⁹ Dialmy, Abdessamad. "Sexuality in Islam in Morocco." CCCL, Rabat. 14 Oct. 2013. Lecture

¹⁰ N. Fauster, Personal Communication, April 10, 2014

the interviews. But there is the mentality that even when a man has sex with a girl, it is her fault, she seduced him, or that he just had an accident.¹¹ The male's role in this phenomenon is almost considered nonexistent if the situation is analyzed on a cultural level.

-The Baby-

Another important group to profile are these children. Many of these children are abandoned in dumpsters and at the doorsteps of mosques. I remember when my teacher told me a story about an event that happened last semester. Her husband was taking out the trash when a group of people were crowded around the garbage can. It did not take long to hear the faint crying sounds emanating from the industrial bin. A young woman abandoned her baby in the trash, the police had been called, and they were on their way. But unfortunately, the baby had been there too long, and had died before the police and ambulance arrived to the scene.¹² Abandonment is a reality, but on the same note there are many women who do keep their children and seek help.

The children are, in theory, able to enroll in school and receive papers, but then this also depends on their mother's ability to register the child's birth, as mentioned in the literature review. A crucial element to the discussion is if the child is able to carry the father's name or not. Typically, the child carries the name of the mother if the parents were not married. But there is a lot of social stigma attached to not carrying the father's last name, and it is a direct indicator that the parents had an illegal relationship. For children born before 2002, one could see on their records that they were illegitimate.

¹¹ N. Fauster, Personal Communication, April 2, 2014

¹² N. Fauster, Personal Communication, October 9, 2013

There would be “xxx” or “unknown” in the designation specific for the father.¹³ But now it is not as obvious because a fictional name is put in these designations. However, one can still find out if a child is legitimate or not if one continues examining the lineage. With legitimate children it is easy to see who the father’s father is, but when it comes to the documentation of illegitimate children one cannot tell who the father’s father is.

-Civil Society-

Many of these children do receive support and care by family members and also associations, which leads into the next topic of civil society. There are a growing number of organizations working to help this disenfranchised group of people and their children. One of the pioneers of the NGO movement, as it pertains to single mothers, is Aicha Ech-Chinna.¹⁴ She started working with single mothers in the 1980s and soon established Solidarité Féminine in Casablanca which has grown over the years. The association has daycare facilities and it also has various businesses, like hammams, restaurants, and hairdressers, all run by single mothers.

Another organization, that I worked closely with during my research, is Oum El-Banine in Agadir. Madame Mahjouba created the association in 2001. The organization works under certain conditions. The young mothers must agree to the following terms. They must inform their families of their situation, they cannot abandon the baby, and they cannot repeat this behavior. As a general rule, they do not work with prostitutes. In terms of facilities they are relatively well endowed. There is a safe house where women live in during the end of pregnancy up until the baby is 40 days old. After that time, the child

¹³ Legal Perspective- Bordat, Stephanie W., and Saida Kouzzi. *Legal Empowerment of Unwed Mothers: Experiences of Moroccan NGOs*. Rep. Rabat: IDLO, 2009. Print.

¹⁴ Religious Perspective - Thomas, Amina, and Alison Lake. "Unwed Mothers and Their Children Slowly Gaining Rights in Morocco - The Atlantic Post." *The Atlantic Post*. N.p., 25 July 2013

moves to the childcare facilities while the mother works. Most women find work as domestic labor. They receive this daycare assistance until the child turns three but there are plans to increase the cut off until the age of six.

The first month of daycare is free then after that a one hundred dirham monthly amount is due. This covers the cost of diapers, medicine, formula, etc. All the mother has to do is bring the baby in with a change of clothes. The childcare facilities are broken up into three sections: 40 days to 9 months, 9 months to 1.5 years, 1.5 years to 3 years. As the children reach the later stages (ages 1.5-3 years), they sing songs in Arabic and French, paint, color, bike ride, watch cartoons, recite Qur'an, and sing and dance to music. There are currently 23 children and 5 childcare providers.

The organization works to reunify families. During a participant observation session, I witnessed a family reunification session. A family had been notified that their daughter was at the Oum El-Banine safe house. The family was completely shocked to hear their daughter was sexually active to begin with, let alone know that she was living under their roof pregnant and had given birth to a baby the previous day. They had to splash water on the father's face to keep him from blacking out from the shock. The social workers were working closely with the family to get them to accept the situation, their daughter, and her baby. But the problem is that they lived in a douwar, and that would not be easy. In the end they the accepted situation, and I got visit their daughter the following day.

The other main endeavor Oum El-Banine undertakes is the safe house. I accompanied a family that came by to drop food off to their daughter. It is a very nicely furnished apartment with a living room where families can visit and speak with their

daughters. It was decorated with framed pictures of Mahjouba, some single mothers, and of course the king. There is a kitchen where the women take turns cooking different meals. Then there was the bedroom, which was a very large room with sofas. Each woman had a sofa to sleep on which she shared with her baby; it was beautiful to see six tiny bodies cuddled next to their mothers.

The organization emphasizes its goal of encouraging mothers to take responsibility for their actions. The organization does not condone behaviors like premarital sex, but rather the association wants to help women take responsibility for themselves and their children. They do so with the help of external funding sources. For example a Swedish MP is a strong supporter of Oum El-Banine financially. But since the economic downturn of 2008, there have been scale backs. But the organization hopes to be back on track soon.

Chapter 2: Societal Perceptions

Now that my basic research questions have been answered above, the paper will delve into the findings when talking to average Moroccan citizens. I appreciated the honesty many of the respondents had. I made sure to talk with a wide range of individuals. I expanded the scope of interviewees to include students, mothers, fathers, professors, painters, housewives, economists, philosophers, etc.

-Perceptions of the Female Role-

-Education level-

The first question I asked was, “what does the term ‘single mother’ mean to you?” The answer remained generally consistent in that it is a woman that gets pregnant without being married. After this general consensus, attitudes varied widely. It is difficult to say

that people without formal education particularly looked down upon these women as I hypothesized. Indeed there was Hassan*, who did not complete the baccalaureate degree, who believed that a “single mother” (or a woman who has sex outside of marriage in general) was synonymous to “’aahira” or “whore”. I asked him if a woman has the right to have sex outside of marriage; the answer was negative. I asked if a man has the right to have sex outside marriage; the answer was negative. Down the line, he admitted to fornicating. So I asked if he considered himself an “’aahir”; the question was met with pause. He said he considers himself “fasid” or “corrupt”, and he feels guilt. He knows he is doing something wrong, but in the end he said, “Allah samhlina” “God pardon us”. I continued, “if you feel guilty for having sex outside of marriage and ask for forgiveness, why not give that same mercy and understanding to women who fornicate?” He paused for a very long time and repeated “Allah samhlina”.

To juxtapose, I interviewed Husna*, a female Islamic studies student at the master’s level. When she answered my first question of what does the term “single mother” mean. She immediately called her a “zania” which means “female fornicator”, which is a term used in the Quran. It was not until much probing, 19 minutes into the interview, did she use the term “zani” or “male fornicator”. When she participated in the focus group with a female sociology student and a female law student, she expressed the need for women to preserve “furujiyin” or “their vaginas” (another Quranic term), wait for their future husbands who would protect them, and not attract men’s sexual desire or seduce them with her clothing, voice, etc. When asked about the children which result from these relationships. She said that the women should be punished and the children sent to orphanages. She also acknowledged that the Moroccan law does not carry out the

Islamic punishment for fornication which is 100 lashes, but a modified prison sentence. Lastly, when I asked what if the mother was deceived or tricked into having sex with her partner (which is the reality in many cases), she simply laughed and posed the question, why should she allow herself to get tricked?

The juxtapositions between Husna and Hassan's interview shows that the line of thinking is quiet similar in that both focus negative attention on the woman. They even go as far as blaming the woman for her position – its because she is a “whore” or she stirred a man's sexual desire. Hassan and Husna are on different ends of the education spectrum, their ideas are somewhat compatible. Though it is difficult to make decisive conclusion on what education level says about one's opinion, it does show that there are educated people and women who espouse these ideas. This line of thinking is not reserved to the uneducated, as I hypothesized.

-Gender-

It is also difficult to say women will be more sympathetic to the trials of a single mother. I had the pleasure of interviewing Zakaria who is a graduate from the faculty of law at Mohammad V University.¹⁵ As I conducted my interview with him, he revealed that he actually conducted research on single mothers when he was an undergrad; he visited Oum El-Banine, Solidarité Féminine, and other associations in Marrakesh and Tangiers. He has met many single mothers during his research period and got to know them personally. At one point during the interview, he said that “it's the man's fault, it's never the ladies fault. No lady wants to live by herself and raise a baby”. He later

¹⁵ N. Fauster, Personal Communication, April 2, 2014

insinuated that it is the guy who keeps “tweeting” in her ears until she gives in and gives him sex.

I also interviewed Mahika*, who is also a law student in Agadir. She participated in the focus group with Husna and Soraya, a sociology student*. When I posed the question of young men deceiving young women with words of love and marriage for the ultimate goal of sex, she understood where these girls come from emotionally. Mahika answered me clearly, “the woman in this case is the victim”. When Husna made the comment about punishing the single mother and sending the child to an orphanage, Mahika retorted with full energy and passion, “what about the father?!” Husna replied “he should also be punished”. Mahika responded soundly, “why is he not punished in Moroccan society?”

I also interviewed Soufiane, who is a sociology student in Agadir. As a man who openly talks about his sexual experiences and is currently sexually active, he spoke frankly about sexual desire and how this ties into the single mother phenomenon. He could understand where these women were coming from; he concedes that women also have a sexual desire and are sexual beings. He empathizes and concludes “all humans, males and female, were are created weak.” He also brought up an interesting topic which ties into my concluding argument; when one asks a Moroccan “is a woman equivalent to her hymen”. Many people will say “no” without hesitation because this seems like a rational answer which one expects. But when deciding on whom to marry, the question of if the hymen is intact becomes central. He observes that people’s rationale reverts back to the “traditional” way of thinking and people live between the “traditional” and “realistic” paradigms.

So with this information, again it is not sound to say that women as a whole will necessarily empathize with the case of single mothers and women who have sex outside of marriage, as I hypothesized. As has been shown, there are men who understand the struggle of controlling one's sexual desires and understand the lengths some men go to to get a girl to have sex with them. Interestingly, when I conducted my focus group with educated young males, the last question I asked was if they could ever marry a single mother. One man said "impossible", the other said if he loved her, and the others chose to exercise their right not to answer.

-Religion's Education-

I also conducted an interview with Muhammad*, who specialized in Islamic studies. I was hoping to get a view to compare against Husna's responses, having studied the same field. But the answers I received were completely different and answered with a different mindset. When I asked about "shahwa" or "sexual desire", he quoted the Quran. He quoted the same verse as Husna, regarding the need for women to preserve their private parts. But he also gave the verse some context by referring to the verse before it that addresses men to lower their gaze (Chapter 24 Verses 31 and 32). He said that God addresses men before women, and it is very crucial to look at who God talks to first. God commands *men* to lower their gazes before He tells women to preserve their private parts. He also expressed that humans were created weak and God's forgiveness is never-ending. He wrapped up the interview by saying that there is a large difference between a male and a man. Being male is a biological designation, but being a man means treating people

with respect and kindness. He said that if his daughter fell into fornication and became pregnant; he would obviously let her know what she did was not permissible, but he would also embrace her and work with her and the situation. When asked if he would marry a single mother, he said it is important for us, as Muslims, to become close with these mothers and embrace them, because like all people they have just made a mistake.

It is difficult to say that Islamic law says one thing or another because in the end it is a human interpreting these laws. We see that very clearly in the way Muhammad and Husna have read the religion.

-Perceptions of the Male's Role-

One of the next questions I asked was about what people thought of the male's role in all of this. The answer was loud and clear. Many people agreed that religiously and logically men and women are on equal footing when it comes to sex outside of marriage: its not acceptable and both should bare the responsibility if a child is born out of this union. But it was also said that the social reality paints a different picture. The male is allowed to have as much sex as he wants with as many as he likes, and the woman is expected to stay a virgin until marriage. If she does not, she is considered a whore. But some go as far as considering the man who has a lot of sex with many women, a 'real man'.

In the focus group with the male participants, it was clearly stated that in Moroccan society sex is considered shameful, and children are taught that from a young age. But that is where patriarchy comes in a makes a distinction. Patriarchy says it's acceptable for a man to be a sexual being, but women have to be pure virgins only to be

consumed post-marriage. With many participants, from the male focus group, the single university women focus group, and the female small town (Ait Taimia) focus group, the concept of the “al-haymana al-thoukouria” or “patriarchy” came up and was well known to be the root of this sexual discrimination found in the culture.

-Perceptions of the Children-

Next, I asked about how society views these children. I was met with two answers: how they should be treated and how they are treated. Jamila of Oum El-Banine says that, unfortunately, these children are left out of Morocco’s “social vision”. One interviewee expressed that society views these children as a problem as well. These are the children who end up on the streets, selling drugs, and becoming the next generation of hoodlums. When talking to Muhammad, he mentioned how one should not have to carry to the sin of another. When doing some research, this is the Quranic verse mentioned, “That no soul shall bear the burden of another and that a person shall have nothing but what he strives for” [*Sûrah al-Najm*: 38-39].

-Perceptions of Civil Society-

During the focus group with the university-age young women, I asked about what they thought of organizations aimed at helping these women like Oum El-Banine and Solidarité Féminine. Soraya and Husna made it very clear they did not agree with the concept. They believed these activities, providing housing, daycare services, and career opportunities, were a type of dangerous encouragement for women to continue this behavior. Soraya said that a better solution would be to concentrate on the families and

make sure there is education and understanding on a familial level. But then when asked how that would be possible when it is the families that are kicking their daughters out of the house when they become pregnant, no answer was received. Mahika expressed a deep admiration for Aicha Ech-Chinna in the discussion; she said that Ech-Chinna has done what few have been able to do: become the new family network for women who have been kicked out of their own.

Summary Reports of All interviews conducted. Most names changed*

Name of interviewee	Defining Characteristics	Interview Notes + Overall attitude toward the single mother phenomenon
Assia	Teacher, mother, philosophy major	Very aware of the phenomenon, and gave personal anecdotes. Aware of civil society's role. Made mention that in Moroccan society there is no difference between a rape victim and a girl who wanted sex.
Zakeria	Law graduate, young male	Considered these women the victims, and outright said that it is the man's fault they are in this position. Mentioned the societal contradiction which says men can have sex and women must stay virgins
Kasima *	English Student, young female	Made mention that these women were stupid for going with these men
Shaheeda *	Teacher, single woman	Did not sympathize with these women, and does not believe that "being deceived" into having sex with a partner is a valid argument. Seeing that Morocco has an Islamic culture, this should not be tolerated.
Jamila	NGO worker – Oum El-Banine	Believes that women do get tricked into having sex with their partners, but must also bare the responsibilities for their actions
Soufiane *	Sociology student, young male	Empathized with women who have sex outside of marriage, saying that all people are created weak.
Focus Group (Male)	6 young males – all university grads or undergrads	Made important mention to the multiple paradigms Moroccans live out which contradict one another:
Focus Group (Female1)	3 young females- in the field of law (Mahika), sociology (Soraya), and Islamic	Very heated debate. Soraya and Husna were on the same page of disagreeing with the concept of organizations like Oum Al-Banine. Hakima empathized with these

	studies (Husna)	women and their positionality.
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Hassan *	Uneducated male from Hawara	Considers all women who have sex outside of marriage whores, but then understands the contradiction in his words because also has sex outside of marriage
Wafae *	Uneducated female from Hawara – victims of domestic violence	Victim of sexual, physical violence, and deception from her partner. But when first asked what her opinion is of single mothers she equated them to “women of the street”
Mahika *	Law student	Empathized with these women, and understands that women also have desire and need social assistance when they become pregnant outside of marriage
Husna *	Islamic Studies student	Very tough stance about how women should and should not act. Believes these women and men should be punished and their children sent to live in orphanages.
Single Mother A	Agadir – farmworker	Initial observations – completely distraught. After the interview she was given her baby and sat looking into his eyes for a good forty minutes.
Single Mother B	Tikiwine – farmworker	The notes I have in my research journal – “she looks completely lost”
Single Mother C	Ait Taimia – former prostitute	Believed that a woman without a man in Moroccan society is worthless.

Single Mother D	Agadir – mute	This is the mother not able to speak. Difficult to gauge her perception of her situation.
Childcare Providers Oum Al-Banine		Believe that this is a woman who has made a mistake and also needs help taking responsibility for her actions.
Social Workers Oum Al-Banine		Believe that this is a woman who has made a mistake and also needs help taking responsibility for her actions.
Focus Group (Female 2) 5 participants	Located in a conservative part of Ait Taimia, mix of educated and uneducated	Very frank and open about the fact that Morocco suffers from patriarchy. Believes the woman and man who have sex outside of marriage have committed a sin.
Muhammad *	Islamic studies graduate, teacher in a conservative town	Believes that men and women who have made this mistake should be embraced and given forgiveness. Acknowledges that the

		society does not give this forgiveness to the woman.
AbdurRahim Anbi	Researcher, professor, advisor	Acknowledges that men will go to great lengths to get sex, and that sex is pervasive in Moroccan culture despite claims that this is an Islamic society.
Jameel *	Security guard, did not complete college	Believed these women are regular people who have fallen into a problem. Understands that men have promised them marriage etc.
Ruqaya *	Bachelors degree in law and completing Masters in Media	Understands that these women have a hard lot but also believes that engaging in sex before marriage is wrong.

Chapter 3: Religious Paradigm

Until now, the paper has brought up religion a few times in order to juxtapose it to the culture and reality. Indeed we see different pictures. Overall, it is important to see what the Quran and Hadith have to say about this topic because people do attribute the illegality of fornication to religion and make claims that Moroccan society is an Islamic society.

The Qur'an itself highlights the importance of sexual preservation from illegal sexual acts for both males and females. Verse 35 in Chapter 33 exemplifies this equality, "Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, **the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so**, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward."¹⁶

¹⁶ God. (610 - 632). *Quran*. Hejaz: Muhammad.

For issues of rape, in Islam, the victim of rape is not to be blamed. Wa'il ibn Hujr reports an incident that happened in the time of the Prophet. A woman publically accused a man of raping her, the man was brought before the Prophet, and the offender was sentenced to death.¹⁷ Until very recently, this directly conflicted with what Moroccan law allowed. A couple of months ago, it would be permissible for the rapist to marry his victim until article 475 of the penal code. This is another example of how at times, religion and culture are at odds with one another.

When it comes to situations of adultery and fornication. This hadith is a good reference:

“Allah's Messenger, I have wronged myself; I have committed adultery and I earnestly desire that you should purify me. He turned him away. On the following day, he (Ma'iz) again came to him and said: Allah's Messenger, I have committed adultery. Allah's Messenger turned him away for the second time, and sent him to his people saying: Do you know if there is anything wrong with his mind. They denied of any such thing in him and said: We do not know him but as a wise good man among us, so far as we can judge. He (Ma'iz) came for the third time, and he (the Holy Prophet) sent him away as he had done before. He asked about him and they informed him that there was nothing wrong with him or with his mind. When it was the fourth time, a ditch was dug for him and he (the Holy Prophet) pronounced judgment about him and he was stoned.

He (the narrator) said: There came to him (the Holy Prophet) a woman from Ghamid and said: Allah's Messenger, I have committed adultery, so purify me. He (the Holy Prophet) turned her away. On the following day she said: Allah's

¹⁷ Hujur, Wa'il Ibn. *Hadith, Sahih Bukhari*. Rep. no. 4366. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Messenger, Why do you turn me away? Perhaps, you turn me away as you turned away Ma'iz. By Allah, I have become pregnant. He said: Well, if you insist upon it, then go away until you give birth to (the child). When she was delivered she came with the child (wrapped) in a rag and said: Here is the child whom I have given birth to. He said: Go away and suckle him until you wean him. When she had weaned him, she came to him (the Holy Prophet) with the child who was holding a piece of bread in his hand. She said: Allah's Apostle, here is he as I have weaned him and he eats food. He (the Holy Prophet) entrusted the child to one of the Muslims and then pronounced punishment. And she was put in a ditch up to her chest and he commanded people to stone her. Khalid b Walid came forward with a stone which he flung at her head and there spurted blood on the face of Khalid and so he verbally abused her. Allah's Apostle heard his (Khalid's) curse that he made upon her. Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Khalid, be gentle. By Him in Whose Hand is my life, she has made such a repentance that even if a wrongful tax-collector were to repent, he would have been forgiven. Then giving command regarding her, he prayed over her and she was buried.¹⁸

When I analyze these verses and hadiths, I see a level of mercy. It is noted very clearly that in both instances the above individuals insisted on being “purified” and both continuously returned to the Prophet Muhammad multiple times for the huddud (punishments). Even in the case of the pregnant woman, in another narration of the story, Muslims in the community financially supported her during this time. We also see that the punishments were doled out, after insistence on the part of the individual, equally regardless of gender.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Analysis of Findings

¹⁸ Qureshi, Latif A. "Qur'anic Teachings on Intimate Human Relationships - The Review of Religions." *The Review of Religions Quranic Teachings on Intimate Human Relationships Comments*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 May 2014.

-Revisiting Hypothesis-

“I predict that those with more direct connections to single mothers like NGO workers will be the most knowledgeable about single mother’s cases, and women may be more sympathetic to single mothers’ situation by virtue of sharing the same gender. Overall I think that those with lower education levels will be more likely to consider these women “street women” or “prostitutes” because of their sexual activity pre-marriage. Additionally, I think there will be an overall lack of attention or a downplaying of the male’s role in the single mother phenomenon due to a level of patriarchy found in Moroccan culture.”

When revisiting my hypothesis, I see many aspects are not as predicted. In the aforementioned section, it seemed as though NGO workers are not the only group which is knowledgeable and vested in this phenomenon. Researchers, like Professor Anbi and Zakaria, provided great insight by virtue of the fact they worked directly with these women. My assumption that women would empathize with single mothers due to sharing a feminine bond and female struggle was also incorrect. To be honest, I found that educated males (Muhammad, Soufiane, Zakaria, and Prof. AbdulRahim) had more empathy for these women than some of my female interviewees did. Additionally, I cannot conclude that having a lower education level makes a person believe certain ideas about these single mothers. Though education level plays an important role in understanding the phenomenon, I interviewed “well- educated” individuals who were the harshest critiques of single mothers for example Husna. However, I believe the last portion of my hypothesis was correct; many people acknowledged how Moroccan society ignores the male role in this phenomenon relating the cause back to patriarchy.

-Final Analysis and Argument-

It seems as though Moroccan society is made of many different abstract ideological mentalities which govern the actions of people. The ideologies that continuously came up in the interviews were: the Islamic paradigm, the traditional/cultural paradigm, and the reality. For example: Islam says sex should be within the legal framework of marriage. Culture says men can have sex but women should stay virgins; if they do not, then they will live with the stigma of being a whore. Reality says that people, men and women, are having sex regardless of their marital status. These mentalities all exist within the same space, and they all say different things. People are able to move in between these ideologies fluidly depending on the situation, and there is a privileged group which is able to use these mentalities for their benefit. One respondent described this as a cultural “izdiwajia” or “schizophrenia”. Which is a great analogy, with a schizophrenic person we see personality shifts depending on the situation. That is what we see in Moroccan society, and in many different ways, we see this all around the world, in many societies including the Occident.

Here are examples of how people move through these mentalities and how patriarchy allows males to move through these mentalities to reap the benefits of this “izdiwajia”.

1. A girl moves from her conservative douwar to the university. Back at home she remained a virgin because that was what was **culturally** expected of her. When she moved to university, **reality** dictates that her family could no longer afford to pay for food and transportation costs. So she takes on an older richer boyfriend

- who is able to cover these expenses in exchange for sex. We see she moves from the “cultural mentality” to the “realistic mentality” due to the circumstances.
2. When a boyfriend and a girlfriend are having sex, they are living in “**reality**”. But when the girl gets pregnant, the boy and his family, often times, switch mentalities and revert to the “**cultural mentality**”, shun the girl, possibly claim to not even know her, and consider her a slut.
 3. When it comes time to marry, a man may have been living in “**reality**” by having multiple sexual partners. But when he is looking for a wife, he reverts back to the **cultural** mentality, and virginity in his future wife is at the top of the list, which is culturally acceptable.

We see that when males switch mentalities, their mindsets are accepted. Many people do not bat an eyelash when a young man requests a virgin wife or when he denies fathering a child. But when a young woman switches mentalities, it is not as acceptable, for example when she decides to have sex. What makes this all the more interesting and complex, is that many will say that “we live in an **Islamic** society” and this becomes justification of the status quo. But when looking at the Islamic paradigm for how sex, rape, fornication, and adultery are handled, we see something totally different from what “reality” and “culture” dictate.

-Study Limitations-

It is a sensitive topic, and in theory, I would have like to stop random people in the medina of Rabat and gauge perceptions. But I was advised that could be risky. In terms of the religious analysis, I do not claim to be an Islamic scholar. The analysis made about

how Islam treats these issues were my honest interpretation. With all interpretations and analyses of religion, sociological phenomena, or human behavior, the analyzer has schemas, biases, and an identity which will always affect the work. I do not deny that I have a particular identity as a Muslim American female which affects the way I look at certain situations.

Recommendations for Further Study:

I hoped to broaden the scope of those interviewed on the subject of single mothers. I think I broadened it to some extent, and it should be broadened even further. Law students all over the country should be surveyed, after all they may become the next generation of judges handing down sentences to single mothers in the future. Islamic studies students all over the country should be surveyed because, after all they may be the individual which influences the issuing of a fatwa (religious ruling) pertaining to this subject. In general, more people should be interviewed and educated on the subject at hand because this group of women is a growing population. This is not just a group of women, but this has been a gateway which opens up the concept of who receives mercy.

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Appendix:

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Single Unwed Mothers - Morocco

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Nicole Fauster, study abroad student at Center for Cross Cultural Learning. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study is to understand the situation of single unwed mothers in Morocco while also delving in how members of society view these women.

• PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Give consent to participate
2. Answer questions honestly to the best of your ability

• POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participation in this project will allow you to have a platform unto which one can share their experiences in a safe and productive space.

• CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of close maintenance of all documents and removal of names and identifying features from the final paper.

• PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

