



Desire with Restraint: the Hybridization of Female Sexual Identities in Tunis

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As Muslim countries become exposed to Western culture, women and their sexual statuses are made into focal points, representing how modern and moral the country is. Some Muslim countries respond to Westernization through state policies that either Westernize women or Islamize women by re-traditionalizing the culture for political, anti-Western reasons. Tunisia, however, has taken a different path. Through in-depth interviews with young Tunisian women, I discovered that young women do not perceive pressure from Tunisian society to Westernize or Islamize. As a result women, and the greater society, are able to mix, or hybridize, traditional culture and Western culture. This hybridization, though it applies to many aspects of society, does not apply to women's sexuality. Though young Tunisian women may be influenced by society to adopt traditional, conservative sexual behavior, they do so, not to appear anti-Western like other Muslim countries, but out respect for their parents and the religion of Islam.

The tug-of-war between Westernization and tradition is an on-going struggle in Arab nations. This struggle exists in many realms, yet the realm of female sexuality seems to have become one of the most important and publicized arenas where the debate is played out. Some theorize that, as private passion has been displaced onto the public sphere of Arab nations, the “sexual” and women’s bodies have become a terrain of projection in the construction of communal or national identity in Arab nations” and that “gender ideology lies at the heart of nationalist thought and has come to signify the country” (Saigol 2000). In turn observers suggest there is much pressure on women to uphold constructed group identities and to cater to state-controlled sexual paradigms.

While many Westernized countries popularize images of female promiscuity and sexual freedom, some Arab nations, in response to Western liberalness, have placed a tremendous amount of social value upon female purity. In these nations, female sexual pleasure is seen as immoral, too modern, and non-Islamic, and the state has implemented formal measures to ensure women behave according to “tradition” (Hassan 1999). Conversely, other Arab nations have reacted to Westernization by embracing the liberal culture and

have enforced guidelines that remake the local women in the image of a “modern,” Western woman.

I argue Tunisia is a special case that may encounter Westernization in a way that is different from these cases. Though parents in Tunisia encourage their female adolescents to maintain their perceived “traditional” cultural heritage, they are also frequently exposed to Western influences. However, unlike the Arab nations described above, Tunisia does not have a state-enacted policy demanding women to actively accept or reject Western culture. Therefore it is not clear how young Tunisian females form sexual identities within an environment where multiple, contradicting sexual norms exist and no formal state code dictates strict adherence to one over the other. This unexplored question is the focus of my research.

In my research I examined how young Tunisian females see their entrance into sexuality and what relevant factors influence and construct their views and behavior. Through in-depth interviews with five young Tunisian females, I discovered young Tunisian women hybridize their sexual identities by integrating into their ideologies aspects of both traditional Tunisian sexual culture and the more liberal Western sexual culture. Perhaps because Tunisia does not enforce a code that prescribes a standard sexual behavior for female youth, I also discovered that young Tunisian women formed highly idiosyncratic hybridized sexual identities. This formation led to confusion and contradictions within an individual and also between members of society.

Additionally, despite this hybridization, young Tunisian women continue to behave according to the traditional norms of society. They do not seem to view Western, liberal sexual behavior as an act of betrayal, but continue to act conservatively because it is important for them to maintain their family’s reputation within the community. This behavior shows that, despite a lack of top-down pressure, society may be able to maintain the conservative traditional norms of its culture, whether or not these norms are actually internalized by the youth.

This article begins by clarifying the terms homogenization, polarization, and hybridization through a brief description of globalization theory. Then it will describe Westernization and gender ideology in the Arab world and elucidate on the importance of a woman’s sexual identity in Muslim countries and how it embodies concerns of personal identity, national identity, and modernity. This section is followed by a specification of sexual norms in Islam and accounts of Western reforms in Tunisian society. Lastly, the article ends with an analysis of Tunisian female adolescents and their sexual attitudes, interpretations, adversities, and resolutions towards Westernization.

Literature Review

Globalization Theory

The question of identity construction is linked to the effects of globalization. Observers argue that, as the metaphorical space between nations grad-

ually disappears, the local may take three main courses of action in response to encroaching cultures: homogenization, polarization, and hybridization. Under the first perspective, increased mobility and flows of global communications may have a homogenizing effect, in which case the local becomes increasingly saturated with transnational and transcultural influences (Mernissi 1973: 167). In this case, the local is destabilized by the more powerful culture and gradually manifests the dominant culture's norms and lifestyles.

This destabilization and replacement of the local culture was illustrated in the early 1900s when Islamic nations (the local) were being colonized by European forces who brought with them their hegemonic culture. One example of this homogenization is the French and English colonizers, who viewed Muslim men as inferior to themselves and believed that the restraints placed on women in Islam, such as veiling and segregation, were barbaric in nature and indicative of this inferiority. As a result, gender and women's bodies were moved to the center of national and cultural debate, "causing women to become markers of how unmodern and uncivilized the colonized were" (Samman 2011: 187).

The colonized, specifically liberal secular Arabs and Kemalist-inspired Turks, accepted the colonizer's representation and judgment of Islam and eradicated symbols that the West would identify as backwards, namely, signs of women's supposed suppression, such as the veil (Samman 2011: 196). The Kemalist Turks began enacting policies that would modernize and emancipate women from their "traditional" bondage of obsolete practices in Islam and remake them in the image of Western women. (Samman 2011: 197). State policies of modernism were all enacted in an attempt to liberalize Muslim women's lifestyle, public manners, gender behavior, and daily customs.

Liberal secular Arabs and Kemalist-inspired Turks accepted the colonizer's designation of their society's backwardness and proceeded to homogenize their culture with the colonizer's image of what a modern woman should look like. Islamic fundamentalists, however, articulated a version of colonial modernity in which Islam was portrayed as the true protector of women. They felt "the future of the nation's advancement lay in how well the women in Islam obeyed their religion" (Samman 2011: 204).

The Islamic fundamentalists embraced the second perspective of globalization theory, termed polarization. Polarization claims that, in an effort to resist cultural hegemony, the local may polarize itself by emphasizing traditional values (Greig 2002: 227). Like homogenization, polarization manifested itself in the context of the Middle East. Once again, women became the main factor when deciding if a civilization was developed and moral according to the standards of the colonizers as well as the colonized (Samman 2011: 186). Islamists rejected the idea that the emancipation of women meant the adoption of Western modernity and instead associated the colonizer's liberal treatment of women as morally corrupt while Islam's modest treatment of women was morally pure (Samman 2011: 206). Just as the Kemalist modernized public space from the top down by making it illegal or at least socially unpleasant for women to represent Muslim practices, Islamists similarly tradi-

tionalized public space from the top down by enforcing conservative lifestyles (Samman 2011: 206).

The responses of the Middle East towards a hegemonic culture as illustrated above have taken one of two avenues: homogenization or polarization. Both of these approaches were imposed from the top down as the government reacted to colonizer's criticisms by enacting policies to either promote modernization through Westernization or to promote national advancement through a supposed return to Islamic morals and traditions. It is unclear how the colonized would have reacted to the colonizers without the guidance of governmental policy. It is possible that the third approach to globalization, hybridization, may have presented itself.

Under homogenization and polarization, the role of Islamic historical roots concerning female sexuality was more evident in the construction of women's sexual identities. The state could either promote or demote this history depending on the ideology it wanted its women to follow. It is less clear how other Arab communities, who are not strongly guided towards or away from their Muslim roots, implement historical conventions of sexuality in Islam. It is also unclear how women's bodies and sexuality are regarded in Muslim communities that do not subscribe to homogenization or polarization.

Gender Ideology and National Identity

As discussed earlier, women's bodies and sexuality have become a principle arena in which the struggle between the global and the local are played out, partially due to the fact that women's sexuality has become an object in which national identity is constructed, represented, and maintained (Saigol 2000). Throughout most of Tunisia's history, women's roles were clearly prescribed, leading many communities to rely on their perceptions of traditional gender roles of women to preserve their cultural customs (Espin 1995: 9). Therefore, Western influence of women could be most damaging in a Muslim community, especially one that embraces Islamist fundamentalism, because women are seen as guardians of "tradition" and morality. Those who exhibit elements of Westernization may be viewed by society as traitors and alienated from a community that clings to its perception of tradition. Therefore Tunisian women, who are frequently told that they are the guardians of tradition, may feel social pressure to maintain conservative behavior. Here we see how conservative behavior can be enforced on an individual level, as opposed to the state using the link between women's status and national identity to ensure conservative behavior.

Tunisian teenagers may not only experience conflict when encountering the two contrasting sexual norms of what they perceive to be the more liberal Western culture and the more conservative Muslim culture, but they may also experience tension when they are pressured to uphold society's understanding of traditional adolescent female sexual behavior despite being exposed to, and perhaps finding identity within, Western sexual constructions.

Women's Status in Tunisia

Women's status in many realms, including that of sexuality, must be examined when deciphering the context in which they form their sexual identity. Concerning the status of women, Tunisia is a rare case among Arab nations. Unlike women in much of the Arab world, Tunisian women have experienced a loosening of patriarchal controls due to the Code of Personal Status promulgated in 1956. The code profoundly changed the legal status of women by formally regulating marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. It reduced much of the gender inequality that exists in Muslim countries, offering Tunisian women a range of opportunities available to them in both their private and public lives (Charrad 2001: 218).

After colonization, the new Tunisian regime attempted to gain prominence by dismantling kin-based solidarities, the traditional system of power. The newly established family law was a by-product of this reform (Charrad 2001: 201). Because these strong kinship ties were the standard basis of monitoring and controlling women's purity, it is reasonable to assume that the marginalization of kin relations allows women to challenge their long-established boundaries on sexual activity. However, there are a few reasons why women in a supposedly modernizing Arab nation may not be able to exercise the liberal sexual culture they view from their exposure to Western culture.

Despite this new opportunity for expanded liberty, it was the reformist leaders of Tunisia, and not a grassroots feminist movement, who initiated the Code of Personal Status (Charrad 2001: 219). Women's possible inability or disinterest in demanding that the traditional norms be dismantled in the work sphere might explain why women have not pushed for loosened boundaries in the sphere of sexuality.

Though Western influences have reached Tunisia, they have not been implemented in every sphere for women or in the same rate in every sphere. This situation is especially true concerning women's experiences with sexuality. Women's rights have increased in many realms of society, but their path towards increasingly Western lifestyles, particularly Western sexual lifestyles, has not always been obvious or well paved. Some pay a costly price of confusion and clash between Western expectations and influences and old duties and customs.

With greater rights come greater responsibilities. Due to the Code of Personal Status, Tunisian women are now expected to contribute to the family financially, and form identities that embrace their freedoms but also harmonize with the social norms of society. They are required to learn how to function in a nation that embraced some aspects of Westernization but still maintains conservative, traditional roots when it comes to female sexuality. Tunisian adolescent females, compared to female adolescents in many other Arab nations, seem to have more freedom with their sexuality. Thus, they are able to exercise more personal agency in the construction of their sexual identity than many other Muslim girls, making the concept of individual hybridization prevalent. However, despite the formal allowance of freedom in many spheres of

daily life, female adolescents are still greatly subject to conservative norms of traditional sexuality. It seems “society’s paramount concern is to continue the organization and control of sexuality according to established essential and substantial Islamic laws” (Arntsen 1976: 24).

Under Islam, the traditional social order is linked with the woman’s virtue because her uncontrolled sexuality is capable of causing social chaos. Men, who are capable of self-control in Islam, are required to exercise power over women’s sexuality for the sake of social order. In an effort to enforce this social responsibility, society has associated concepts of female virginity with male honor. Consequently, man’s traditional ideal for womanhood included chastity, obedience, and modesty (Arntsen 1976: 25-26).

These beliefs concerning female sexuality in Muslim-Arab culture remain influential as some of these values are deeply embedded in the Muslim-Arab society’s construction of women’s sexual ideology. Unmarried adolescents are still expected to remain “pure” and reserve intercourse for marriage. This concept differs greatly from the current system of sexual meaning in Western culture. The contemporary West views sex as an integral component of individual identity and a vital part of relationships (Irvine 1994: 4).

My research shows that the Muslim society does not fully embrace Western conceptions of sexuality. Tunisia has adopted many other aspects of Western culture concerning women that have been imposed on women from the state, like divorce and labor laws. Why, then, do Tunisians uphold the sexual boundaries formed under Islam? What meaning does Western sexual liberalism and chastity carry in Tunisia?

Hybridization Theory

Hybridization theory involves the expansion of mobility and results in a global crossover as hegemonic cultural values are adapted to local conditions (Greig 2002: 232). Unlike the first two globalization theories, hybridization usually is not implemented via a top-down approach. Nor can it be readily understood through a macro investigation. Hybridization, as described below, can be a very individualized process.

Though Islamic nations are no longer being actively colonized, the intensification of mass communication in the past years has proliferated cross-cultural interaction and subsequently accelerated the incorporation of external cultural elements, sexual and non-sexual, into local cultures in unexpected ways (Greig 2002: 233). Western sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions, and lifestyles are all conveyed to the local. This is not to say the existing values and beliefs are inconsequential. They inform how the local receives the global homogenizing force through dialectic, sometimes causing the perceived traditional to be revived and reconstructed with elements of the hegemonic culture to form a complex, hybridized popular culture (Skalli 2006: 42).

The reconstruction of Western culture when it is incorporated into local culture is illustrated by Tunisia’s interpretation of the Code of Personal

Status. As described earlier, the Code of Personal Status was issued by the Tunisian government in an effort to modernize women's statuses in the educational, economic, and family sphere. Many aspects of modernity have indeed been implemented into women's lives; however, due to the widespread support for women's continuation of the wife-mother role, women are encouraged to contribute to the development of society by raising modern family members. The fundamental role of women in modern society as defined by the post-independent Tunisian elite has remained similar to the role assigned to women in the traditional system. The male elite's vision of the new Tunisian woman is not radical as the major desired change is to make women better able to perform their role as wife-mother (Arntsen 1976: 382).

This example illustrates that liberty for women in some spheres does not translate to liberty in all spheres. This also illustrates the existence of hybridization in the Tunisian society. Elements of Westernization play a part in the construction of women's roles in some spheres, but the local society reshapes Western elements of modernity to fit the traditional norms in other spheres. At times, the Tunisian society uses Western principles for different purposes than what may have been originally intended. Instead of fostering women's access to the public sphere, Western reforms in Tunisia direct women to keep their traditional roles of wife-mothers, and to instead use these new doctrines of the West to create modern individuals.

While some Western concepts can be refashioned to fit Tunisian society, others are fused in a less harmonious manner. The expansion of Westernization and globalization reveals that hybridization of unlike cultures can become rife with contradictory and conflicting spaces of knowledge and activity (Skalli 2006: 24). As a result, some individuals may feel affiliated with the global as well as the contrasting local. For example, it is illegal for an unmarried man and woman to live together in Tunisia, a common practice in the United States. But the opinions of the young Tunisian adults that I encountered did not match the law. Though they saw nothing wrong with unmarried men and women cohabitating, many of them said they would not cohabit themselves because of their family's or society's opinions on the matter. This decision illustrates that possible disjuncture between individuals and their society may result from globalization. It also illustrates how ties to the local can influence individuals to behave in ways that are contrary to their personal beliefs.

Women's roles in the local are still believed by the global to be an expression of local specificity and are dealt with locally; however, due to the recent accounts of hybridization, one must think of sexuality in the Muslim world beyond the confines of patriarchal nationalism (Skalli 2006: 16). Therefore, I will use globalization theory to interpret my findings and to compare young women's motivations for their conservative behavior to the motivations of the homogenized and polarized societies in order to determine if Tunisia has adopted a mindset towards the West that is similar to or departs from other Muslim countries.

In my research, I discovered that female adolescents in Tunisia are encouraged by their parents to maintain conservative behavior by relying on

“traditional” sexual ideologies, but they are also frequently exposed to Western influences. Because no state-enacted policy requires Tunisians to actively accept or reject Western culture, female adolescents are supposedly able to adopt some aspects of Western culture while rejecting others. Though this supposed ability to embrace Western culture holds true in many aspects of their lives, it is not true when it comes to their sexuality. This leads to the unanswered question of why Western sexual culture is unavailable to young Tunisian women while the country openly accepts many other aspects of Western culture. The answer to this question and other findings offers an extension and new insight into existing research concerning Westernization in Muslim countries. This research also further examines the still controversial subject of young Muslim women’s sexuality, about which limited literature exists.

Research Design

The topic of current female sexuality is still considered taboo in the Middle East, especially when it concerns the younger generation. As a consequence, little research can be found on the subject. Previous research explicates the conjunction of diverse cultures, the formation of sexual ideologies among adolescents, and the history of female sexuality under globalization in Muslim countries. However, to the best of my knowledge these topics have not been combined to specifically study the current state of young Muslim women’s conceptions of sexuality within a nation of heterogeneous cultures. Unstructured, in-depth interviews allow me to produce insight into this subject by inquiring about the personal motivations behind women’s conservative behavior.

Study Population

For this study, I interviewed Tunisian females between the ages of 19 and 22 using the snowball method. Because they fell below the average marrying age, my respondents were not married, nor were they being pressured to become married in the near future (Foster 2006: 163). This was ideal, because I asked about societal pressures that did not necessarily stem from the Tunisian marriage culture. All of my respondents were attending school in the Tunis area and were part of the middle socio-economic class. These characteristics ensured frequent exposure to Western media portrayals and other elements of Western culture.

I chose young Tunisian women for two main reasons. A young woman’s dating activity is more likely than a young man’s activity to be patrolled in Tunisia. Therefore she has to be vigilant when determining her values and behavior in regards to her sexuality. How young women exposed to competing and conflicting mindsets construct their identities and develop coping techniques to deal with societal backlash gives insight into the effects of globalization. Also, young people may also be better candidates for revealing the process of assembling a belief system because they are still in the process of try-

ing out the possible identities they might adopt (Swidler 2001: 90). Young Tunisian women arguably live unsettled lives because they are in the midst of building repertoires of cultural interactions upon which they will base their behaviors. These were the cultural interactions and cultural conceptions that I inquired about. Specifically, I asked questions about their personal values and behavior concerning sexuality. I also inquired about their perceptions of their parents' and society's values and boundaries concerning sexuality, as well as the anticipated responses for crossing these boundaries.

Choice of Method

Interviews were my choice of method for various reasons, the first of which is to overcome the language barrier. Though the young women I interviewed spoke English very well, I wanted to be there in case they requested clarification on a question. Furthermore, if there was a sentiment they could properly convey in French but not in English, I wanted to be able to immediately translate my impression of their response and gather feedback on whether my understanding was accurate. Second, my research asked about perceptions and experience. The interview method better allowed me to inquire how respondents interpreted certain experiences and what meaning or value they gave to these experiences. Third, I felt respondents would be more likely to discuss issues of sexuality with someone they had developed a rapport with, as opposed to a survey.

Interviewing also had its limits. With every interview, there is the possibility of the "interviewer effect," in which the interviewer's presence affected the participant's responses. This obstacle was unfortunately unavoidable and hopefully I overcame it by building a rapport before and during the interview.

Other hindrances existed, not necessarily with my method of interviewing, but with the nature of my project. With cultural influence and identity construction being such dense, subjective, immeasurable concepts, it is difficult to accurately gauge the effect of Western culture in comparison to Islamic, familial, and societal influences. The respondents may have actively or unconsciously dismissed the diverse ideologies that surround them, but this does not mean that they avoided internalizing at least part of the cultural lesson. Attempting to determine something that the agent is oblivious to was one of the main difficulties in the project. However interviews allowed me to delve into passing comments and anecdotes the respondents may have dismissed as irrelevant, but in actuality shed light on the significance of Western culture in Tunisia.

Lastly, how one perceives culture, absorbs culture into their ideologies, and displays culture is a very individualized process that is difficult to generalize, even within a single society. Therefore my conclusions cannot be generalized to apply to all young Tunisian women.

Findings

Tunisian female adolescents are exposed to both conservative views regarding sexuality in the name of Islam as well as portrayals of sexually active teenagers in Western media. Though both sets of cultural influences manifest themselves in these adolescents' identity and behavior, they do so in different ratios according to the individual's degree of personal agency and the nature of surrounding influences. This personalization of identities became readily apparent as I interviewed five Tunisian female adolescents I call Alima, Barika, Cala, Daliyah, and Eladaria. Daliyah, by far the most liberal respondent in regards to her behavior and perception of others, was the only respondent to identify her parents as liberal, illustrating the large part parents, surrounding media and societal influences, play in the construction of an adolescent's sexual behavior and values.

Each respondent was exposed to different proportions of the more liberal Western concepts of sexuality and the more conservative Tunisian concepts. Also, none of the respondents perceived rigid, state action in response to Western sexual culture that would have strongly guided them toward or away from sexual constructions in Islam. This lack of explicit direction allowed for idiosyncratic beliefs when these contrasting systems intertwined to form a single, sexual ideology for each individual. While it is impossible to pinpoint a single construction that exists for all Tunisian female youth, interestingly enough, each respondent provided similar replies concerning the sexual ideology of the Tunisian society. The rules of sexual culture in Tunisia, though perhaps not explicitly dictated, appear to be well understood by all.

The Sexual Identities Formed Under Homogenization, Polarization, and Hybridization

As discussed earlier, colonized Muslim nations responded to Western cultural hegemony in specific ways. The postcolonial intellectual of the Middle East proceeded to either modernize women by demanding that they accept the colonizer's judgment of the superiority of the "Modern Western woman" or "Islamize" women by forcing them to represent an ideal version of an authentic Muslim woman (Samman 2011: 186). Has Tunisia responded in one of these two ways? Do Tunisian women feel pressure from the state to behave according to Western sexual culture or Muslim sexual culture?

None of the respondents reported feeling controlled sexually by formal means. Nor were they familiar with the "women question." The "woman question," refers here to the concept that their status and behavior is representative of their country's national identity. Their unfamiliarity with the "women question" explains why they also did not feel active pressure from society to mimic images of Western women in an effort to modernize their country. Unlike the Kemalist Turks, Tunisian female adolescents do not see their modest sexual behavior as incompatible with modernization. Therefore

they do not share the Turk's motivation to deny the sexual culture of Islam in order to advance their country.

Tunisian female adolescents' unfamiliarity with the "women question" also explains why they do not feel active pressure to adhere to and reaffirm Tunisian "traditional" values. Unlike those who adhere to Islamic fundamentalism, Tunisian females did not view Western sexual culture as morally decayed. Consequently, they did not share the motivation to remain sexually conservative according to Islam as a way to guard tradition and advance the country. Because the respondents did not feel strong pressure to "modernize" or "Islamize" their sexualities as a response to Western sexual culture, one can speculate that Tunisian female adolescents do not perceive their culture to be homogenizing or polarizing itself from Western sexual culture.

Adolescents' sexuality is dictated by the surrounding culture or cultures. Without notable pressures to adhere completely to one conception of sexuality, these Tunisian female adolescents did not subscribe completely to Western sexual conventions or to Islamic sexual conventions and have therefore also not adopted the same motivations or sexual behaviors as the women in Kemalist Turk societies or Islamic fundamentalist societies. This leaves the question: If Tunisia does not attempt to control their women's sexualities through state sanctioned policies like other Muslim countries, then what are the resulting sexual identities formed by Tunisian adolescents with exposure to both Western sexual culture and Islamic sexual culture?

Without standardized sexual norms, the respondents were subject to the third globalization theory, hybridization. With exposure to both Western and Islamic sets of sexual culture, and no explicit pressure to choose one set over the other, the Tunisian female adolescents incorporated elements of Western sexual culture into their conception of Tunisian sexual culture. They did this to differing degrees depending on their perceived role in Tunisian society and the cultural options they believed they had within that role. Sexual roles dictate one's sexual behavior and scripts while specifying appropriate sexual goals, possibly informing how these Tunisian female adolescents thought they should behave (Irvine 1994: 10). Sexual roles, identities, and ideologies are a reflection of the existing cultures. To examine which sexual identities are formed, one must examine what the perceived surrounding influences are.

Factors in Society Influencing Adolescents to follow Conservative Norms

Despite personal ideologies and desires, adolescents may choose to follow conservative norms regarding courtship for various reasons. What happens when adolescents identify with a certain sexual ideology yet are not allowed to outwardly express the accompanying behavior? According to the respondents, their reaction to such a split depends on their motivations for following their parents' and society's norms.

The first four respondents were given advice and also certain boundaries by their parents to abide by, such as staying in groups, avoiding kissing (sometimes contact of all kind), and fully disclosing their whereabouts as well

as the identity of the boys they are with. Though these boundaries were administered, adolescents and their parents never openly discussed the punishment that would result from rule breaking. The respondents assumed a violation would result in circumscribed freedom, as parents would be less trustful and therefore more overbearing. However none of the respondents cited fear of punishment as one of their motivations for obeying codes of conduct, leading one to look for other explanations as to why these adolescents sometimes choose to follow the rules of a courtship ideology they themselves do not always subscribe to.

The respondents discussed the importance of the role families play in the Muslim culture. They reported sometimes feeling an expectation to repress their sexual desire because their individual needs came second to the family's name. Engaging in an act of sexuality may bring shame on them as individuals, but more importantly, it may bring shame upon the family. How highly respondents value and depend on their families is a culturally rooted lifestyle that may influence adolescents to subscribe to or abide by modest sexual norms.

I discovered that the respondents do not necessarily feel a pressure to abide by society's rules in an effort to evade punishment, avoid social chaos, or uphold the conservative traditions of society. They more so feel pressure to follow the rules that conflict with their personal views out of respect for their parents. All of the respondents have much respect for their parents, and during the interviews, frequently discussed how highly they value their parents' opinions. Alima described her reliance on her parents,

Sometimes when I'm confused I think about what my parents said. I trust their word and I want to respect them and carry out their wishes. So when I'm under pressure I think about what they said and the solution comes out. They're wiser than me, so I trust what they think more than what I think.

These adolescents learned to depend on their parents and have the utmost respect for them. This respect and its subsequent obedience towards behavioral restrictions give the parents a great deal of influence over their children's conduct and belief system. Respect strengthens these adolescents' willingness to suppress their sexual desires that lay outside the bounds of their parents' social code. Alima described how she restrains her individual gratification for fear of shaming her parents when referencing displays of affection,

I don't want it to get back to my family, and people would disrespect them. For people who [have pre-marital intercourse], they just don't care about their family. People will think, 'Wow she's misbehaved and has poor parents who didn't know how to raise their children.'

Alima was willing to follow the codes of society and refrain from dating as frequently as she would like because she adheres to a culture that values a family's reputation over individual desires.

This behavior may illustrate how influential parents are in the construction of an adolescent's identity. It also may illustrate how adolescents are encouraged not to necessarily incorporate all of their parents' views into their personal sexual ideology, but at the very least continually follow their conservative rules. However, this does not explain what tension arises from obeying rules that are tailored to an ideology adolescents do not identify with.

Considering the great influence first hand exposure has on adolescents, many of the parent's or society's ideologies seem to have been internalized by these teens. Therefore, there did not appear to be a great difference between the sexual views of parents and society and the sexual views of the respondents. Consequently the boundaries constructed by parents did not always conflict with the adolescent's desires for certain sexual behaviors.

When parents' and adolescents' views did differ, the adolescents felt their parents were entitled to their opinions. Yet respect for parents and their views did not always translate into strict adherence to their "conservative" rules. Respondents sometimes viewed sexual discipline to be within their discretion, though a discretion heavily influenced by their parents. Parents' sway came, not from concrete rules, but from their children's fears of disappointing or disrespecting them. Therefore, the bigger the gap between the parents' views and the adolescent's views, the more likely rules were going to be broken, and the more likely shame and remorse were experienced by the adolescent. Alima discussed a friend whose sexual ideology differed drastically from her parents,

She hates it, she always keeps secrets and lies. "I'm going with that friend, I'm going with this friend" she really wants to tell her mother but she can't because she really loves this guy and her mother told her not to talk to boys. She feels angry against these rules, but guilty at the same time for breaking them.

In this example, deviating from parents' range of acceptable sexual behaviors and expressing one's desires in secret induces guilt and feelings of dishonesty. In Cala's case, expressing these courtship desires induced self-loathing. Not only did she feel torn between two paradoxical ideologies, but she also felt like she was being disloyal to her mother.

I felt like I was betraying [my mother] and lying to her by making her believe I was something I was not...a completely innocent girl. I hated the fact that she thought I was a good girl. And back then I thought by doing those things I was being a bad girl and a bad person. I felt really bad about myself, I felt I was disgusting

In this regard, embracing Western cultural constructs that conflict with the values of the family causes one to feel ambivalent. Some Tunisian adolescents feel tethered to the old ways, not necessarily because of similar

ideologies, but because of a high respect for their parents, while simultaneously being pulled by Western models that they also subscribe to. This sometimes results in episodes of frustration, resentment, and guilt.

Hybridization Complications

The expansion and implementation of Western sexual culture in the conservative Tunisian sexual ideology reveals how hybridization of unlike cultures can become rife with contradictory and conflicting spaces of knowledge and activity. As a result, non-cohesive identities and problems navigating society may be prevalent in the Tunisian culture.

Though the respondents see their sexual identities as cohesive, they critique many of their peers for embracing aspects of each culture that are in conflict. As a result, they view many of their friends as hypocritical. Cala discussed the difficulties of adopting two conflicting cultures concurrently:

Youth see the Western way of doing things and then they copy it here. They want to do exactly the same thing and I don't think you can do that. You can't be really religious and then super liberal, there should be a transition.

Cultural factors, such as the supremacy of the family, may play a role in explaining her disapproval of directly mimicking the West and also why some adolescents adopt only certain aspects of Western sexual culture. Tunisians have family expectations to refrain from being sexually active. Because of this, they may chastise those who do engage in sexual behavior as well as refrain from sexual activity themselves out of respect for their family. This closed-door approach to sexuality may contradict their adherence to other perceived Western ideologies, like tolerance. Cala then reflects how this mish-mash of traditional and Western cultures negatively affects her,

Some guys think I'm a slut because they see me kissing my boyfriend, so they say, "hey you, you're haloofa, I saw you doing things." [Their reactions] are stupid, retarded and hypocritical because they claim to be open-minded and non-judgmental.

Cala encountered individuals who adopted contradicting parts of Western and traditional culture as a reaction towards the influx of Western sexual portrayals. She also encountered individuals who took "extreme" stances when it came to their sexuality, at times causing a split within the generation. Daliyah perceived this rupture when she said, "girls act like sluts or like princesses, not in between." To her, some of the girls treat their relationships like an, "epic love story." They believe "their boyfriend is the most handsome man in the whole world and he praises her like a queen." These romanticized relationships could be a type of polarized reaction against, what Barika called Westerners' "non-sentimental" take on male/female relations.

On the other extreme, Daliyah thought some girls chose to act like “sluts” and use their sexuality as a tool to make a point against an old-fashioned society. In reference to two adolescents who were caught doing a sexual act in a classroom, Cala said, “they’re doing it just to do it. To make a point, to prove that they’re free and modern.” Though nothing can be said conclusively, these adolescents could possibly be reacting to Western culture in a manner similar to Kemalist Turks. Seemingly they have rebelled against the boundaries and the constrictions of the conservative Tunisian sexual culture by homogenizing themselves to fit their perception the Western sexuality, all in an attempt to appear modern.

The split between sexual identities within a generation marks an even bigger split between an individual and society. Though global crossover takes place as Western cultural values are adapted to local conditions, these Western cultural values may not be adopted or may not be adopted to the same degree by every generation in a society. Respondents’ constructed sexual identities are, in their opinions, more influenced by Western culture than the older generations in Tunisian society are influenced by Western culture. As a result, the respondents had to learn how to navigate successfully between their views and the views of the older generations within society. Cala described how it was a struggle to know what was appropriate in certain situations. All respondents remembered instances in which they engaged in behavior that was inappropriate for some in society and subsequently suffered negative feedback. Cala described one event specifically,

Once I was hugging my boyfriend in the street and this woman stopped her car and called me a bitch, ‘a dog of the market’, because I was hugging him, nothing else, and she called me a bitch and said I should be ashamed of myself and said there are no morals anymore.

While identities are forming, adolescents may struggle with indecision over what is appropriate and what is not (Chan 1994: 96). In this stage, they are very vulnerable to society’s critique. Cala said this woman’s comments as well as other incidents of societal judgment destroyed her relationship because society made her boyfriend and her feel as if they “were doing something really wrong and should be ashamed.”

Tunisian society’s views of appropriateness do not always match adolescent’s more liberal ideas of appropriateness. To avoid further altercations, the respondents learned strategies of ambiguity and compartmentalization when interacting with society.

Strategies for Negotiating Two Worlds

The respondents believe they have learned the sexual values and expectations of the Tunisian society and how these factors differ from those in Western culture. When they recognize the existence of these conflicting messages and desires they can anticipate reactions and make informed decisions so

that they can function in their community without causing a disturbance, even if it means suppressing their desires that differ with society's norms. For the most part, stark contrast does not exist between the respondents' sexual presentation in public and society's conservative expectations of behavior because the respondents have taken it upon themselves to mediate the gap between their perceptions of society's expectations and their personal views. They first do this internally by reappropriating Western influences into their identities and lifestyles. They then express these influences in small ways that exist within the boundaries of society. In this way respondents are able to negotiate between these two worlds externally through their use of ambiguity and compartmentalization.

The ambiguity of these girls' signals, whether they are meant to be signs of seduction or not, become tools for adolescents when they are not allowed to be explicit about their sexual intentions or attitudes. Ambiguity is a technique for them to mediate between two contradictory identities. This ambiguity is most easily observed when looking at how adolescents choose to present themselves. Alima and Barika, in particular, were evasive about the sexual significance of choosing not to wear the veil. Wearing the veil is a common practice in Tunisia, and is done as a sign of religious devotion. At first they claimed they did not wear the veil because they were not faithful enough to the tenets of Islam, as one should be before they choose to wear it. After further reflection, Alima described another reason,

Actually I don't know why I don't wear it, it's not that I disagree at all. I'll probably wear it when I'm older. But, um, I'm a girl and I want to show my hair which is the best part of the body and yeah, the hair, that's why, and you can't wear a skirt and the veil, unless [the skirt] is really long. And you can't wear anything tight that shows your figure.

This statement gives the impression that the sleeveless top and tight jeans she wore during the interview may not have been merely just clothes to her, but were chosen and worn with a specific meaning behind them, though this meaning would never be explicitly discussed. Though Alima's clothes showed her feminine curves, she could avoid criticism by not being explicit about their sexual implications. She could also feign ignorance if these implications were brought up in a negative manner. In this case, ambiguity is one way adolescents may be able to express some of their sexual views without attracting too much attention and eliciting confrontation.

In addition to explaining a coping mechanism, the discussion of the veil held further significance. For the Kemalist Turks, not wearing the veil was a form of resistance against the bondage of Islam, while for the Islamic fundamentalists, wearing the veil was a sign of resistance against the morally decayed West. The respondents did not adhere to either of these meanings. For them refusing to wear the veil was not taking a pro-Western stance, but merely a way for them to show off their hair. Additionally, according to the respondents, Tunisian society did not see wearing the veil as an indication of

anti-Western sentiment. It was, instead, a sign of religious devotion. In the opinion of the young Tunisian women, the veil remains free of political associations and simply exists as evidence of the significance of Islam. Tunisia's concept of the veil shows once again that Tunisia has not followed the same path as other Muslim nations in response to Westernization.

A second mechanism the respondents used to manage their role in conflict situations is compartmentalization. They separated their conflicting roles of "adolescent who is pure" and "adolescent who is interested in sexual behavior," allowing them to better play each role and resolve tension that might be created from encountering conflicting demands in the same place. This is not to insinuate that adolescents are leading double lives; it merely attests to their ability to use discretion. In public, adolescents obey society's expectations of conservative sexual behavior based in Islam and act in a manner in accordance with societal norms, avoiding conflict and judgment for themselves or their families. In private, especially with their peers, the respondents are more expressive. For instance, Cala, who was called a name in the street for hugging a boy, keeps the physical contact between her and her boyfriend to a minimum while they are in public. If young Tunisian females choose to acknowledge their sexual behavior only in private, this may further suggest that the acts carry no political significance.

Conclusion

As we have seen from the Kemalist's Turks, Muslim countries may react to Westernization by discarding Islam and homogenizing themselves to Western culture. Muslim countries may also react in the opposite manner and embrace a re-traditionalized version of Islam as a way of rejecting and polarizing themselves against the morally decayed West. Tunisia has neither explicitly homogenized nor polarized itself against Western culture.

Since young Tunisian women's sexual behavior and motivations for such behavior do not in any way resemble a Muslim nation's behavior or motivation in past examples of homogenization or polarization, I conclude that without an explicit top-down approach to controlling sexuality within conflicting sexual norms, young women may attempt to hybridize the contrasting sexual cultures, incorporating elements of both cultures depending on how they view their role in society and the liberties of that role.

Young Tunisian women have hybridized their sexual identities. However, because there is no explicit, standard sexual ideology for them to follow, these sexual identities are highly idiosyncratic and vary between their peers and society. This can sometimes lead to contradictions, confusion, and tension that they progressively learn to mitigate.

Also, despite hybridization, young Tunisian women continue to exhibit conservative behavior. They do so in an effort not to disrupt society so as not to disgrace their families' reputation. This shows that, despite a lack of top-down pressure, society may be able to maintain the conservative, traditional norms of their culture, whether or not this norm is actually internalized by the

youth. More importantly, the motivation behind this conservative behavior suggests an explanation as to why these norms survive in Tunisia.

Many other aspects of Western culture do not conflict with Tunisian society, as evidenced by the Code of Personal Status and its educational and labor reforms that mimic Western culture concerning women. In spite of the acceptance of Western norms in many realms, the rules of female sexual behavior in Tunisian society remain unchanged. Through this research, we discover why, in Tunisia's hybridized society, the sexual norm remains faithful to traditional, Islamic norms. Tunisians experience sexual behavior in a way that is different from the Kemalist Turks and the Islamic fundamentalists

Unlike Samman's account of those who homogenized and polarized, young Tunisian women did not see their sexual acts as portrayals of national identity. Therefore, for them, their sexual behavior was not coupled with political implications of pro-Western or anti-Western support. The young women's decision to remain chaste was due to their fear of anticipated backlash from society that would ultimately harm the reputation of their parents, whom they greatly respected. Furthermore, according to the young women's perceptions, their parents' adherence to conservative, traditional behavior is due to the importance of the Muslim religion. In other words, young women do not see sexual behavior as, in their words, "bad" because it is a Western norm and, therefore, an act of betrayal. They see sexual behavior as bad because they would feel as if they were being bad daughters, while their parents see sexual behavior of the young women as bad because they would be being bad Muslims, showcasing the continued influence of Islam

While this research offers a basis and a framework for future studies, it is not without its limitations. Due to the idiosyncratic nature and variability of identities in Tunisia, the sample size is not large enough to make any generalized statements about the rest of the population. Many more young Tunisian women from varied class and geographical backgrounds should be interviewed. Additionally, the values and boundaries of society and parents used in this study were based on the respondents' perceptions. If this research is continued, it would be beneficial to interview members of society as well as the parents of the respondents to ascertain if the respondents' perceptions were accurate.

Due to the ever-changing fluidness of sexual identity, Western sexual culture is continuously being interpreted, deconstructed, judged according to moral standards, and also used to challenge those standards. For these young women, their parent's approval may be the most influential factor when deciding their sexual expressions. But as these young women age, they may feel less tied to their cultural-familiar pressures and become more open about their own sense of sexuality. If these young women begin to engage in more liberal sexual behavior and become publicly open about this behavior, it may be beneficial to study society's reaction to this new behavior. Future research may determine if society, as a response to an important Muslim norm being broken, adopts a response similar to or different from the responses of other Muslim countries exposed to Westernization.

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