Ineds N'Itrane

A women's group in southern Morocco

Consciousness, crochet, and collective childcare practices

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Author's Declaration

The work presented in this dissertation was carried out in the Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies, Birkbeck College, and is entirely my own except where other authors have been referred to and acknowledged in the text. It has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university. The views expressed in this dissertation are my own, and not those of the University.

Signed

SOPHIA BOOTH 23/09/16

Contents

Abstract

This dissertation is about a women's group aimed at supporting the mothers of vulnerable children, facilitated by a charity in southern Morocco. It considers how a process of 'conscientisation', brought about through participation in the group, impacts on children. It looks at how empowerment for the women, is related to their being able to access children's rights, to their understanding of children's education, and to their struggle to reduce violence against children. It does so by looking at how the women articulated their sense of purpose in life and their relationship to society. It concludes by suggesting that the women's critical awareness of the world within which they live has the potential to bring about social transformation.

1.

Introduction

Ma y kder ela Imra ghir Imra: It is the woman who impacts the woman

It is the 23rd December 2015, the day before the Prophet's birthday. The session begins with talk about the week before and the women compare experiences of a parenting technique they had discussed. Then the facilitator begins explaining the theory of 'attachment' between mothers and babies. The women listen and ask questions; they are a little bemused by the heavy theoretical content but they are keen to discuss examples from their own lives and to question how they can use this knowledge practically. After some time, as the discussion around 'attachment' fades, a group of four women, dressed in traditional *lyzars* (long colourful fabric wrapped round from head to toe), bursts into song. One woman leads the chant and the others repeat. It is hypnotic. More women begin: with voices, clapping, and the odd ululation (a high pitched tongue shrill). One, who had the warmest smile, and would later be very patient when trying to teach me words for vegetables, had made cakes and home roasted nuts. The session became a *hefla* (party). We did henna in the traditional Berber style and the atmosphere was joyful. Oumaima, the group's elected leader, shared out tea and fizzy drinks.

That morning, I had sat in on a meeting about the women's group alongside Oumaima and three other women, all of whom work for Association Aatfal in Timignoun, Morocco. Oumaima was the only one who is illiterate, but

she does not let that blur her 'contribution to female knowledge' (Sadiqi 2014:191). She is a mother of eight who helps out at the centre with housekeeping and cooks for the children who come. She is well respected by her community, having acted as an informal midwife and counsellor for many women. She is an invaluable source of wisdom and guidance to the social workers. Having first attended the social centre as a 'beneficiary', she worked hard to resolve the problems she and her children experienced, and she succeeded. Now the association hopes that Oumaima will stop being a 'beneficiary' and help to reproduce her own success with other families. She will be reinstated at the centre in an active role which honours her contribution to the community, and which makes the most of her knowledge and capacity.

Oumaima's story matters because it is emblematic of the story of the group as a whole. Association Atfaal began the women's group in the belief that 'poor women are capable of promoting their own development' (Kabeer 1994:223). More specifically, they are able to promote their children's rights and by doing so to transform the society in which they live (UNCRC 1989). The impact of the group starts with the individuals. As the director of the centre puts it, 'it is the woman who impacts the woman'.

In development thought, 'conscientisation and organisation' are two resources available to poor women which encourage 'their capacity to resist and transform through their collective strength' (Kabeer 1994:251). In this dissertation, I look at one women's group, Ineds N'Itrane, and explore how it functions in relation to motherhood. More specifically, I look at how the group has influenced changes in collective childcare practices and consider how the

women talk about accessing children's rights, the education of their children and violence against children. Fatima, a director of the charity Association Atfaal, summarised the group's impact like this,

> There is a visible difference. Now the women are more conscious and autonomous. You can see a difference in their children from five years ago. They used to be dirty – you could see in their eyes and hair, but now they are very clean and smiling. So even the children in difficult situations, they are like the others and they feel comfortable and confident in their skin. They do not come across problems at school with the other children nor with the teacher because their mother has made things better…It is a question of confidence in yourself.

Hygiene is just one of the changes. In this dissertation, I explore the links between participation in the group, women becoming more 'conscious and autonomous', and how they '[make] things better' for their children. I explore the impact of the women's project and how the women perceive the 'new forms of consciousness' which emerge from the 'intangible resources of analytical skills, social networks, organisational strength, solidarity and sense of not being alone' (Kabeer 1994:245). I attempt to make these resources more 'tangible' in my analysis.

In the first chapter I look at what the women described as finding 'the way', using Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus' to show how 'the way' relates to 'conscientisation' (1989, Freire 1993). I explore how it plays out as action in the women's lives, and how it is associated with mobility and accessing services. I talk about 'the way' first because it was the clearest means by which the impact of the group was articulated. In the second chapter I look at how the women are enthused about 'learning' and 'education'. I argue their children benefit from their perception of education as an active and ongoing process and how this is

associated with renouncing punitive discipline. In the third chapter I look at how the women perceive the world around them. I argue that through considering the position of their children, the women show a critical awareness of social structures in which they live and lay the foundations for a community-led effort to protect street-connected children.

In 1984, Fatima Mernissi argued that Morocco needed development which was symbolic as well as material:

> *les problèmes qui se disent au Maroc 'en mal de developpement' sont d'abord d'ordre ideologique avant d'etre economiques* (16).
>
> The problems facing Morocco in its difficulties in development are ideological before they are economic.

This is true for women and children. The women's group has shown that changes in ways of thinking, rather than in material circumstances, can improve children's lives. Furthermore, the women's group shows how symbolic development in Morocco starts with grassroots organisation.

1.1. Literature review

Mothers, children, and women's groups

There is a pervasive bias in many cultures, by which the mothers of street-connected children are viewed as 'neglectful' or 'immoral'—and this has a 'compounding' negative effect on children's lives (Aptekar and Oliver 2016:409). Childcare practices are social and cultural, and different parenting strategies develop in difficult circumstances (Scheper-Hughes 1992). Neglecting mothers' perspectives in research around vulnerable or street-connected children encourages a discourse which ignores the structural and social issues and instead treats problems as individual failures, which can in turn create further problems (Wells 2008, Jack 2004;2010). The women's group I worked with is a project aimed at supporting mothers whilst not penalizing them. In Guatemala, an adult education project developed better parent-child relationships and reduced violence against children, demonstrating how 'collective action' towards a 'common good has a potency in reducing violence' (Schrader-McMillan and Burton 2009, Daro and Dodge 2009:70). At the same time, 'self-help groups' can also have an impact on how women treat their children's education (Sahu and Singh 2012:475).

Association Atfaal's women's group takes a 'bottom-up' approach to strengthening informal child protection mechanisms. 'Bottom up' development is opposed to 'top down' development because it is community driven rather than policy led (Wessells 2015). Community-focused projects can also strengthen social networks. Child maltreatment is reduced by fostering an 'environment of

mutual reciprocity in which residents are collectively engaged in supporting each other and in protecting children' (Daro and Dodge 2009:70). Communities which have limited 'trust' or are 'socially impoverished' often experience higher levels of child maltreatment and parents with limited social support are more likely to be abusive (Jack 2004:376). First time mothers without traditional support structures have benefited from such groups (Strange et al. 2014).

Despite this potential, participatory women's groups (participatory meaning partly or fully led by the women themselves) have gained attention in development under two main guises. The first is as an intervention in impoverished areas for maternal and natal health (Victora 2013a, Victora 2013b, Molzan-Turan et al 2011, Colbourn et al 2013, Nair et al 2012). Whilst the outcomes are often easily quantifiable (e.g. weight of babies, number of fatalities), the determinants are social and therefore harder to measure using numbers (Colbourn et al 2013:191, Victora 2013a). Few studies look at 'determinants' (Mainuddin et al 2015, Hossain and Hoque 2015), and the relationship between participatory groups and elder children is under-researched (Nair et al 2012). The second way that women's groups gain attention is as a socio-economic development strategy. These groups, including co-operatives and NGO (non-governmental organisation) led projects focus on female enterprise and alleviating poverty (Bordat et al 2011, Toomey 2011, Sesan 2014). There is some evidence suggesting that groups which are more participatory and focused on social, rather than economic, benefits are more effective in achieving their aims (Teshome et al 2012).

Theoretical Approaches

A useful model for understanding how the women's group functions is Paulo Freire's concept of 'conscientização' (roughly translated as conscientisation) or the process of developing 'critical consciousness' by questioning assumptions and making problems out of things which are taken for granted (1993, 2013 [1974]). Learning is 'praxis' made up of action and reflection. Developing consciousness is transformative; it is 'the beginning of an action' (Mayo 2004:50). In line with Freire's model, the women's group allows women to become more conscious of the significance of enculturation, empowering them to reject the social structures which perpetuate poverty.

Especially useful is Kabeer's definition of 'empowerment' as something that comes from 'within' but is related to the surrounding conditions (and constraints). Empowerment is symbolic and has material outcomes. It is defined as,

> the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability (Kabeer 1999:437).

There are different types of choice, but the most important is the ability to make 'strategic life choices' and this is true of the choices women make about or for their children. In my analysis, conscientisation highlights choices and constraints and empowerment is being able to make informed, or 'critically conscious', choices.

In order to elucidate the foundational relationship between critical consciousness and women's participation in the group and society, I use Bourdieu's theory of 'habitus'. Bourdieu melts the boundaries between objective

structures and subjective experiences by analyzing their complex interplay (Bourdieu 1989:14, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). 'Habitus' refers to the way in which people are both conditioned by social structures, such as 'class', but also reproduce them as individual agents, as they 'classify' the world (Bourdieu 1989:19). Mental structures are the product of 'internalisation of the structures of that world' (Bourdieu 1989:18). Habitus can therefore sustain hierarchies and perpetuate inequality; the oppressed maintain the structures from below. However, Bourdieu argues that individuals do not 'obey laws' like automata. It is possible to expose the structures and, by doing so, be able to transform them (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:59). What Freire calls conscientisation is thus recognizing 'habitus' or the interplay between agency and structure, it is 'empowering', in Kabeer's sense of that word, because choices are made apparent.

Status in society is mediated through 'economic capital, cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1989:17). Bourdieu's differentiation of the types of capital is useful when thinking about development. Sadiqi considers 'supplementing women's material empowerment with symbolic empowerment' as vital, showing how it is intertwined with the emergence of the 'Berber woman' as a political category (2014:7-8). The women's group does not provide 'hand outs' as this type of material development does not address symbolic inequality and can reinforce the hierarchy (Mosse and Lewis 2005, Escobar 1995). 'Hand out' style development can disguise the 'symbolic violence' enacted through hierarchical structures, the 'violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:272*).*

Farmer's theory of 'structural violence' expounds the relationship between hierarchy and violence. John Galtung coined the term 'structural violence' to express how violence is anything which stops someone from fulfilling their potential (1969:169). Violence exists wherever power structures control ways of being and living (Kleinman 2000:238). In this way, poor women can be seen as victims of structural violence and 'habitus' as part of this process. Violence is exclusion and the ways in which a more powerful class, or state, denies groups in society the same basic standards of life, and is characterized by axes which intersect: gender, race, and socioeconomic class (Farmer 1996). This is key to understanding how poor Moroccan women experience the world. Structural violence is the way in which women are kept in poverty, through their inability to access services which impact on their children's lives, such as medical care and secondary school. The women's group, alongside Atfaal, therefore mitigate structural violence and the reproduction of poverty.

1.2. Methodology

Outline

Influenced by Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi, I felt it was important to let 'Moroccan women speak for themselves' and I have used many direct quotations from interviews (Schaefer-Davis and Yabis 2016:79, Mernissi 1984). Unless specified, all translations (from French) are my own and transliterations (from Darija and Tashelhiyt) are from my field notes.

My reading highlighted the need to understand how and why women's groups impact children, so I used a qualitative methodology. My approach was 'emic' as the women defined key parameters (Lett 1990:130). I assumed *not to know* rather than *to know*; anthropologists criticise international development for assuming *to know* and thus enforcing a hierarchy of ways of thinking (Ferguson 1997). I tried to stay rooted in the context and experience of the research— 'the hard surfaces of life' (Geertz 1973:30). This helped me to be conscious of the 'additional, moral, ideological' statements I made about 'real cultural events' (Clifford 1986:98).

It is important to acknowledge that social research can face a conflict between 'the desire to know and the longing to help' (Kruger 2014:1012). My motivations were academic but I also wanted to hear the women's stories. I saw data gathering partly as an opportunity to collaborate (Abu-Lughod 2002). Whilst striving to avoid bias, the notions of 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' sounded to me too much like superiority. I recognised my relative privilege and did not

want to enforce it further – instead prioritising solidarity over objectivity (Scheper-Hughes 1992;1995).

Sampling

The two focus groups contained twelve and sixteen women respectively with four women who attended both. I did semi-structured interviews with six women who attended the first focus group, and three of whom attended the second, meaning my full sample was twenty-one women. I introduce the key individuals: Oumaima, Salma, Hiba, Mounia, Laila, and Yasmine, where their stories form the basis of my argument.

My participants had volunteered from the women's group and were in a range of situations—all either had children of their own or were full-time carers (or both). They are 'competent, but socially constrained actors' (Kabeer 1994:235). I met them through a key gatekeeper in the organisation who was also my interpreter. I worked with three women from within the organisation to whom I owe a lot; they provided translation, insight, and wisdom during the research process. I had planned to include children, but realised that this could have compromised the mothers (Schrader-McMillan and Burton 2009:202).

Data Gathering

As well as semi-structured interviews and two semi-structured focus groups in which I made notes and audio recordings, my research benefited from participant observation. I took part in the activities of the social centre with the women, the children, and the social workers themselves. Interviews encouraged the 'co-production' of knowledge through 'talking and listening' (Sherman Heyl

1997). Similarly, focus groups reflected the group's format and data emerged from dialogue (Kitzinger 1994). I asked non-leading questions around my research themes—the group, children, and the community—aware of the problems associated with assumptive questioning (Morrow and Richards 1996:98, Bostock 2002:275).

Ethics

I worked with an organisation I knew and trusted which helped me to mitigate the problems of being an outsider (Kenny 2007:14). The women's welfare was my first priority and I worked with the key gatekeepers to ensure the research would not be compromising or difficult for the women, and that everyone at the centre knew my purpose. Conscious of the fact that the production of knowledge has consequences, I hoped to make a 'practical contribution' to the organisation as well (Chambers 1983:74). Anthropology has a colonial history and as a European who communicated in French (the language of the former colonisers) it was important to be culturally sensitive (Asad 1973). Writing a reflective journal helped me avoid ethical issues related to a lack of self-awareness (Probst 2015).

I have anonymised all people, places and organisations. This can present a 'conflict of rights'—the 'right to be protected versus their right to have a voice'—and I questioned the implied power imbalance in not allowing someone their voice (Powell and Smith 2009:139, Burgess-Proctor 2015). However, as we cannot control others' interpretations, nor gain consent from everyone implicated by research within a community, anonymisation is necessary.

Limitations

My inability to speak any of the native languages not only emphasised my status as an outsider and made it difficult for me to assess the 'accuracy' of translations, but also meant I had less control over how my attempts to 'do no harm' were translated (MacKenzie 2015:168).

My research took place within the social centre, which may have affected the data and my connection to the charity could have affected how the women spoke and what they said (Bostock 2002). The short time (in translation) that I had to get to know the women meant it was hard to understand their 'self-presentation' (Kruger 2014). The recall of past events is 'selective at best' and people present themselves and their stories as a social event which can reflect different 'truths' (Ritterhouse 2006:6, Kruger 2014).

Data Analysis

Qualitative techniques allowed me to generate theory out of data through careful 'reading and rereading' and grounded theory gave me a level of flexibility in analysis (Rice and Ezzy 1999:258, Glaser and Strauss 1967, Morse 2009).

In a straightforward way, by sharing their ideas and experiences the women answered my initial question, 'How do participatory women's groups impact collective childcare practices?'. I 'placed the experiences of women at the centre of research' and considered how 'experiences are framed' through 'cultural discourses' (Bostock 2002:275, Harding 2001:518). I have tried to avoid disguising the 'multiple interpretations' possible and therefore the power dynamic 'based on whose voice gets heard' (Sherman Heyl 1997:1).

1.3. Background

My research focuses on a group which the members named Ineds N'Itrane*. Ineds* means 'mothers' and *N'Itrane* means both 'of silver' and 'of stars' in Tashelhiyt—the Berber dialect of the region. The group is part of a women's project run by Association Atfaal, a British and Moroccan partnership which supports vulnerable children and families in Timignoun, southern Morocco. The charity runs the Atfaal social centre which is attended by the children of the women's group and where the women meet once a week.

In this dissertation, I use the word Berber, rather than the more politically correct *Amazigh* because, like Fatima Sadiqi (a Moroccan Berber feminist academic), I assert that 'Berber' in English is not pejorative in the way that it is in French or Arabic, and because it was the word I heard most often when researching (Sadiqi 2014:9). Morocco is multi-cultural and multi-lingual (Ennaji et al 2016:2). The languages spoken in the Atfaal social centre are Darija (the Moroccan Arabic dialect), Tashelhiyt, French, and FusHa (Classical Arabic, only used when helping with children's homework). My research was conducted in French through an interpreter who spoke Tashelhiyt and Darija.

Morocco is a middle-income country which made rapid efforts to accelerate 'modernisation' upon independence in 1956 (Sadiqi 2014). In the 21st century, legal reforms, such as the 2004 changes to the Moudawana (Family Code) and the 2011 constitutional changes following the protests known as the 'Arab Spring', are considered huge steps for democratisation and gender equality (El Haitami 2013, Ennaji et al 2016:2-3). However, large inequalities exist in

wealth distribution and unemployment, and rural poverty is widespread (The New Arab 2015).

Timignoun is a semi-rural town in the south. It has a long and recent history of rural to urban migration, especially from the nearby mountains, and continues to be a nexus for the rural and predominately Berber populations who live in the surrounding areas (Hoffman 2008). Women frequently spoke about family who lived in the countryside and mountains. The economy is based on agriculture, small industry, and limited tourism (Ministère de l'intérieur 2009). There are many poor families living in and around the town. Association Atfaal was set up to help the 'street children' of Timignoun —the children of families living in poverty. The women's project was set up to help the mothers of street-connected children.

Rural and semi-rural poverty is particularly aligned with women's poverty and related to these economic issues, rural and/or Berber women face many challenges to full participation in society (Ennaji et al 2016). For example, whilst Morocco simultaneously has very progressive secular and Islamic feminist movements, it is estimated that fifty percent of adult women are illiterate (Ennaji 2008, Sadiqi 2011:36). 'Cultural hurdles, patriarchal traditions, illiteracy, and lack of information' impact on women's lives by preventing them from gaining full access to their rights, including their right to live without abuse or exploitation (Ennaji 2016:104). Association Atfaal aims at alleviating the problems associated with social stigma, poverty, and lack of education, and does so by encouraging the women to organise and plan for themselves as they learn, share, and work together to better their children's lives.

In Morocco, the 'most important source of authority' is 'patriarchy' (Sadiqi 2014:6). Despite this, Moroccan women are often celebrated for their strength, dynamism and determination (Ennaji et al 2016, Sadiqi 2011&2014, Schaefer-Davis and Yabis 2016, Mernissi 1984). Moroccan women are lauded as 'the main advocates of development and social justice' and have made progress in mainstream society as well as though grassroots organisation (Moghadam 2012, Daoud 1993, Bordat et al 2011). Whilst in Morocco, I was frequently in awe of strong and intelligent women, including those within Atfaal, who seemed to be at the heart of the fight for social justice and children's rights.

In recent times, NGOs have been instrumental in helping women to shape their own transformation of society (Ennaji, 2011:80). Versions of women's groups have existed at least since independence, in the form of Foyers Féminins—groups which taught domestic skills (Bordat et al 2011:17). Whilst Ineds N'Itrane is focused on women and their children, there are many women's organisations across Morocco, including grassroots movements, which support women in different aspects of their personal and civil lives (Ennaji et al 2016:1, Bordat et al 2011).

As far as I can tell, Ineds N'Itrane is quite unique—it is directly linked to the women's hopes, but also to their aspirations for their children as they are brought together by Association Atfaal. Their own development and their children's become entwined.

2.

‘I have found my way’

Critical consciousness, mobility, and purpose

When Salma was a young teenager she moved to the city to marry. In the early years she struggled with the responsibilities of motherhood. She felt that she could not ‘educate’ her young children because she was ‘too young’ and ‘outright, […] had no goal’. Salma used the word ‘goal’ to refer to what motivates her to make choices in her everyday life. She made the link between her parenting and her own sense of purpose. Furthermore, Salma associated this lack of direction with a lack of ‘love or sweetness’, feeling she wouldn’t experience the same difficulties with her eldest children if she had had the women’s group before. Whilst she is still working to ‘repair the damage’ she feels was caused by this deficiency, she presents herself confidently as an organized and purposeful woman. The women’s group has meant that Salma feels she has ‘changed’ and is able to ‘love’ her children and be ‘happy to look after them with all things, their education…in all aspects’.

Salma’s ability to ‘love’ her children is intertwined with her own personal sense of direction, or ‘way’ in life (as she and others put it). This chapter will show that women feel better able to look after their children and to access outside services when they feel that they have ‘found [their] way’. I argue that women are able to make choices which impact on their lives by being more aware of the world around them and their place in it. The chapter is made up of

three sections. In the first I consider what 'the way' means and argue that it is best understood in terms of Freire's concept of critical consciousness and Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. In the second section I argue that there is a connection between the 'way' in life and spatial mobility. In the third section I address the possible conflict between taking control of one's life and belief in God.

2.1. 'The way'

'Way' is my translation of the word '*chemin*' which was used by my interpreter to translate the Darija and Tashelhiyt words used by my participants. I discussed with my interpreter how the French word '*chemin*' is used to mean the 'way' or 'path' in a physical sense, but also in a figurative sense, to express the direction someone takes on a metaphorical journey. For this reason my interpreter felt it was a good translation, as the original has the same dynamism. It did not appear to be the language prescribed by the group, rather it was how women expressed the impact of the group for themselves. Perhaps like the word 'empowerment', 'way' is not 'clearly defined, let alone measured' and there is a value in the 'fuzziness' (Kabeer 1999:436). The 'way' is associated with self-esteem and is related to women's capacity to take control of aspects of their life with which they previously struggled, such as their family's health or children's education. In this context 'health' and 'education' have idiosyncratic holistic definitions. 'Health' can refer to medical health as well as hygiene and minor injuries and 'education' refers to the way in which children learn and grow, not just in knowledge but in experience, attitudes, habits, and behaviors—the way in which

they learn from the world around them. In the second chapter, I explore this further.

The 'way' seemed to represent the ways in which women developed 'new knowledge of the surrounding reality' which led to 'new self-understanding about the roots of what people are at present and what they can become in the future' (Burton and Kagan, 2005:68). This process can be understood in terms of Freire's theory of conscientisation. The 'way' refers to purpose and a transformation in behaviour. Salma felt the women's group gave her 'fulfillment' and made her 'conscious' and able to 'do lots of things' when she used to just be 'sleeping at home'. Whilst Salma might mean this literally, it could also be read figuratively. Salma's statement that she is no longer 'sleeping' might express a different type of awakening, which is a consequence of the changes she has made in her life. The women's group is not an adult literacy group, as in Freire's model, but encourages women to no longer take for granted social norms, freeing themselves from assumptions by questioning them. For example, being illiterate does not mean they can't help their child learn to read.

Let us now turn to another example. Mounia is an older member of the group who has three children herself and two which she looks after for her sister, who has serious learning difficulties and spends most of her time in the street. Mounia is a shy woman who only speaks her native Tashelhiyt and has minimal contact with the outside world. Mounia told me that before the women's group she did not 'know her way'. Now she had 'found her way, a good way'. Whilst others expressed this sentiment more jubilantly, Mounia spoke with a quiet assertiveness. Assertiveness and 'the way' seemed to be mutually

reinforcing. The women's group helped many women develop different types of confidence and, like Mounia, their sense of purpose is encouraged by a feeling of belonging. Oumaima spoke of developing confidence through self-criticism, using the frameworks and knowledge she had learnt in the group. Her sense of purpose is embedded in the goals of the group.

Others expressed something similar in different language. They spoke of 'mentality' as a key factor in whether mothers were able to be successful in supporting their children. Laila said,

> If you have a good mentality you can learn and even if you hit your children because you have a problem in the head, you can learn not to.

The idea of 'mentality' is related to that of 'the way' but importantly distinct—Laila suggests that it is not the path taken but the approach to that path which matters more. She also emphasizes the importance of being able to 'learn'. As I argue in chapter two, women often made clear links between 'mentality', or state of mind, and learning, asserting that the latter is rooted in the former. Learning is related to women's subjectivity, and consciousness of this is the first step to being 'no longer willing to be mere objects' (Freire 1993:15).

Finding the 'way' is related to recognizing agency within perceived structures, or the 'fuzzy stuff' between agency and structure (Wacquant 1992:22-26). Bourdieu uses 'habitus' to refer to the relationship between structures and subjectivity and 'fields' to show how groups and classes are made distinct by these structures. In this way, he shows that sociological constructs constrain human interactions and representations and form the 'daily struggles' of agents and groups as they try to change or maintain these structures

(1989:14-15). By becoming aware of their own purpose and choices women challenge social norms and are therefore able to renegotiate the power structures which impact on their lives. Finding the 'way' or being aware of 'mentality' is perhaps the beginning of recognizing how to change these structures.

> [Woman's] ontological vocation [...] is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms [her] world, and in doing so moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively (Freire, 1993:14 [Genders changed])

On an individual level, women felt more confident and purposeful—their life was 'richer' as they nourished their relationships with their children. Collectively, women supported each other in overcoming exclusion. In conservative communities in southern Morocco, shame, or *Hshooma* is a guiding principle of social interaction and social norms are reinforced and reproduced. For a woman, shameful behaviour might include being seen to be unaccompanied in 'the street', a typically 'male' sphere (Sadiqi 2014:106). Walking down the street unaccompanied because you want to go to the market, visit the doctor or the civil administration buildings, or take your child to school might represent one of the 'daily struggles' involved in changing these structures.

2.2. 'Now I go out…I am free…I go out freely'

Oumaima said this when talking about the difference participation in the group made on her life. The 'way' is related to spatial mobility and accessing services. The confidence, related to a sense of direction in life, is the same confidence that permits women to 'go out freely' without a chaperone to access things which

impact on their capacity to parent. There is a distinction between the metaphorical sense of 'way' (direction in life) and the physical spatial 'way' (mobility) but the two are related. An NGO programme working with women who have suffered under violent patriarchal structures in Asia encouraged women as part of the healing process to go out on their own (Kabeer 1994:246-7). Oumaima visited the 'tribunal' on her own (a place that until recently was off-limits to women). She found the papers she needed from the civil administration to ensure her children are recognized by the state. Laila took other women from the neighbourhood to begin the lengthy and difficult process of late birth registration. The bureaucratic processes surrounding late birth registration in Morocco are in many ways an example of 'symbolic' or 'structural violence' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Farmer 1996).

Marginalised women, especially those who are poor, Berber, and/or illiterate, face great challenges when attempting to register their children (necessary in order to give them full access to healthcare and secondary school). These challenges are in the form of exclusionary institutional processes. Civil servants, for example, can discriminate against poor or single women, and the process requires money and documents which many do not have. Illiteracy aside, the complicated paperwork is usually in the languages (FusHa and French) of the well-educated or upper-echelons. Association Atfaal found that some of the key factors that inhibited women from registering their children were a lack of information about the process, a feeling of intimidation about the process, and feeling unable to get over the first hurdles. Therefore, by visiting the administration building together, the women not only enact their civil rights, but

overturn one of the forces which oppress them—their own internalized incapacity to direct their own lives and the hurdles placed before them by the state.

There was complete consensus amongst the women that since joining the group they visit the school and hospital more frequently. By finding their 'way', women became active citizens, who stood up to these structures of exclusion and violence—for the sake of their children. Through accessing services, they are better able to meet the needs of their children, but they also begin a process of transformative social action as they encourage other women to do the same thing. By making 'strategic life choices' women address the problems of marginalization, untreated health problems, lack of education, and being undocumented in society (Kabeer 1999:447).

In the same breath, women spoke about visiting 'nice places'. They enjoyed visiting sites of cultural importance from which they had previously felt excluded. Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' refers to how, other than wealth, people are classed in society. Cultural 'capital' or symbolic capital 'provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy, as classes distinguish themselves through taste' (Gaventa 2003:6). These visits to sites of social and cultural interest show poor women transforming the way in which cultural capital is distributed in society, and democratizing mobility.

2.3. 'They become what God wants'

This was said during a discussion on children's education. Whilst finding the 'way' seems to link directly to being able to make life choices, the question of

intentionality and God's will also arose. A religious sense of pre-destination could potentially conflict with the idea of working towards a better life by finding and following the 'way'. Success and struggle are shaped by religious cultural discourse. For example, the Arabic phrases '*lHamdulillaah*' ('praise God' for present or past events) and '*Inshaa'a llaah'* ('God willing' when talking about the future) exist in Darija and Tashelhiyt, and were frequently used by the women in the group (Latin transliteration from Sakulich 2011).

Different women spoke about 'destination' in different ways. Hiba felt parenting was difficult because 'they become what God wants'. Zineb, in the focus group, told me she did not 'beat' her children because God controlled their behaviour so it was futile (I consider the shift from what the women called 'hitting' to tenderness in the following chapter). Laila seemed aware of the potential contradiction between her own efforts and her belief in God's will, melting the boundaries between them:

> I do what I can when I have the way to do so, even though already tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, what happens is already drafted [by God]…I do whatever I can, anything, to get there…but it is very difficult, because it is very difficult to be the author of a family.

Laila asserts that God 'drafts' what happens but also refers to herself as 'the author' of her family— 'author' in this sense could mean the person responsible or the person who creates, or both. Perhaps Laila is struggling to 'get there' which is the place God has drafted for her, she is attempting to fulfill God's 'drafts' by writing them herself.

Salma felt that her sense of 'the way' helped her to become a better 'practicing Muslim'. It seems the 'way' is neither simply a religious sense of

destiny or something forged entirely by the individual. The two are not mutually exclusive, but co-exist in different ways for different women. The 'way' relates to a social reality which does not contradict faith or destiny.

3.

‘I have learnt lots of things, thanks to the group’

Learning, sharing, and tenderness

Many women asserted that the group helped them with children’s ‘education’. They felt enthused about school and helping their children develop good habits for a healthy life as well as good behavior. One such woman is Yasmine, who said ‘I do not have many worries about the education of my children’. Yasmine looks after her sister’s three children whilst their mother goes to work on a farm out of town. She never married or had any children of her own. It is normal for mothers to go out to work but Yasmine’s sister is lucky because she has somebody to look after the children. Yasmine treats the children as her own and prides herself on how much progress they make in school and the manners they have developed. She is proud of their education. The children are bright and sometimes a little cheeky, much like Yasmine herself, who sometimes sits on the curb outside the centre and makes friendly repartee with the different people who come and go. For Yasmine, the group plays two predominate roles: the chance to have some ‘*fête*’—to talk and laugh with friends—and to learn a new craft. Yasmine revels in craft-based activities and is, like many of the women, very proud of her skills. She is a master crocheter.

Laila felt the ‘group is what you make of it’ but mainly,

> It is to learn to do something, and to make it authentic at home and then to have the power to sell them.

The word 'power' suggests that Laila would find it not only useful but empowering to sell things that she made. Laila placed huge emphasis on the role of material development alongside symbolic and social development. Hiba, suggested 'the purpose of the group is to serve everything that is useful and to learn something to make a revenue'. Some women entwined the importance of children's education and revenue. As Hiba put it: 'the house you have influences the mother you are'. Hiba suggests parental practice is inextricably bound up with the material resources available. On the other hand, Salma and Oumaima felt they benefitted particularly from discussions and sessions on children's education.

Timignoun is well known for its artisanal crafts—the artisans constitute a key part of the small economy built on commerce and tourism (Ministère de l'intérieur 2009). Across the globe, NGOs have used handmade crafts in rural development strategies (Forstner 2013). In Morocco, women's cooperatives specializing in the local product—for example, Argan oil in the south or buttons in Sefrou—are effective in developing women's income, and those which are run by women (rather than by male government employees) also have social benefits (Schaefer-Davis and Yabis 2016, Bordat et al 2011:108). Learning is associated with helping women 'safeguard their rights and interests' (Ennaji et al 2016:5). Mothers who learn sometimes encourage their children's learning and their appreciation of 'learning' influences how the women feel about their children's education. Argan oil producers learnt literacy and organisational skills through membership of a women's cooperative and as a consequence chose to send their children to school (Toomey 2011:41).

Fatima, a director of Association Atfaal, suggested that Ineds N'Itrane was the first women's group in the area to step away from traditional training in domestic skills. Ineds N'Itrane chose to learn handicrafts as well as to develop their personal strengths and their capacity to support their children. According to the women, learning takes place in the group in two key ways: through the learning of 'a little know-how' or craft, such as crochet or 'design'; and through the discussion of topics related to children's education or their personal lives, in sessions instigated by a social worker or facilitator.

In the previous chapter I argued that the women's group helped women to find their 'way' and feel more purposeful by developing their critical consciousness, and that this played out in their lives as mothers in distinct ways identified by the women themselves. 'The way' is linked to learning as women consciously choose their activities when planning the group. In this chapter I show how, partly due to their own experience of 'learning', women endow children's 'education' with great importance. I argue that the women have a holistic impression of 'education', inflected by traditional ideas about social development as well as locally-specific concepts (Barron-Pastor 2015:73).

Firstly, I look at how the women associated learning with sharing in social and family environments. In the second section I look at how, as learners themselves, women placed new emphasis on their children's education and expressed an understanding of 'learning' as an active ongoing process. I look at how 'happiness', as an emotional state, is linked to the women's enthusiasm for their children's education. In the third section I consider how the women chose to move from 'hitting' to 'sweetness'.

In development thought, and western ideology in general, education is often thought of in a common-sense way as an 'inherent "social good"' (Froerer 2011:696). In this context, education is seen as an innately productive force which helps to alleviate poverty, has gendered and social benefits and is considered a good for its own sake as well (Colclough 2004:166-7). What is meant by 'education' is usually formal schooling, which has 'roots in colonialism' (Harber 2014:16). Engaging adults with education thus means encouraging them to provide a 'nurturing environment' whilst children learn at school (Umermura 1999:8 in Maeda 2015:173). Whilst the women succeeded in this, and embraced many aspects of formal schooling, they also expressed their own ideas about children's education. For the women, education does not only happen in prescribed circumstances, it is founded in experience and sharing.

3.1. 'I don't hide anything'

This sentiment was expressed by many women who asserted that they shared what they learned with their children and that this type of openness was good for children's education. Yasmine, amongst others, expressed enthusiasm for the group learning as it constituted part of her relationship with her children and made her feel happy. Every Friday, Yasmine's adopted son, Hamza, approached the women's group facilitator to ask 'will my aunty be at the women's group today?' followed by 'what will she learn at the women's group today?'. Hamza enjoys his aunty taking part in the group, and expects her to bring home new skills to share and stories to tell each week. Her participation encourages a dialogue between her and her children about learning. Yasmine reflected on how

they would each discuss the things they learnt that day and beamed with pride as she showed me one of her handmade items.

Whilst this type of sharing suggests learning can be open and inclusive and help develop a dialogue between mothers and children, sharing can also have a practical effect on childcare practices. Mounia felt happy to be able to learn a recipe and then 'make it for my children'. Oumaima melted the boundary between the direct and indirect ways in which she shared her learning those around her. As a well-respected woman, Oumaima felt she shared her learning,

> by way of my daily life with my family, with my sister who is abroad … and with all the neighbourhood.

'Daily life' here perhaps represents the way in which 'learning' encourages a type of consciousness. Oumaima's 'daily life' is a purposeful and deliberate demonstration of her learning and knowledge. Sharing through 'daily life' relates to alternative local modes of sharing knowledge in the social environment (Omolewa 2007), a type of 'learning' integrated into normal daily social practices (Harber 2014:16).

For the women, sharing is opposed to 'hiding'. Laila and Mounia both suggested that not to share information was to 'hide' it. Laila said,

> I don't hide any information, each time I know something I will share it with my neighbours.

The idea that to not share was effectively to 'hide' suggests that not sharing is a deliberate action and emphasizes the action in a negative light. As Mounia put it,

> I share everything with my children because I do not hide anything from my children.

Mounia makes a link between sharing with her children and her 'learning' in the women's group, and opposes the idea of 'hiding' things. Honesty and openness are highly prized amongst the women and 'secrets' or closedness is associated with ill consequences. For instance, it was suggested that if you 'hide money from children, the children will steal it'. Openness seems to have cultural capital, as Laila put it 'trust is the most important thing'. The women shared examples of being honest with their children, one woman claiming that 'honesty with children makes you feel at ease' therefore implying it benefits the mothers as well as children.

This informal and horizontal model of learning perhaps has its foundations in Berber women's oral traditions, in which different types of knowledge, including spiritual knowledge, are produced, learnt, and shared through 'ritual and artistic' story-telling, poetry, and song (Sadiqi 2013;2014:165). Whilst never achieving full recognition in mainstream Moroccan society, these traditions have played a part in safeguarding the Berber language, traditional female knowledge, and Moroccan cultural history (Sadiqi 2007;2013). When Hiba, for example, who is Berber and monolingual, learnt something she would 'pass it on like a message'. Amongst rural, Berber women, silence or shyness is not respectful, whereas talking is a sign of respect and solidarity (Hoffman 2008:10). The model of learning operated by the women in the group has much in common with the model advocated by Freire. Freire's theory is founded in the Marxist idea that educators should learn from those who they seek to teach because people 'change circumstances' (Mayo 2004).

The same model applies to experiences, shared through discussion, as well as to practical skills. Salma felt that she 'learnt to not make the same mistakes that the other women have made' taking 'lessons from the other women in the group'. Hiba said it was an opportunity to 'share and discuss the worries' and discover answers to problems. Through sharing, discussing and working towards practical solutions, the women model the way in which they advocated treating children.

Imane, the group facilitator, associated sharing with 'empowerment'. She said,

> if a woman finds out about a work opportunity she can share it with another woman. The other women can benefit from her experience and feel empowered… whether it is financial or social.

Imane implies that sharing the knowledge of a work opportunity would give women the opportunity to make money but also feel 'empowered' in a 'social' way. Sharing creates social networks and through the network women can find opportunities and develop social capital. Having access to knowledge through sharing increases the resources women have with which to make choices about their lives. It is therefore constitutive of 'empowerment' as Kabeer defines it (1999).

3.2. 'The difference is I learn'

Hamza and Yasmine's habitual dialogue suggests another characteristic of the group's learning. Learning is continuous not discrete. When thinking about the difference between her life as a mother before and after joining the women's

group, Hiba concluded 'the difference is I learn'. She did not list the things that she had learnt. Hiba focused on learning itself and characterized it as an active and progressive state similar to a state of mind or being, bolstering the relationship between learning and 'the way'. She expressed the limitless possibilities of being in a state of 'learning', saying 'if we don't know something, we learn it'. Being open to learning means that everything has the potential to be a learning experience. The women described what they 'learnt' in the group as '*Kulshee! Kulshee*!' (everything! everything!).

The women also made links between their own learning and their children's education. They asserted that their children 'no longer forgot what they learnt in school', and celebrated how their children now had 'good habits', variously discussing how they were hygienic, no longer late for school, and did not sleep in late. These were all considered outcomes of a 'good education'. Health is generally considered 'a source of economic productivity' and ill health and hygiene are generally associated with poverty (Sadiqi 2008:452). They also affect children's experience of school. By transforming 'habits' the personal becomes social.

Just as Yasmine enjoyed crochet, women frequently linked the capacity to learn (and having found the 'way') with happiness. When we cooked together it was a fun atmosphere with gossiping and laughing. Supporting each other and a sense of belonging have positive outcomes for women and children (Daro and Dodge 2009). Nearly everyone wanted to express how the group made them feel 'at ease' like they were at a '*fête*', or party. The good feeling related to children. One woman said 'we feel enthusiastic towards children's education'. For Salma,

being capable and being able to love are mutually reinforcing. Women said that when they were happy it was better for their families, and their children's 'good education' made them happy.

3.3. 'To hit them on the head in front of everyone isn't an education'

Hiba, who I will introduce fully later, said this in relation to the way in which people behave in the street, but I use it here to introduce the ways in which the women understood and communicated that 'hitting' was not good 'education'. I use this quotation as I enjoyed the matter of fact way Hiba spoke about these issues.

'The way' is related to the manner in which the women take care of their children as their sense of purpose made them more aware of their actions – no longer behaving like an automaton. The women's adoption of 'the way' is epitomized by a general shift from corporal punishment, or 'hitting', to talking and 'tenderness' and even 'love'. The women felt that reducing violence against children was better for the children's education as well as their own maternal sensibility. To this end, all the women wanted to discuss how they no longer 'hit' their children. Mounia and Hiba spoke about their choice of 'sweetness' and 'compassion' over 'violence'. Hiba described herself as 'hyper aware'—when she felt like she would be violent she would 'get out' of the situation to recover and handle it calmly. Oumaima and Salma wanted their children to be 'free' with them watching over 'calmly'. By saying this they imply it is freeing for both child and mother no longer to use violence.

Related to being 'aware' of how they disciplined their children, the women named the behaviour of the child as the responsibility of the mother. Yasmine linked purpose with responsibility and maternal experience. She felt that it was wise to avoid 'hitting' because if a child misbehaved 'it is the fault of the mother who has badly educated her child' so the child didn't deserve it. Oumaima felt strongly that it was the responsibility of the mother to temper her behaviour for the sake of the child's education, not that it was the child's responsibility to learn to temper their own behaviour in order to please their mother. For this reason, she prioritized the welfare of children above mothers.

However, Oumaima also asserted that the way in which someone relates to their child can reflect the way in which they relate to their social environment. There is often a tendency for 'authoritarian' and 'punitive' childrearing practices in 'repressive' social contexts (Schrader-McMillan and Burton 2008:199). Mothers who experience fear and alienation are often troubled by the task of engaging with their children and meeting the needs of their family (Bostock 2002). In this way, confidence and finding the 'way' means recognizing and overturning some of the impact of the 'repressive' context, be it of poverty, illiteracy, conservative cultural values, or social stigma, and thereby finding it easier to engage with their children and avoid the use of violence.

Familial violence and the psychological mechanisms used to justify or explain it, are social and cultural, and not purely the fault of individuals. Understanding this not only helps the individual, but society (Martín-Baró 1996). The women's group provides a space for women to discuss and remedy some of the structural levels of repression, such as dealing with civil authorities and

schools, and this in turn has the impact of reducing violence against children. As I explore in chapter three, this has the potential to extend beyond their family life.

4.

‘I don’t leave them to go out in the street’

Unemployment, the street, and community

Many women were keen to assert that because of the group they did not ‘leave [their children] to go out in the street’, however, some women continued to worry for their older children outside the house. One such woman is Hiba. Hiba is a smiling and friendly woman. She speaks Tashelhiyt and uses the Berber colloquial mouth click when listening and following. Mounia refers to Hiba as her only friend. Hiba’s husband and older children are unemployed and all five of them live in an apartment of one and a half rooms in a ‘precarious’ neighbourhood—nestled tightly in between other families, including those of other members of the group. Hiba has many worries for her family. She feels her worries have got worse now her children are older. As she puts it,

> It has been a long time since I have been at the tribunal, but I tell a little story about one time when I was there… because they had said my son had committed vandalism in the gardens, but he had done nothing, but he stayed there for three days. I have worries about when my children go out, and I am always worried until they come back. When I am alone with them to talk I say “don’t leave with other children who are wicked… you must choose your friends wisely, and please don’t come back too late, don’t come back too late to the house so I can sleep peacefully.”

The gardens are a large modern municipal space just outside the town. Hiba worries that her children must be safe and make good choices but acknowledges that the authorities (the police) may treat them unjustly. In this extract, Hiba describes succinctly the complex relationship between women’s concerns for their children’s lives, and the children’s relationship to the street, the police, and

society. Hiba shows how concerns about social structures exist alongside those about children's 'education'—behaviour, and choices. Hiba's real wish is that her family will find work. Illiterate herself, she wanted the promise of success that their 'schooling' implied to be fulfilled for her children. For Hiba, the most important things were that her adult children 'can find a job, find a job and make some money' and that they be 'protected by God'.

In the previous chapters I have shown how the women's group indirectly and directly has a positive impact on children's lives. In this chapter, I look at how the women described their relationship with the world around them. Pinto has referred to consciousness as a '"way towards" something apart from itself' (Freire, 1993:51). Reflecting the way in which feminist movements in Morocco became about democratisation and modernisation, the women's journey to better their children's lives becomes a '"society" project' in the community (Sadiqi 2008:451). Not only do women participate in society by enacting their children's rights, but they also recognise social injustices through how they think about their children.

In the first section, I do this by showing how the women think about education and unemployment. Secondly, I look at how they view 'the street' and how their 'interests emerge out of different dimensions of social life' and 'are always rooted in experience' (Kabeer 1994:228). In the third section, I consider how the 'way' is not just personal, but also local. I argue that the women are in the process of transforming the cultures around childcare and children in their community.

4.1. 'To be in a good situation, you must finish your studies'

Laila is intelligent and has a bright sense of humour. She is a single mother of three children who often wears more western style clothing. Being a single mother means she is generally more stigmatized (Sadiqi 2008:456). However, she also exhibits her strength of character very openly—she is confident and forthright with her opinions—in a group discussion she stood out as someone who both encouraged others to share their opinions and was able at times to dominate the conversation. Her confidence is clearly connected to her aspirations.

Laila is conscious of the aspirations she has for her children. She feels strongly that she wants her children to be,

> better than me, better than those around me.

She feels that she does not have 'the means to do what' she would like. She has potential but no 'way' to fulfill it. Her situation can be understood in terms of Kabeer's three components of 'Choice': 'resources', 'agency', and 'achievements' (Kabeer 1999:437). 'Resources' are the conditions in which choices are made; living in poverty is disempowering because it constrains choice (Kabeer 1999:437). 'Agency' is the capacity to choose, and 'achievements' are the outcomes of choices. Laila has agency but she lacks resources, both material and symbolic. For Laila, 'to be in a good situation, you must finish your studies', rather than live life like she does. She wants to do 'what [she] can in order to have a good situation'. Unlike the other women, Laila felt she lived her life not with purpose but by doing what she could. Her choice of the word 'studies'

applies to orthodox global ideas about formal education and mobility (Harber 2014).

Mounia spoke emotively and implied that she did not feel it was previously possible for her children to aspire to education and employment:

> it moves me a lot when my children don't drop out of school and one tries to get an apprenticeship

It 'moves' her because she had not thought it was possible. Perhaps because of her social isolation, Mounia often spoke about her experience in a way that implied a belief in 'individual misfortune rather than social injustice' (Kabeer, 1994:227). Other women suggested that the social reality did include structural inequalities. Both Yasmine and Oumaima said that before the group they thought that a good 'level of studies' was reserved for wealthier families. Oumaima thought her relatives who had emigrated had a good level of education, directly linking education with spatial mobility. Hiba joked about the lack of education in mountain communities, saying that the children break the televisions by thinking they can touch what is 'inside' them.

But even education is not always enough:

> Even if you have a good level of studies, there are no jobs

This was said during a conversation about whether the women's group 'had succeeded in living up to its name'. It became apparent that *'Itrane'* (silver) represented money. Many women felt angry that they had not generated more revenue over the last year and expressed disillusionment about the possibility of earning a living. Laila suggested that,

> The adults are not motivated because they can't find a job even if they have finished their studies...

Laila voiced what many felt. Around the table women nodded, agreed and clicked in approval. Despite recognising the many advantages of 'studies', the women felt that there was little hope for their 'adult' children to find a job. The fact that resources, including jobs and higher education, seem to be reserved for the higher classes is generally treated as a fact of social reality. However, the women spoke about it as an injustice.

The experience voiced by the women's group can be considered within the framework of contemporary critiques of education and development, namely the problem of 'overeducated and underemployed people' (Illich in Barron-Pastor, 2015:72). Global discourse about education asserts that schooling contributes to economic growth (Bils and Klenow 2000). However, there is evidence to suggest that schooling encourages social and economic reproduction—perpetuating inequality (Harber 2014:65). Formal schooling can be critiqued as structural violence (Harber 2004). Often schools perpetuate 'the existing social pattern' and provide 'an apparent justification for social inequalities' (Bourdieu 1974:32). School can bolster social inequalities because of the correlation between social, or symbolic, capital and achievement (Froerer 2011). The fact that schools are associated with social development reinforces this assumption.

In Morocco, structural violence through schooling occurs along gendered and ethnic axes (Farmer 1996). Rural girls, for example, often drop out of school earlier than boys (Derdar 2014). Despite being spoken throughout Morocco,

Berber dialects are excluded from the formal educational system, often resulting in young people rejecting their Berber identity (Ennaji 2005:182). Arabic is seen as a high written language and Berber as an oral language associated with the land (Sadiqi 2007, Hoffman 2008:4). Whilst the gendered problem of girl's education is gradually improving (Sadiqi 2008:454), the socio-linguistic hierarchy is sustained by schooling (Sadiqi 2014:104). The Berber alphabet Tifinagh and the main dialects were officially recognised under the umbrella term Tamazight in the 2011 constitution following the 'Arab Spring'. However, language continues to carry symbolic capital and to be used as a means of inclusion and exclusion. Moroccan schooling is in FusHa and French—the Arabic 'carries religious and traditional values and French modern ones' (Sadiqi 2014:104).

Women felt similarly strongly about their own achievements. I spent a day cooking with the women's group (failing to learn the Darija and Tashelhiyt vegetable names) and later attended the event where they sold their produce. Despite these efforts, many women suffer due to unemployment—their own and that of their family. Many hoped to find secure and lucrative employment, and felt women with young children were discriminated against. Another woman was 'going mad about it' saying, 'I work just to sleep'. Although she had some income, it was only helping her on a basic level of survival—not enough to live but just enough to 'sleep'. Or maybe the work simply exhausted her. The women recognise the injustice. Kabeer characterises conscientisation as,

> the act of moving beyond acceptance of structures which are so pervasive deep-rooted that they become invisible to the exploration of how these structures are sustained – and who they benefit (1994:251).

The women are certainly 'moving beyond acceptance'—whilst aspects of the structure which benefits others are still sustained, they are no longer invisible.

4.2. 'For me, it is forbidden for my child to play in the street'

A woman said this during a discussion in which women shared ideas about the 'street' and their children in response to my question about the influence of the group on the community. Especially as a group, the women were keen to discuss social issues and especially 'the street'. Group work is often considered more effective than individual consultations for 'measureable outcomes' in adult education but has rarely been associated with looking at the social environment (Wolfendale and Einzig 1999:15). Perhaps people feel more able to share the weight of social problems as a group, when they are not cast as individual failures.

As Hiba suggests in the opening section of this chapter, women's concerns for children are two-sided. On the one hand, the street presents risks for children. On the other hand, the women recognise the ways in which their children might themselves be viewed as dangerous for being on the street. They are concerned for their children's subjective experience, as it is situated in repressive structures. Their concern represents a critical consciousness which melts the boundaries between 'agency' and 'structure' and characterises the 'street' as a site of intersubjective experience. Throughout the developing world, street-connected children are represented as both vulnerable and as a potential

'risk' to society. In effect, they are doubly marginalised (Stephens 1995:12-13). Street-connected children are often treated as the ultimate 'outlaws' (Ennew 1995:202). Their very presence in the street means they are 'out of place', both by the standards of 'childhood', because they are *at risk,* and by standards of society, because they are *risky* (Connolly and Ennew 1996). Freire encouraged his students to differentiate between 'culture' and 'nature' (2013). It could be argued that women experience a 'natural' worry—for the welfare of their children and a 'cultural' worry—for their social existence and representation.

Salma felt sad and fearful about 'the street'. When we spoke about what had an impact on the way she took care of her children, she said,

> But also the street. The street...which influences the children negatively, in my own experience, the street can have a terrible impact on children.

For Salma, embodied in the word 'street' are all of the risks and problems that she and her children have struggled with. For her, the street represented marginality through criminality. She spoke about the street not just as a place but a conglomerate of social and cultural forces which can 'influence' children. Association Atfaal's first project was to support street-connected children. They found that such children lived in a variety of situations, with poverty and the absence of caregivers due to ill-health being key factors. I use the term 'street-connected children' as it recognises the fact that most 'street children' have varied and dynamic relationship to the street—spending different amounts of time in the street and using their time differently (Consortium for Street Children 2016). The streets of Timignoun are nearly always alive with activity—with slight lulls during prayer times and eating times. Notably, children play in

the residential streets and men linger there, dotted all over the public spaces (perhaps due to the high levels of unemployment). In 'traditional' streets, such as those of Timignoun, the space seems 'to be owned by men' (Sadiqi 2014:106). Women seem to pass through whilst men appear as a fixture. Children fill in the gaps. In the evening, in the central square Place Amrabat, there are many children. I was told that some of these children are there playing, some are working, and some don't have anywhere else to go.

As Hiba suggests in the opening anecdote, the 'street' is also often linked to the police. For street-connected children, 'sadly, the most common public response is scorn and hostility' (Aptekar 1994:195). This is usually either reflected or instigated by the institutional response, which is often state led violence and exclusion. For Salma and Hiba, whose children are now grown up, the relationship with the street can flirt with 'criminality' rather than mere 'mischief' (Aptekar 1994). Both mothers directly related their children's activities to the 'influences' of the street and felt that education and employment would refocus their attention away from the activities of the street.

4.3. 'I watch over them peacefully'

Salma said this in relation to how she wanted to supervise her children. In many ways it is characteristic of the community driven efforts to look after children. In Place Amrabat, Mohamed, a well-respected man and a director at Association Atfaal, sits in a central café, at the same table, drinking rounds of tea throughout the evening. I sat with him one evening. He told me about how the children knew he was there and felt safer for knowing for it. Some would come there for that

reason. He said he had a better sense of what was happening in the streets from his seat there. Previously, there were many paedophiles who came to the square, but now his presence has put them off. From his tea table he warmly says hello to many people that go past—both 'street-connected' and smartly dressed people. Halfway through our conversation, he got up and walked across the square to speak to a group of boys whose appearance suggested poverty. Mohamed came back a few moments later and continued to talk. This seemed to represent 'child protection' happening at a community level. In this section I consider how, alongside people like Mohamed, and Association Atfaal, the women made critical assessments about the culture of the street, and by increasing their participation in society they have developed a sense of collective responsibility towards the children of the 'street'—a localised version of a 'child protection' network.

Child protection is often used to refer to top-down policy-led systems for safeguarding children, but it is used here to encompass the diverse ways in which various actors, including communities, actively secure their children from harm. Child protection can thus refer to 'the community-driven action and the related social transformation that supports vulnerable children' (Wessells 2015:20). Like Mohamed, the women's group expressed a collective sense of responsibility towards the 'children of the community', including those on the streets. Yasmine said she watched out for children who stayed 'too late' in the street and stayed with her children when they went outside during the day. Linked to their increased participation in the community and society, the women felt obliged to ensure the safety of other children as well as their own. Many

women spoke about watching out for dangers in the street and knowing how to recognise these dangers. Women, including Laila, cited a session on sexual abuse as making them more aware of how to detect and prevent these abuses from occurring in the street. This sense of responsibility is connected to their growing sense of critical consciousness about the world around them. The women themselves develop their own systems of supervision and 'child protection' which are part of a wider social justice and social development movement.

The way women experience physical space is political. The participatory model of the women's group builds confidence by providing women with a space in which discussion emerging from lived experiences roots their subjectivity in 'place'. This links their sense of 'way' to a 'politics of place' and 'of ubiquity' in which the emphasis is challenging social problems through 'local paths' with the understanding that women can transform the spaces they interact with (Gibson-Graham, 2004:29).

It has been noted elsewhere that attempts at strengthening child protection networks by 'expert' figures often marginalise the local practices, generate resentment, and subsequently fail (Wessells 2015). The women spoke of a network of supervision which was embedded in their own culture and emerged out of their own experience. Hiba viewed the 'street' as a nexus of culture and community and accordingly saw it as a site of social development. Hiba claimed that if she saw,

> a mother beat her child in the street, if I know her, I can say to her don't hit your child in front of everyone, you can take them back to the house and speak to them because to hit them on the head in front of everyone isn't an education for them.

The women see discipline as part of the process of 'education', epitomised by their collective transition from 'hitting' to 'tenderness'. For Hiba, an important factor seems to be whether it is 'in front of everyone'. Rather than make an example of a child, she advocates taking them away from 'the street' to discipline them at home. This could be read as an attempt to disrupt and transform the culture of the street as a place associated with social and familial violence.

5.

Conclusion

Ineds N'Itrane shows how grassroots organisation can change attitudes towards childcare practices and how women are capable of transforming society. The group helped women to reflect on the world around them and make choices related to a purpose that they found in themselves. The women reflected on their roles as mothers and their purpose is linked to their understanding of children's education. The women's group gave them the space to consider the world around them and take the first steps towards transforming injustices they had previously considered natural. Their children no longer experienced violence at their mother's hands, and had access to their rights to healthcare and education. The women cared for their children's health, hygiene, and habits whilst focusing on their education, both in terms of their parenting and their experience at school. Furthermore, the women began looking beyond their family lives at the children of the community and the social issues which affected them.

Conscientisation and solidarity are linked to feeling happy and confident in life which in turn has positive outcomes for women and children. Imane, the group facilitator, believed that with encouragement a woman 'in a bad situation' can 'arrive at the frontier and pass over to being satisfied in her life'. 'The way' might relate more to mental health than my analysis has provided, and it would be interesting to see what projects or policies in Morocco which 'address[ed] the mental health of people in precarious urban settlements' could achieve (Schrader-McMillan and Burton 2009:209).

As Schrader-McMillan and Burton argue,

> For a change in the parent-child relationship to take place, parents need to understand the way in which external conditions affect their ability to care for children (2009:208).

In large part, Ineds N'Itrane provided women with a space to consider the influences on their parenting and reflect on the actions they take. Accordingly, they made positive steps for themselves and their children. The extent to which the women could be given further space to develop their consciousness, and to work on their relationships with both their children and the community, is constrained by other factors. As Sadiqi puts it, 'family is the site where the core patriarchal order is implemented' (2014:100). The patriarchal structures which are embedded in Moroccan private and public life remain a constraint. Recognising women as 'socially constrained' does not disregard their strength or knowledge or the progress they make in loosening those constraints (Kabeer 1994).

Salma suggested that the thing missing from the group model was 'the men'. She said that whilst she made so many improvements and was so conscious of her children's education, the men did not understand and could ruin her hard work. Salma's critique is pertinent to more than just the women's group, and says something about the work of 'women's empowerment' in a situation where men do not have much reason or encouragement to adapt. It would be interesting to see what the possibilities were in Morocco for addressing issues such as violence against children, unemployment, and street-connected children using a conscientisation model which included men.

Research in this area would benefit from seeing how far the women's group approach can go—whether the women of Ineds N'Itrane are able to take the approach to other women, perhaps in other precarious neighbourhoods, or poor rural communities. Whilst mothers engage in their own systems of 'child protection', it would be interesting to pursue the ways in which young people themselves could be agents of change here and how far this could coexist alongside the other formalized structures such as the police (Wessells 2015). Anthropologically, it would be interesting to research further into traditional forms of female knowledge in rural and Berber Morocco, to explore their relationship with Moroccan society, and to ask how traditional knowledge relates to the women's group approach.

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