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# Citizenship Attitudes and Social Inequality Among Moroccan University Students

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**Abstract**: Drawing on social identity approach, comprising of social identity theory and self-categorisation theory, this article compares the ways in which public and private university students in Morocco approach the controversial relationship between citizenship and identity. By revealing students' self-identification and the role socio-economic factors have in this process, we seek to gain knowledge about the extent to which citizenship is perceived as a legal status as opposed to membership in a political community and how the transformation inherent in global market capitalism and the distribution of resources affect the youth's behaviours and attitudes towards social action. The sample represented the public and private dichotomy divide through 150 participants from four differently located Moroccan universities, namely Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Mohammed V University, Al-Akhawayn University and International University of Rabat. Data were collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire and a semi-structured interview and were analysed using a mixed method approach to triangulate findings and ensure trustworthiness.

**Keywords**: identity; citizenship; Morocco; university students; public versus private

## Context

This article compares the ways in which public and private university students in Morocco approach the controversial relationship between citizenship and identity. By revealing students' self-identification and the role socio-economic factors have in this process, we seek to gain knowledge about the extent to which citizenship is perceived as a legal status as opposed to membership in a political community and how the transformation inherent in global market capitalism and the distribution of resources affect the youth's behaviours and attitudes towards social action.

The relationship between citizenship and identity is strongly contested and has undergone several changes throughout the Moroccan history from the pre-colonial to post-colonial time. In the pre-colonial times, citizenship was not based on sovereign control over a territory, but on a personal oath to the sultan as the Commander of the Faithful (Perrin 2011). The sultan presides over a bureaucracy known as '*maxzen*', which embodies the unity of the national community on the basis of a trans-historical legitimacy (Benaliin Perrin 2011). The French protectorate in Morocco was installed in 1912. With association and assimilation policies under the direction of first French Resident-General Hugo Lyautey, the idea of the divide within Morocco between urban or *'bilad al-maxzen'*and rural or '*bilad al-siba'* areas was deepened (Scham1970). The *'bilad al-maxzen',* or land of government, was the Arab Moroccan population of Morocco residing in the cities and whom the French chose to govern under the principle of association. In contrast, *'bilad al-siba'* was the Berber-speaking population in the deserts and mountains,

thought not to be loyal to the sultan. The French realised that they needed to govern this zone through assimilation (Porch 2005) and in the 1930s went as far as forcing the sultan to sign the Berber Decree, which attempted to strip the Berbers of their Islamic identity and create a difference between them and Arabs.

During the protectorate era, citizenship took a new direction and was used as a colonialist policy to indoctrinate and exercise control. The French developed a complex educational structure based on race, social class and creed. There were:

a) traditional Qur'anic schools that existed before and during colonisation and were based on an original Arabo-Islamic education system subordinate to the religion on which they were founded, which legitimised them and dictated the curriculum;

b) French public schools that were established by the colonisers to provide education for the French, other foreign nationalities and Moroccan elites;

c) Israeli schools where children of Moroccan Jews studied; and

d) free Moroccan schools that were established by the National Movement and reserved for Muslims but divided into schools for the indigenous people and schools for the sons of lords (Boubkir & Boukamhi2005; Moatassime 2015). This spatial and social divide created levels of inequalities associated with deprivation at the bottom of the distribution and reduced social cohesion, which consequently had a negative impact on economic growth. In addition, since around the mid-1980s, with the intervention of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, policies in many countries, including Morocco, have become more liberal, entailing a reduction in progressive tax, deregulation, privatisation and, in many cases, reduced social transfers (Dadush & Saoudi 2019).

Privatisation was introduced in 1990, constituting a neo-liberal turning point of Moroccan economic policy and a radical transformation of the sociological fabric–especially the reproduction of the elitist system. In general term, privatisation has been fruitful for a limited number of Moroccan investors and big foreign groups, and has shifted the sites of the political control of the economy (Dadush & Saoudi 2019). Despite the exceptional revenues brought in by the privatisation, and the social and economic development in recent years to reduce poverty, the state budget is still in deficit today, with low living standards generating much frustration among the general population. In the wake of privatisation, the country has been experiencing what can be termed as a kind of social malaise. It has seen the rise of popular movements chanting slogans such as 'a privatised Morocco is a deprived Morocco' and demanding public services be improved, salaries be increased and more employment opportunities be created. Myriam Catusse (2009) argues that 'if the seeds of a social question emerged with the globalization of the Moroccan economy, it is less the result of a brutal disengagement on the part of the state than because economic liberalization accentuated the weaknesses of an already modest state social security system'. The Human Development Index of Morocco has increased significantly, from 0.46 in 1990 to 0.67 in 2017; however, performance remains the lowest and poverty rate is high compared to other developing countries, if we consider the ratio of income as a measure of inequality.

Similarly, following the adoption of the National Education and Training Charter in 2000, Morocco deliberately chose to promote the private sector in its education system, considering it a main partner, alongside the state, in promoting the education and training system, broadening and extending it, and improving its quality. In 2009, the country adopted the 2009-2012 Emergency Plan, which also

introduced principles of privatisation and commodification in the public education sphere, including outsourced management for boarding schools and school canteens, access to private capital for public schools and precarious teacher recruitment practices. As a result, the percentage of private enrolment at the primary school level has more than tripled in fewer than fifteen years, from 4 percent in 1999 to 16 percent in 2016 (Abdous 2020).However, as Khadija Abdous points out, the increase in the number of private schools does not correlate with improved learning outcomes for students and creates inequalities and a multi-speed society. Private higher education in Morocco also began in 1980 largely as for-profit post-secondary higher schools, which were vocational in orientation. Since the 1990s, Morocco has introduced a wave of reforms, aimed at aligning Moroccan higher education to the degree structure of its European counterparts and investing in new infrastructure, as well as expanding private universities with the goal to increase the percent of students in private universities to 20 percent of total enrolments, all together, taking on a 'semi-elite character' (Buckner 2018).

Even though there is growing awareness that economic inequality impacts individual lives, the way that such inequalities affect national identity, social behaviour and political attitudes remains poorly questioned. There is very little understanding of why, when, and for whom inequality has social consequences. Inequality not only provides a lens for seeing the social world but also changes what it means to belong to different groups. Drawing on social identity approach, comprising of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1985) and self-categorisation theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979), we compare the potentially sensitive issues of how public and private university students in Morocco perceive their citizenship identities and what role socio-economic variable play in the generation of these identities. For this study, we select contexts in which issues of citizenship and identities are contested and an enhanced 'us' versus 'they' dynamics are explicitly raised. The sample represented the public and private dichotomy divide through four differently located Moroccan universities, namely the public Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fes), the public Mohammed V University (Rabat), Al-Akhawayn University (Ifrane) and private International University of Rabat (Rabat-Sale).

## Social identity, citizenship and inequalities

The upsurge of theoretical interest in citizenship over the last decade has significantly shaped a growing sensitivity to identity development. Identity can be defined as a particular form of social representation that mediates the relationship between the individual and the social world and can be seen as having three components: 'cognition', answering the question 'who am I?' and including personal and collective attributes; 'self-action', pertaining to the claims I want to/can make about myself; and 'others', answering the question 'what is our relationship?' (Chryssochoou 2003). These components constitute the lenses through which people see the world and establish their relationship to it.

Citizenship is a key signifier for political and social membership in a polity. It can be considered as a process of socialisation between the individual and the community. However, if citizenship is the acquisition of a status in a community or society, then identity is an important prerequisite of citizenship that demonstrates how one internalizes, codifies, and projects essential features of one's group or community. If citizenship modality can be demonstrated through a set of norms that a group or community imposes on an individual, identity is a mental construct developed through an interpretation of those norms that directs individuals' behaviour (Rapoport & Yemini 2019). Conceiving of identity as a

dynamic process between the self and community often generates a 'repertoire of identities that are constantly shifting and that we negotiate and re-negotiate according to the circumstances' (Joseph 2010, 14). A look at identity through the lens of citizenship education has become even more urgent in light of growing civic deficit, political apathy, globalisation and interconnectedness that directly or indirectly impact stakeholders' decisions and curricular practices in regard to public education, identity politics, and social justice. Wiel Veugelers and Isolde de Groot (2019) argue that the identity development of a person is not left to the autonomy of the free individual, but is made the target of a direct socialisation effort by schools, coordinated by the national government. Within such a framework, different ideological articulations are possible.

The social identification construct has assumed an increasingly important role in research and theory on group processes and intergroup relations (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel & Turner 1979). By conceptualising group and intergroup behaviour as emanating from a transformation of self-categorisation, these theories provide a coherent framework within which to explain a wide range of phenomena, such as prejudice, group cohesion, leadership, social influence and the self-concept (Abrams & Hogg 2010). This multi-dimensionality of social identity stems from Henri Tajfel's (1978, 63) definition of the construct as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'. This definition has attempted to represent three components in measures of identification, namely awareness of group membership, group evaluation, and emotional aspects of belonging (Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade & Williams 1986; Cameron 2004). Identity from this perspective is not something belonging to the individual but rather something that emerges out of an interaction between the person and the situation (Liu & László 2007). Each of us belongs to many social groups. However, these memberships are not likely to be formative of behaviour (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi & Ethier 1995). One reason is that contextual factors play a significant role in bringing the relevant identity to the foreground.

Individuals' identification with a group or community relates to a positive attitude that leads to internal social cohesion (Andreotti 2011). However, 'we can not only explain citizen identity through integration, inclusion and homogeneity, from a single and compact vision. Within a collective identity, citizens confront themselves with difference, exclusion and diversity—both from outside and from within' (Tamayo 2019). Also, hierarchic economic, political, social and cultural systems structurally position individuals within networks of power relations and shape their life opportunities (Dayton-Johnson 2001). James Liu and Janos László (2007, 85) argue that:

> a person has a fluid repertoire of self-categorisations that enable self-positioning as 'one' with different in-groups and responses to being positioned as 'other' by other people. Self-categorisation activates socially shared cultural knowledge that allows the individual to conform to situation-appropriate group norms for behaviour.

One can be a citizen by being a teacher, a student, an entrepreneur, a diplomat, a street vendor, unemployed and so forth. In other words, social roles, social strata and entire classes can all influence states of embodiment. Such social roles become the identifier of a citizen and define the particularity of the practices and experiences of making citizenship, producing equal/unequal social practices.

Identity categories such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and class also matter to sociologists because they are closely linked to social structures, where power relations and control of labour, land, financial

capital and other material and symbolic resources are systematically stratified. This tension qualifies different modes of identity (the sense of who they are and where their place is) and, accordingly, distinctive citizen practices. Equality is central to the theory of citizenship, and the systemic patterns of social inequality observable in society can be used to explain identity. Peter Callero (2014, 5) posits that 'we experience inequality in and through categories, labels, and classifications that define individuals, groups and collectives, where rewards and resources are predictably and unevenly distributed'. In a context of tension and inequality, the community defines the rules of participation. In other words, different modes of citizenship are manifested in social injustice, the allocation of resources, the restrictions on individual liberties and the struggle for power (Bauböck 1994). The different hegemonic ideologies of citizenship have offered a dichotomy of rights versus participation with equality as a key nexus (Marshall & Bottomore 1992), but its attainment is an aspiration, and the promotion of universal rights simply renders inequalities noticeable. Dan Allman (2013, 10) posits that within liberal thinking:

> universal citizenship did not emulate fully the fact that the notion of universal was still a somewhat relative concept and that a boundary between the includable and the excludable would not only continue to exist but would be reinforced also.

The interplay between the person's self-identification and the situation, containing the different social factors originating from other people and institutions that direct him (or her) how to think, feel and act is at the heart of this study. We seek to address the following key questions: How does the perception of social justice perception social outcomes? How do university students in Morocco identify as citizens, and what are the similarities and differences between those studying at public and private institutions? Do the well-defined Marshallian citizenship criteria apply to young Moroccans? Why do some Moroccans feel like second-class citizens, and what are consequences of this feeling? Is it justified? These considerations motivate the study, where we investigate the following hypotheses:

1. Students in private universities show patriotism and willingness to be active citizens.
2. Students in public universities feel like second-class citizens and rebel for full access to their rights.
3. The socio-cultural dimensions (social class, unemployment, gender inequality) shape the discursiveness of citizenship identity within the Moroccan context.

## Research design

Given that our main aim was wide ranging and that we wished to discuss the ways in which public and private university students in Morocco perceive themselves as members of communities and as citizens and the role socio-economic factors play in this identification process, a mixed method approach was deemed appropriate (Bergman 2008; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner 2007) to triangulate findings and ensure trustworthiness. Data were collected between 2018 and 2019. The sample represents the public and private dichotomy divide through four differently located Moroccan universities, namely Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Fes), Mohammed V University (Rabat), Al-Akhawayn University (Ifrane) and International University of Rabat (Rabat-Sale). The universities were selected on the basis of specific criteria related to national ranking (top universities in Morocco), diverse socio-economic standards (private and public), and different geographic lines (Rabat, Fes, Ifrane). Also, the choice of the universities was motivated by the researchers' familiarity with the regions and acquaintance with

colleagues who made helped collect the data. The focus on university students reflects an analytically relevant picture, as members of this age group have a coherent understanding of citizenship norms and values and are likely to be affected by developmental trends (Dalton 2007).

### *Participants and data collection tools*

Data were collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. With the aim of collecting detailed information and accumulate sufficient knowledge about discourses of citizenship conception and perception in Morocco and the ways in which these are manifested in attitudes and behaviours in society, a questionnaire was developed and administered online among university students in French (second foreign language and the language of instruction of the scientific subjects in higher education). We built a protocol of questions divided into four different but complementary sections: identity belonging and community development, employment, social character and gender equality, and competencies and civic skills; with a Likert response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items on concepts aim to assess the students' conceptualisation of citizenship, democracy, government responsibilities and social challenges. The items related to the attitudes probe students' sense of national identity and gender equality. The items on actions concern participation in community life with civil society organisations or political parties. In all cases, there were opportunities for students to explain their responses. Prior to its administration to the target sample, the questionnaire was first piloted to check its reliability.

In total, the sample consisted of 300 students representing the public and private dichotomy divide. In order to observe the activities and reactions of students while filling the questionnaire, we used Hotjar (H-Ltd 2017) a simple, powerful and easy solution for deep analytics. It provides functionalities regarding the user behaviours through using a tracking mechanism. In addition to counting and recording properties, Heatmap is the section of Hotjar that shows how users moved throughout the website, clicked and scrolled down. This identifies specific areas and places where users spend more time than others, which helps to determine what catches attention and what does not. The total number of students who consulted the questionnaire exceeded 300. Unfortunately, the response rate was disappointing, as only 150 participants fully completed the questionnaire. Using Hotjar, we could determine that 100 students started the questionnaire and did not finish it, while the remaining 50 students opened the questionnaire, scrolled it and left it. We assume the reasons are due either to the length of the questionnaire, the sensitivity of the issue, the preference of paper questionnaires over internet questionnaires or the scarcity of scientific research that made students unaware of the importance of surveys.

Sub-group interviews were also used to collect qualitative input related to citizenship identity construction and attitudes. Twenty students were recruited through general advertisements to the student body of various universities. Four sub-group interviews were carried out in each of the universities (each consisting of five students). In all cases, students were selected according to their willingness to participate and debate, a range of academic ability and discipline areas, and according to gender. The interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes and followed a set of guiding questions about their perceptions about citizenship and identity, the nature of their identification with citizenship, and what makes a Moroccan citizen. It should be noted that questions were used as a guide; thus, they were adapted or

expanded according to the flow of conversation. The sub-group interviews were conducted in Moroccan Arabic. Excerpts were transcribed and translated.

*Table 1 : Characteristics of Participants*

| | TOTAL | | GENDER | | | | LEVEL | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Male* | | *Female* | | *18-22 Years* | | *22-25 Years* | | *> 25 Years* | |
| | Count | Valid% | Count | Valid% | Count | Valid% | Count | Valid% | Count | Valid% | Count | Valid% |
| Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University (Fez) | 107 | 35,6 | 48 | 45 | 59 | 55 | 46 | 42,9 | 28 | 26,2 | 33 | 30,8 |
| Mohammed V University (Rabat) | 58 | 19,4 | 27 | 47 | 31 | 53 | 24 | 41,38 | 17 | 29,3 | 18 | 31,02 |
| Al-Akhawayn University (Ifrane) | 44 | 14,7 | 16 | 38 | 28 | 62 | 21 | 47,7 | 19 | 43,2 | 4 | 9 |
| International University of Rabat (Rabat-Sale) | 91 | 30,3 | 38 | 42 | 53 | 58 | 47 | 51,64 | 34 | 37,3 | 11 | 12 |
| **TOTAL** | 300 | 100 | 129 | 43 | 171 | 57 | 138 | 46 | 98 | 34 | 64 | 20 |

### *Data analysis*

First, we transcribed all sub-group interviews, using the process of transcription to note down ideas for headings, categories and codes. We have added translations in addition to the original words in the presentation of the data. Initial qualitative analysis (Creswell 1998) was completed using the software Tams Analyzer. Initial categories were developed followed by codification and creation of matrix nets and schemes with subsequent testing of those analyses. Once qualitative data had been codified using this procedure, data from the questionnaire were quantified using the statistical package SPSS. Of the statistical procedures herein mobilised to analyse the quantitative data are frequency of distribution and the independent samplest-test, otherwise known as the student's t-test. The use of quantification is controversial in mixed methods analysis, as it may result in significant losses of variance (Sandelowski 2009), but we proceeded with this approach in an attempt to enrich our understanding by means of triangulating quantitative analysis with a more explicitly interpretative analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) of the focus group data. The quantitative analysis was used to underline the differences and similarities between both groups (public versus private), and qualitative analyses were used to explain these differences and similarities of students' perceptions. Ethics were considered, with university administration providing authorisation. Everything was clearly explained to respondents, who signed consent forms. All data were considered anonymously, questions were not intrusive, and participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time and were informed about what would happen to the data they provided.

## Findings

We organised our findings on three interrelated themes, namely identity and belonging, civic engagement and political participation, and social justice and gender inequalities. The meanings of the above discussions about identity formation and citizenship conceptions in relation to this study can be explained by putting them in the context of Moroccan society through the lens of public and private university students. Respondents were asked to describe their experiences with citizenship and discuss issues pertaining to identity belonging as well as strategies to enhance participation and full access to rights.

### *Identity and belonging*

As the descriptive data in Figure 1 indicates, we asked to categorise their Moroccan citizenship. Results depict two types of self-categorisation.

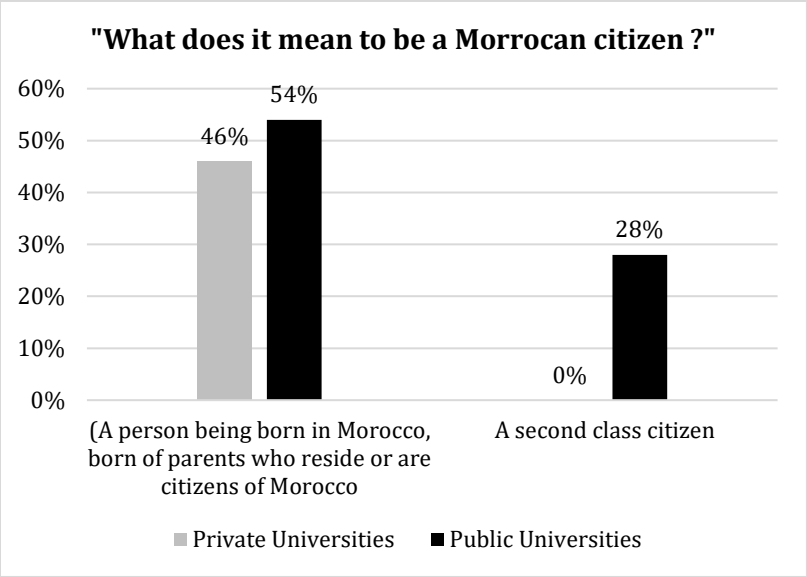



*Figure 1. What does it mean to be a Moroccan citizen?*

In our sample, 54 percent of the public university students identified with the legal label (a person being born in Morocco, born of parents who reside in or are citizens of Morocco). By contrast, only 46 percent of the private university students identified as such. Interestingly, some public university respondents identify with the equality label, where they are likely to be reduced to second-class citizens (a second-class citizen 28 percent), meaning deprived of their rights, and that unavoidably implies the existence of a first-class (or full) citizen. When we investigated the class background of those respondents, we saw that they had statistically significant lower family resources (education, income and job status of parents) compared with others.

On a societal level, it seems that the Moroccan political agenda managed to construct a solid national identification among students. This is due to the fact that certain national symbols – the flag, national

anthem and others – commonly occur in the Moroccan school curriculum (Idrissi & Benabderrazik 2020). For example, when asked to define the concept 'citizenship', a 22-year-old man from the public Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University said:

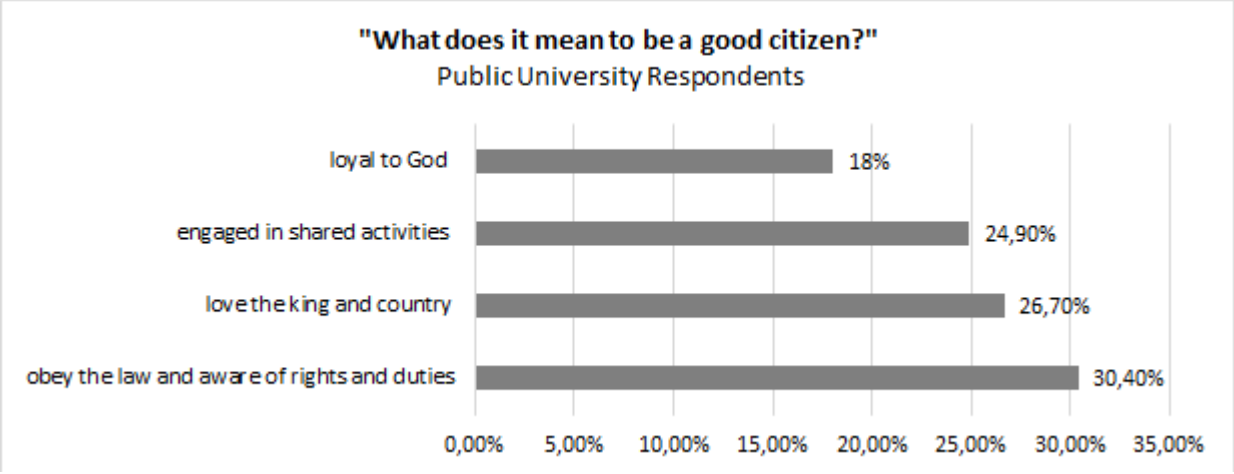
> *Citizenship is a word that covers several concepts and definitions. It is derived from the word* wattan, *which is the person's place of origin or habitation. This* wattan *is a subject of sentiment and affection. So* wattania *really coincides with love for the country, actually in terms of historical culture, customs, and language, pointing clearly to love sentiments towards a homeland, and* muwattana *[citizenship] is a citizen's characteristic that defines his/her patriotic rights and duties; and an individual is aware of his rights.*

A 25-year-old woman from the private International University of Rabat/private said:

> *There are many conditions required to qualify as a good citizen. Citizenship should go beyond having a passport. It is not a matter of carrying a passport and becoming a citizen. Citizenship was an all-around concept: socially, economically and culturally. Citizenship means belonging and loyalty. It is not conditional that I have it just because I have the name Moroccan. There are many conditions that you have to believe in them all together in order to be a* muwatten [citizen].

Such a comprehensive account of students presupposes that citizenship entails a social contract between the state and its citizens –and an ongoing exchange of rights and responsibilities.

A lifetime of socialisation through absorbing national symbols and rhetoric, and being exposed daily to nationalistic activities and lessons at the school level could activate national pride, through which an individual might build an understanding of the characteristics of the good citizen. We highlight in Figure 2 some of the responses to the question 'What does it mean to be a good citizen?'.



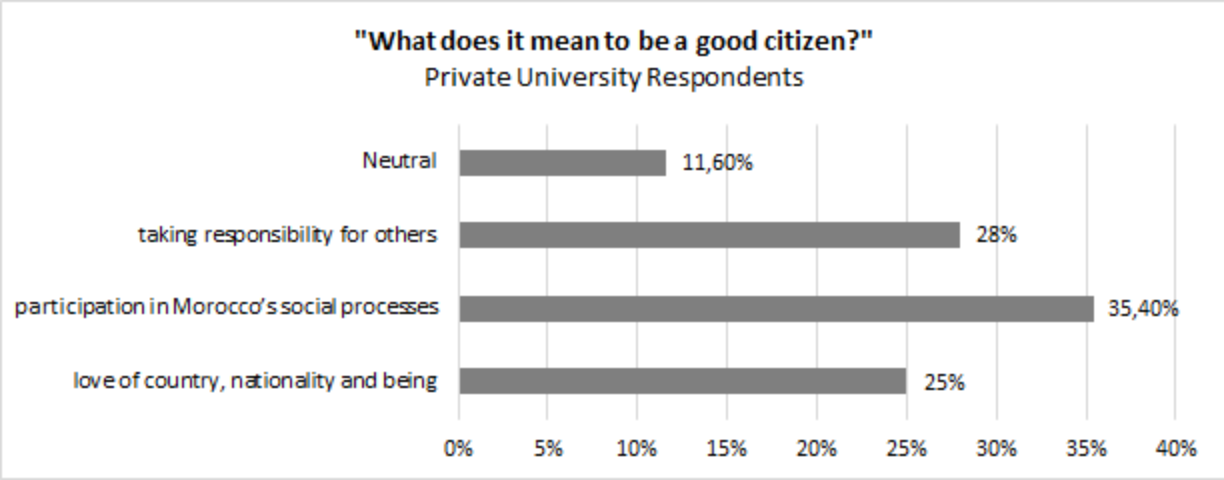



*Figure 2. What does it mean to be a good citizen?*

Public university respondents highlighted a liberal duty-based form of citizenship that sees the good citizens as individuals who obey the law and are aware of rights and duties (30.4 percent), love the king and country (26.7 percent), are engaged in shared activities (24.9 percent) and are loyal to God (18 percent). For example, a 24-year-old man from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah admitted that:

> *in our religion, Islam, love for the country equates to love of Allah and God. This sentiment promotes peace and tolerance and restrains the person from harming other Muslims and protects the lives of Muslims and their economies, trying to work towards one goal and unify them to what brings good for everyone.*

In contrast, the private university respondents do not entirely exclude love of country, nationality and being (25 percent) but were likely to emphasise, more frequently, participation in Morocco's social processes (35.4 percent) and taking responsibility for others (28 percent). A 23-year-old woman at the International University of Rabat stated that:

> *the good citizen, I mean someone who respects and values the others' role as members of society […]It is their duty to be helpful to others and considerate to their properties and space. But I know this requires a big dedication.*

Interestingly, a 25-year-old woman from the private Al-Akhawayn University went further with her conception and infused a new range of concepts and vocabulary related to ecological citizenship as a subset of global citizenship where citizens are responsible to protect the environment. She said:

> *This planet is our home, created by God, so we have no right to destroy Allah's creatures. With the current challenges of global climate change, social systems –including the health, well-being and sustainability of communities–are under threat. It is everyone's responsibility to show commitment towards the environment and act as a good and loyal citizen not only of his/her country but of the world. Citizenship can start with simple gestures like [respecting]green places by not cutting trees or throwing garbage in the streets.*

This conceptual framework of loyalty transcends the national borders and responds to the need to go beyond the scope of the national loyalty logic especially with globalisation and internationalisation. Noticeably, voting and taking part in political parties are not high on the priority list of both groups.

A nationality-based conception of citizenship goes further to touch upon a sense of common state identity and belonging. However, the maintenance of this national sentiment depends on the existence of

social justice that frames everyday life and practice. Students were also invited to answer the question: 'Are you proud to be Moroccan?'

The results in Figure 3 show that 86 percent of respondents from private institutions rated themselves as proud of their nationality, while 54 percent of students from the two public universities reject and disagree with the statement. This suggests that nationalist rhetoric varies with the country's income distribution. The larger the share of the student population that is subject to unequal distribution and excluded from resources, the less proud the citizens are on the average. This indicates that pride in the Moroccan society is produced by wealth and power rather than the other way around. A typical response is one that came from a 21-year-oldwoman at Mohammed V University:

> *in Morocco, if you do not have money and a strong network system, you are not valued in your community; we live in a Hippocratic, pragmatic society. The feeling of being treated in an unequal and irrespective manner promotes a sense of hatred and reinforces the belief to behave in rebelliousness with the collective rules.*

In contrast, a 23-year-old man from Al-Akhawayn said:

> *my Moroccan nationality is an important indicator of my identity. Whenever I go abroad, I feel proud to identify as Moroccan and get people to know some of our culture, cuisine and tourist sights.*

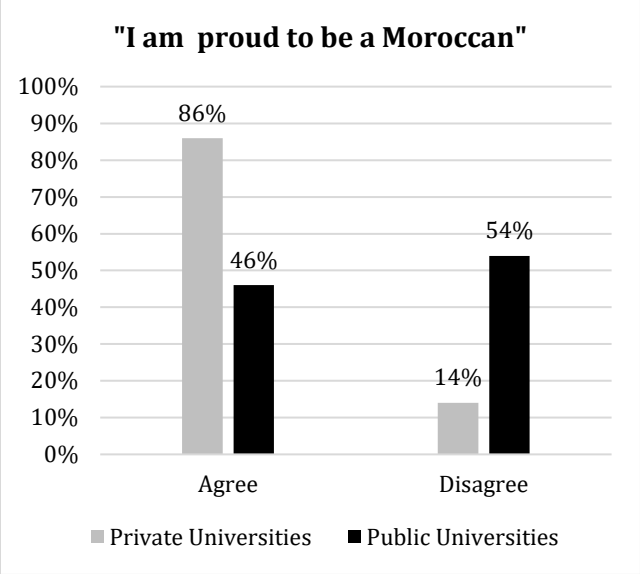



*Figure 3. 'I am proud to be a Moroccan'*

The majority of students indicated an interest in pursuing employment opportunities outside of Morocco on completion of their studies. Of all the students surveyed at both public and private institutions, 73 percent demonstrated a strong willingness to apply for job opportunities abroad after graduation, with the main destinations being countries of Western Europe such as France and Germany. This form of individual mobility is an opportunity to search for better economic, working and living conditions as some students revealed in the interviews. Here, the debate on identity might be shifted again towards the politics of recognition, existence and the feeling of empowerment, but the patterns of identification among the students vary greatly. The findings show that not only upper and lower middle income students choose to emigrate and improve their economic status but also students from private institutions, who are generally financially stable and able to live a comfortable life in Morocco. What is

the reason for students at private institutions to leave the country? From the focus group data, it is clear that the private-university students move to find democratic spaces where they can be free and enjoy basic human rights that transcend identity. For example, a 24-year-old man at the International University of Rabat commented, '*Morocco is great, but certain conservative issues related to religion and traditional beliefs bother me. I want to move abroad to do whatever I want and be free from all bonds'*.

The dynamics of identities are complex, however. Some respondents at public universities said they aspire to move in and out of multiple socio-economic spaces that induce basic socio-economic gains.

### *Civic engagement and political participation*

When asked to complete the sentence: 'For my voice to be heard, to defend my rights and to have an impact in the community, I choose to be engaged in…', 87 percent of all respondents show a responsible commitment for taking action to improve their community and nation (see Figure 4). However, attitudes for action differ.

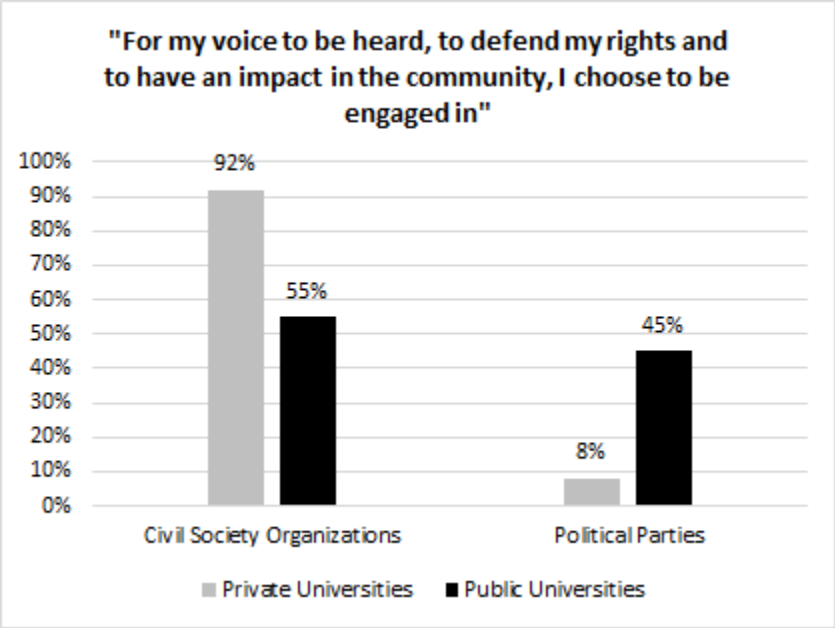



*Figure 4. 'For my voice to be heard, to defend my rights and to have an impact in the community, I choose to engage in…'*

Ninety-two percent of respondents at the private institutions said they find volunteering with civil society organisations and associations a suitable way to be active in the community. Thanks to the opportunities their institutions provide, 40 percent of them said they were playing an active role in a number of associations (for example non-governmental organisations and clubs such as AIESEC, Enactus, AUI MUN and Association Pour la Protection de la Famille Marocaine, just to name a few). Respondents also perceived their involvement with these organisations to develop civic competencies and skills. A 22-year-oldwoman at Al-Akhawayn (Ifrane) said:

> *Thank God, we study at a university that takes care of every single minute of the student's time. Lots of extracurricular activities are provided, which I consider very important in developing first our sense of identification with the college*

*environment and the community. As far as I am concerned, my engagement at the Azrou Center for Community Development developed my self-confidence, my sense of well-being, happiness and transferable skills that for sure will help later in the workforce.*

On the other hand, although 55 percent of public university students expressed an interest in active civic engagement through civil society organisations, they still faced limited opportunities in community volunteer activities. For example, a 23-year-old woman from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah said:

*In our context, since the quality of education is measured according to students' performance in examinations, this pressures us to focus on cognitive knowledge that will be tested. Second, the university does not provide a conducive atmosphere to practise any activities, let alone funds us to run them; lecturers are also not available to assist us.*

This seems to demonstrate that the public education system, in general, is permeated by a culture of performance that limits the students' critical potential and prevents active learning. The data seem to show that students in public universities are measured in terms of their performance in final examinations alone, and not in terms of any other critical involvement.

Ten percent said they remained neutral, and only 25 percent said political involvement is key to make their voice heard and defend their rights. As a dummy variable, we asked respondents how often they discussed politics with their parents, with 1 being 'never' and 4 'always'. Of the public university students, 80 percent of do not discuss politics with their parents, while more than half (53 percent) of private university respondents said they effectively did so. As is clear from the results, there is indeed a strong and significant association with the parents' level of education, socio-economic status and politics. However, the parents' education and other indicators do not significantly relate to or explain political trust.

Taken together, the results seem to show that student trust in politics and political parties is low as they perceive democratic accountability to be absent. The results show that adolescents frame their understandings of citizenship as active participation. This participation is social rather than political, reinforcing their role as compliant learners and as citizens-in-waiting rather than citizens-now (McLaughlin1992; Osler &Starkey 2005).

### *Social justice and gender equality*

Figure 5 shows the social challenges facing Moroccan society as identified by the respondents. For both public and private university respondents, poverty, linked to unemployment, and poor performance of schools and universities were strongly felt concerns. Thirty-three percent attributed the poor performance of schools and universities to a didactic pedagogical approach based on memorisation and cognitive testing, absence of technological instruments, and overcrowded classrooms. A 23-year-old man from Mohammed V University claimed:

*The Moroccan educational system is facing significant challenges in translating civic learning into citizenship practices. We feel a lack of a political will to form critical and active citizens with the capacity to change the democratisation process.*

Moreover, 29 percent of the students described poverty as a pandemic that continues to gnaw at the Moroccan society. Stigma, lack of respect and denial of dignity were constant refrains when students talked about poverty and how poor people are treated by the wider society. This brings us to the

psychological impact of the way people in poverty are often treated. A 24-year-old man from Mohammed V University said:

> *You are like an onion, and gradually every skin is peeled off of you, and there's nothing left. All your self-esteem and dignity is gone. People are ignorant of the fact that we are humans as well, and we need to be respected.*

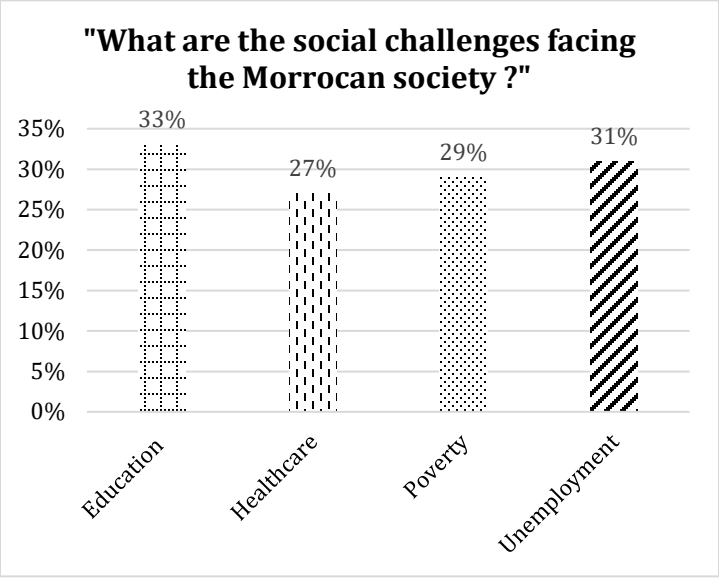



*Figure 5. What are the social challenges facing the Moroccan society?*

The concern with dignity and respect expressed by many experiencing poverty also has implications for social justice and the politics for recognition. A 25-year-old woman from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University contended:

> *In Morocco, policy reform has to be directed towards tackling the material manifestations of poverty and ultimately its eradication. But so long as there are people living in poverty, it must also address their lack of voice and the way in which they are treated by public institutions. This undignified treatment represents a denial of our citizenship.*

Parallel to education, 27 percent of the respondents agreeing that especially the public health sector is a disaster. During the interviews, it emerged that, despite Moroccan government efforts to provide free services and meet the needs of poor people and those living in rural areas who are unable to afford private healthcare, the system still suffers from many inadequacies including: insufficient funds, human and material resources; an uneven geographical distribution of medical centres, causing an imbalance between the regions; low up take of health insurance; and corruption. Interestingly, a 22-year-old man from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah studying computer science suggested designing an e-health strategy to improve the day-to-day operation of the public healthcare sector and recommended that government departments including the Ministry of Health and healthcare organisations should collaborate to put in place functional big data systems.

Furthermore, 31 percent of respondents considered unemployment as one of the most persistent and contentious economic challenges in Morocco. During interviews, public university respondents were pessimistic about securing a job after graduation. A 25-year-old woman from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah mentioned that:

*The current generation of young people are facing numerous labour market challenges, especially with the wide variations that exist in the employment prospects of various educational disciplines, in which human science fields have substantial numbers of unemployed compared to hard science.*

They further emphasised that students from public universities lack the required competencies, skills and experience to function productively in the workplace.

Interestingly, students at private universities hardly referred to sexism, sexual harassment and gender-biased behaviour during the interviews, while it is difficult to draw one conclusion about the position of public university students on these issues. Some women said they were struggling and suffering within what Paula Nicolson (1992) has described as the 'toxic context' of a patriarchal society. Sexual rumours, demeaning jokes or comments, sex-related personal comments and calling names appeared to be most problematic for women.

A 23-year-old woman from the International University of Rabat said:

*Sexual harassment is prevalent in Moroccan society. We are exposed to a variety of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour(verbal, non-verbal, assaultive) of a sexual nature, or based on gender, that potentially infringe on our right to a supportive, respectful and safe learning environment, or our dignity.*

A 22-year-old woman student from Al-Akhawayn University suggested:

*Acting against sexual harassment should be done at two levels: more information and discussion about what sexual harassment really means, and better and stricter rules.*

In other words, gender equality and stereotyping should be considered.

The questionnaire further investigated the perception of students towards gender equality. The men were invited to comment on the statement in Figure 6.

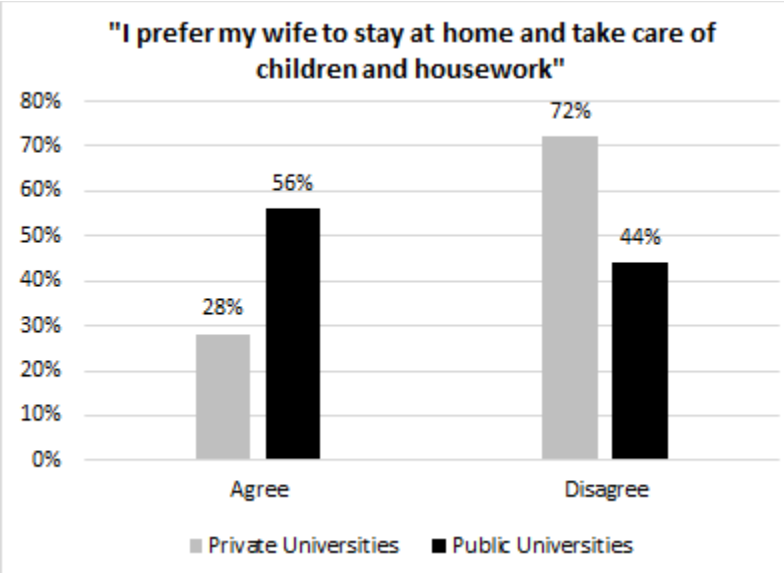



*Figure 6: 'I prefer my wife to stay at home and take care of children and housework'*

Seventy-two percent of the students at private universities opposed the statement, while 56 percent of public university respondents said they preferred their wives to stay at home and take care of the children.

The majority of the respondents from public universities based their judgement on conservative Islamic values as a way of reclaiming their true identity. Some cited a verse of the Quran to validate this perspective:

> Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard' (The Quran, Surat An-Nisa, verse 4-34).

Moreover, during the interviews, some respondents mentioned that men should be prioritised when there are employment opportunities. Therefore, the hegemonic patriarchal attitudes towards women in Morocco have been consolidated and maintained by the interpretation of Islamic laws.

Furthermore, this patriarchal system also seems to determine the different positions that men and women should occupy. When, in the focus group interviews, students were invited to discuss the most suitable jobs for women, social preferences tended to direct women towards certain professions namely teaching, nursing and fashion.

The crucial question is why women are less likely to achieve the top jobs. In line with gender stereotypes, a 21-year-old man from Al-Akhawayn University commented:

> *Men are offered more learning opportunities in mathematics, science and even business, and are expected by teachers and family members to pursue careers in these fields which leads to them taking on leadership roles in society.*

However, this micro-level analysis cannot tell us anything at all about the social processes going on. In starting to think about why so few women make it into the higher levels of Moroccan organisations, it is important to note that it is wrong to assume that this attitude is necessarily due to gender discrimination alone.

## Discussion and conclusion

How young adults' attitudes are shaped towards citizenship and identification is an issue that has attracted considerable attention in social and developmental literature. This article addressed a number of areas related to how young people understand social identity and conceptualise citizenship. It followed a social identity approach, comprising social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979) and self-categorisation theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell 1987). Over the last decade, the social identity approach has proved to be a powerful framework for exploring the relationship between individuals and social behaviour (Jetten, Zhechen, Steffens, Mols Peters & Verkuyten2017). Based on the comparative model of identity formation, we considered how Moroccan university students in both public and private institutions conceived of citizenship. We found that positive self-identification follows first and foremost from the underlying structure of social justice. The present study suggests that socio-economic dimensions shape the discursive practices of active citizenship within the Moroccan context and determines the behaviour and attitudes of young people towards social action.

Our findings show that if they are considered as second-class citizens – with little access to resources, lacking representation in the system of governance, being discriminated against by political elites – students feel like they do not belong and might not take pride in their identity as Moroccans. These

findings therefore seem to prove the first part of our second hypothesis – which holds that students in public universities feel like second-class citizens. The findings do not seem to prove the second part of this second hypothesis, however, which holds that these students who feel like second-class citizens rebel in order to gain full access to their rights. Rather, they did not seem to take social responsibility or engage in civic action to defend their rights. They did not necessarily resist domination, rather complying with it. Anthony Giddens (1982, XX) has pointed out that, 'Compliance of the subordinate within the power relations may be explained not by lack of resistance, but by the absence of the means to implement such resistance'. Mainly, our findings seemed to show that the relation between a positive conception of identity and civic engagement was stronger for students in private institutions, who claimed to be involved in volunteer activities and seemed to strongly aspire to contributing to their communities, than for their counterparts in public institutions. This pattern of results is in line with our first hypothesis, which states that students in private universities show patriotism and willingness to be active citizens, and supports Erik Erikson's (1950-1968) psychosocial theory that the formation of a stable identity may nurture a desire to contribute to society through community-oriented activities. Students from private institutions seemed to indicate their participation in such activities was in order to contribute positively to the social order and resist social injustice where it was seen to occur.

Legalistic ideas of citizenship are grounded in communal cohesion, where all members treat each other with respect– that is, as equal citizens. The respondents in our study did not all define citizenship in this way. Some public university students defined it in a purely practical sense, as 'people who hold the same passport as we do', while private university respondents defined a citizen in a much deeper sense, as someone who possesses qualities that call forth an attitude of respect and active participation. Defining citizenship helps locate the social behaviour respondent within the broader intellectual framework of social justice but in a way that draws attention to the failure of the so-called 'second-class citizens' to mobilise not only economic resources but also social, cultural and symbolic resources (Moller 1998). Deprivations on the economic front specifically are related to deprivations on the political, social and cultural fronts of society, and the foundation of this framework led to several dimensions of social exclusion: denials, insecurity and uncertainty, legitimisation and reproduction, domination and hierarchy, mobility and protest. Hilary Silver (1994) identifies three major paradigms of social exclusion. Firstly, the solidarity paradigm views social exclusion as the breakdown of social bonds in the society where the poor, unemployed and ethnic minorities are viewed as deviant and excluded. Secondly, the specialisation paradigm views exclusion as discrimination and denial from participation in social interaction. And thirdly, the monopoly paradigm considers social systems as essentially hierarchical, with differential power spread among different social groups, where powerful groups generally control resources and opportunities and restrict the access of other groups.

Based on real conflict theory, social cohesion may have much more important relationships with social justice than national identity and patriotism, as it has been proven that access to resources maintains social stability (Campbell 1965). According to the political and social theorist Nancy Fraser (1997), there are two general principles and understandings of social justice. The first is 'socio-economic' injustice, which typically involves struggles around the politics of redistribution. The second is 'cultural or symbolic' injustice, rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication. She illustrates:

> non-recognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions' (Fraser 1997, 14).

Therefore, as most of our respondents claimed, the marginalisation of citizenship in Morocco – as articulated in the theory of social rights and the gap between access to material and symbolic goods (access to education but not employment, access to information but not to power and decision-making, prevalence of civil society organisations but no effective entitlement to economic and social rights) – has resulted in a fragmented society, lack of civic identification and a distrust in democracy. Civic identification and trust in democracy are important for social participation.

Although students at private institutions of higher learning seem to support the democratic process, they also seem disengaged from politics and show low trust in politicians and government. Participation in political activities is in crisis, especially when it comes to young people, and this is a major issue facing contemporary democracies (Arab Barometer 2014; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd & Scullion2010; Henn & Foard 2012). However, William Galston (2011) argues that political engagement should not be considered as the only prerequisite to ensure democracy. None of the scholars who defend active political engagement, including Tocqueville, argue that democracy requires all or most citizens to be politically engaged, but what should be a top priority is preventing radical disengagement, which brings up the threat of a variety of undesirable consequences. Hannah Arendt (1963) argues that tolerant, charitable and socially engaged individuals may eschew political participation but still contribute to the success of democracy. With many Moroccan political parties fragmenting and losing credibility, associations have flourished in the country. According to a 2014report by the Ministry of Interior, the number of associations grew significantly, from 4 000 in 1990 to 116 836 in 2014, targeting a variety of social issues related to human rights, gender equality, local development, environmental sustainability and more (Zoubairi 2014). The National Human Development Initiative, founded in 2005 by King Mohammed VI, also aims to ensure equality and better the lives of Moroccan citizens. However, there is much work to be done in order to promote the integration and civic participation of the youth in cooperative movements.

This study has some limitations. First of all, data were collected from only 100students at four universities, and thus may have limited generalisability to students enrolled in different programmes at different universities and institutions. Moreover, the sample study was less diverse than the overall survey population or nationwide youth population. Furthermore, this study was limited to examining social identity only in terms of socio-economic status. Other forms of social identity – based, for example, on religious affiliation, sexual orientation, group and ethnic membership – may lead to the development of critical social consciousness and thus inform engagement in social justice. Last but not least, given the sensitivity of the topic as well as the length of the questionnaire, there were no real incentives for the students to complete it online. We tried to encourage participation by ensuring participants that the results of the study will be submitted to policy makers.

While there are clearly limits to what this study can tell us, it does more than fill a void in the literature pertaining to citizenship and identity formation. It provides an opportunity to gauge where Morocco stands on the path to social justice and citizenship rights and to consider the implications of these findings for future policy reforms at the national level. Previous research shows that a useful approach to enhance students' understanding of social justice issues (with a prolonged emphasis on social

change and student agency) is to promote a thick social justice and active citizenship education that encourages challenging and transforming existing institutional structures, and to include the youth in decision-making (Breunig2019; Idrissi 2020; Lerner & Fulambarker 2018).

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