Perceptions of and Obstacles to Success and Integration at the Moroccan-Algerian Border: Life Experiences of Sub-Saharan Migrants in Oujda

A Creative ISP

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SIT Migration
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ABSTRACTS

The aim of the following paper and podcast series is to examine the migration journeys, lives, and integration experiences of sub-Saharan migrants at the Moroccan-Algerian border city of Oujda, in an effort to understand migrant perspectives on integration into Moroccan society. When faced with challenges to integration – including social, legal, and economic barriers – migrants must develop strategies to survive in Morocco while navigating a social place within a new society. Migrants’ varying perceptions on the need to integrate and possibility of integration illustrate the problems inherent to the process of achieving a new life in a nation that is relatively young to the issue of incoming migrants.

Throughout my time in Oujda, I conducted eight migrant interviews; five are used within the podcast series. My conversation with the director of the Moroccan organization CNDH is included in a subsequent podcast episode to illustrate the Moroccan perspective on the presence of migrants in Oujda.

Literature by a variety of authors and researchers provides a base of background information, historical context, and definitions, while the majority of my conclusions are drawn from the results of my fieldwork. Through interviews with sub-Saharan migrants, I find that lack of community, unattainable employment, the struggle of raising a family, and misaligned expectations between sub-Saharan and Moroccan populations are major difficulties to be overcome when building a new life in Oujda.
KEY TERMS AND CONTEXT

For the purpose of the following study, I rely on the following definitions of frequently recurring terms and concepts.

“Sub-Saharan migration” refers to the movement of people from African countries located South of the Sahara to Morocco through the Sahara and Algeria. Reasons for leaving may be related to pursuing employment, a better economic environment, education, or life in Europe. The sub-Saharan immigrant population in Morocco also includes asylum seekers and refugees fleeing conflict, oppression, and violence by extremist groups in their countries of origin.

“Integration” in this case refers to the process of mutual adaptation between host society and migrant, including a sub-Saharan migrant’s success in finding community and a higher quality of life within Moroccan society. This encompasses employment, relationships with locals, adequate provisions, and supportive social circles.

“Transnationalism” is defined by Basch et. all (1994) as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” More recent scholarship understands transnational migration as taking place within more fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants simultaneous embededdness in more than one society (Levit and Jaworsky). Within my research, the concept of transnationalism serves to illustrate the multiple identities migrants may grapple with while attempting to establish themselves in Moroccan society: thereby posing
challenges to building a life in one locality while possessing expectations and traditions of another.

My research incorporates historical contexts and literature with the personal testimonies of sub-Saharan migrants at the Moroccan-Algerian border city of Oujda to illustrate contemporary perceptions of integration and its barriers. Larger social panoramas exemplify a lack of sub-Saharan acculturation and quality of life in Morocco. While official policy and law may function to explain these phenomena, my fieldwork directly expounds migrants’ recognition of what factors play into the lives they lead. The scope of the problem at hand is large if examined from an overarching standpoint; when speaking with migrants at ground level, however, several main components become apparent obstacles that must consistently be overcome.
INTRODUCTION

While Morocco has been, for quite some time, identified primarily as a country of emigration, it has undergone the process of transforming into a destination for migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa since the mid 1990s. An increasing number of migrants from countries South of the Sahara travel to Morocco to pursue employment, a preferable economic environment, and education. The African immigrant population in Morocco also includes asylum seekers and refugees fleeing conflict and oppression in their countries of origin; several migrants I spoke to who left for this reason fled hostility instigated by extremist groups.

In 2001, the Zaire war (which occurred predominantly in the Congo) spurred the first major period of migration to the North. A wave of sub-Saharan migrants flooded Morocco; seventeen countries saw people leave by two main routes through Algeria, all aiming for Morocco as a stop on the way to Europe. An estimated 90% of these migrants traverse great stretches of land in the Sahara and Algeria before entering Morocco through the border city of Oujda. Oujda’s location, only 27 kilometers from its Algerian sister city, Maghnia, makes it a primary entrance and settlement point for sub-Saharan migrants in the midst of their migration journey.

The practice of entering Morocco through Oujda is rooted in old migration routes: before 1994, the migratory path from Maghnia to Oujda was the solitary legal entrance from Algeria to Morocco. Since the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria was accused of instigating the 1994 Marrakesh bombing, the frontier has been closed, with no reconciliation between Algeria and Morocco in sight. The only
current way for migrants to cross this border remains illegal, often requiring the aid of human smugglers, police corruption, and payment of officials.

While many sub-Saharan migrants expect to utilize Morocco as a staging ground before entering Europe, an increasing number fail or do not continue on to the EU, remaining in Morocco rather than returning to their unstable or substantially poorer origin countries.

Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco exist within cross hairs of boundaries: the border space of Oujda becomes a site where global flows converge. Pre-existing social patterns, dynamics, and ideas intersect in one space to influence social arrangements of migrants and, to some extent, determine their place in society. Migrants’ place-making ability, and how they go about it, is crucial to the success of their lives in Morocco; they must carefully navigate cultural intersections while building new lives for themselves.

It is within this non-permanent and transitory lifestyle that the struggle for integration is exacerbated. Faced with a barrage of social, legal, and economic barriers to integration, migrants must develop creative livelihood strategies to not only survive in Morocco, but to achieve meaningful personal lives and to reconcile and navigate differences between home and host countries. While sub-Saharan migrants reside in Morocco, are surrounded by Moroccan society, and receive aid from Moroccan organizations, perspectives on the necessity of amalgamation differ within the migrant population. Therefore, sub-Saharan experience of Moroccan life
can be said to be a process in which migrants, to varying degrees, are embedded in the multiple locations and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live.

In the following paper and podcast series, I examine the migration journeys, lives, and integration experiences of sub-Saharan migrants at the Moroccan-Algerian border to comprehend migrant perspectives on integration into Moroccan society. I will briefly delve into Moroccan comprehension of the same issue to grasp the differences in expectations and realities of those existing on either side of “belonging;” are efforts to integrate sub-Saharan realized, and if not, what is preventing a favorable outcome? How do sub-Saharan outlooks on belonging to Moroccan society play into subsequent participation and integration? Testimonies in Oujda articulate the intricacies and challenges of living as an “outsider” in a community that now must become one’s own.

Through fieldwork and interviews, I find that lack of community, unattainable employment, the struggle of raising a family, and misaligned expectations between the sub-Saharan and Moroccan community lead to poor (and at times, hopeless) results for migrants.

My research surrounding sub-Saharan place and identity within Morocco aims to unveil micro-aspects of migration. Rather than focusing on travel patterns and integration policy, I will inquire how the process of resettlement in a border space affects ties to new and original communities, quality of life, and experiences as a non-Moroccan. Through this research we may begin to understand what perceptions exist within sub-Saharan and Moroccan populations that are helping or hindering migrant attainment of success and assimilation.
The following paper provides a background of sub-Saharan existence in Morocco and an extensive effort to understand transnationalism’s facets as they relate to the migrants of this study within the context of a border space. I will define my scope of research through a description of methodology and positionality to provide a frame of reference for the research done throughout this process.

After exploring the findings of my interviews with migrants in Oujda through a series of podcasts, I will analyze my discoveries and discuss their implications within the broader scale of migration and societal identity. I will then discern further questions that this research has raised within the field of sub-Saharan integration in Morocco.

Listen to the below podcast for a brief, auditory introduction to the following research project.

“Introduction: The Lowdown”

https://soundcloud.com/zoe-zuidema/1-introduction
LITERATURE REVIEW

Sub-Saharan Migration to Morocco

Although Morocco is predominantly a country of emigration, it is also transforming into a destination for migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa with the goal of finding economic opportunity or safety in Europe. However, increasing European immigration restrictions have played an unintended role in reinforcing the permanent character of Moroccan migration (De Haas). Morocco has recently begun to acknowledge its growing role as a country of immigration in response to increasing criticism by national and international NGOs on the escalation of mistreatment of migrants. In 2013, King Mohammed VI announced a new policy that includes avenues for regularization of unauthorized African immigrants. The move signified first-time acceptance on the part of the Moroccan government of Morocco’s reality – yet the policy has yet to be extensively implemented (De Haas).

The mid-1990s saw an escalation of sub-Saharan African migrants moving North, with three key influxes since. The first major wave of migration to Morocco began in 2001 with war in the Congo, and an increase from 2005 to 2008 due to conflict in Liberia and Sudan. 2009 to 2014 saw another wave moving for economic reasons, spurred by circulating postulations that Europe holds a better economic future (Ammari).

Although Moroccan policymakers and the media have emphasized the temporary, transitory character of sub-Saharan immigration, an increasing
proportion of these migrants are becoming long-term or permanent settlers. Inability to afford the trip to Europe, lack of documents, and a brutal border regime keeps migrants at bay, compelling them to establish life in Morocco rather than their intended destination. The long-term stays of migrants are solidified by intergovernmental organizations engaging to improve legal and social conditions in Morocco to keep migrants satisfied in non-EU territory (Duvell). The success of these programs is debated, most notably by migrants themselves.

Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, then, are “stranded in their involuntary waiting room” (Duvell). Sub-Saharan migrants constitute .02% of the overall Moroccan population and enjoy no legal status, have limited access to capital and credit, and are frequently treated with hostility on the part of the local population (Pickerill). Concerns about the adverse effect of increased migration controls and lack of adequate provisions place the lives of migrants in a state of distress, with a threat to migrant agency and successful personal life.

**Migrant Integration into Morocco**

Immigrants are, according to Schiller et al, often viewed as people who uproot themselves, leave behind their home and country, and face the painful process of incorporation into a contrastive society and culture. Migrants’ daily lives depend on multiple connections across borders, and their public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state (Schiller). While they may become incorporated into the economy and political institutions of the country in which they reside, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain
connections, build institutions, and conduct transactions in the countries from which they emigrated.

In Morocco, wariness of and racism against sub-Saharan leads to economic, political, and personal insecurity of newcomers and their descendants. According to a study carried out by the Moroccan Association for Studies and Research on Migration, only about half of Moroccans interviewed would be willing to work with or hire a sub-Saharan. Consequently, migrants are often stranded on the edges of society, without a clear course into the workforce or surrounding community.

In relation to Morocco’s nation-state building efforts, migrants exist at the bottom of the priority list. They are not situated in the process of constructing and shaping collective memories and identity of a nation just established as independent in 1956 – one based on a homogenous Arab identity. Schiller states that there exists the construction of a myth: that each nation contains a single people defined by their residence in a common territory, their undivided loyalty to a common government, and their shared cultural heritage. It holds migrants in a state of incompatibility, asking them daily where their allegiance lays, with whom they align, and where they find community.

With pressure to settle after a painful migration, local integration remains one of few options. It is in this dichotomy between transnational engagement and the necessity of assimilation where sub-Saharan migrants encounter the difficulties of engaging in daily Moroccan life.

The act of integrating isn’t an easy task, by any means. With the growth of global interconnection comes resurgence in the politics of differentiation (Schiller).
In addition to lacking legal status, migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa are the regular target of violent racist attacks and discrimination. Migrants in Morocco often confront an entirely different racial hierarchy than the one in their home country, which limits socioeconomic status and how “Moroccan” one may become (Levit and Jaworsky). Migrants must make sense of two distinct socioeconomic and status ladders while attempting to locate themselves along it in regards to their transitory lifestyles.

Ability to participate across borders is impacted by class and race, and translates into the differences in migrants’ informal but crucial knowledge and networks for success in the mainstream (Levit and Jaworsky). Those who are not educated, fluent in the language, or do not possess desired skills find Morocco inhospitable. These individuals find themselves in poverty-stricken spaces with lack of secure economic footholds in the host country, despite efforts to overcome multiple impediments.

In addition to social and economic barriers to integration, the Moroccan government generally refuses to issue resident permits to migrants (De Haas). In 2007, the United Nations High commissioner for Refugees signed an agreement with the Moroccan government, resulting in limited improvements in the situation of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Ideally, those holding UNHCR registration cards are less frequently subject to harassment and deportation; according to migrants in Oujda, however, this is not necessarily the case.
Integration Challenges Posed by Transnationalism

In the past, immigrants were often pressed to abandon ties to home, resulting in the erasure of memories of transnational connections in subsequent generations. Today, an increase in density, availability, and importance of transnational interconnections are made possible (and sustained) by new technologies of transportation and communication (Schiller). The ability to maintain close and immediate ties to home is increased and practiced.

Transnational migration, then, is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multiple and simultaneous social relations that link together society of origin and settlement. Migrants may be situated in a transnational lifestyle due to: deteriorating social and economic conditions that leave no option for a secure place of settlement; persecution leading to the economic and political insecurity of the migrant and their descendants; the nation building projects of both home and host countries, which build loyalties among migrants to each nation (Schiller).

The phenomenon of transnationalism could be said to diminish the significance of national boundaries and the distribution of objects, ideas, and people. Migration is one of the most important means through which borders and boundaries are being contested and transgressed. Sub-Saharan migrants living in Morocco must navigate novel traditions and expectations in anticipation of a “new life” in a foreign setting, while remaining embedded in their own differentiated cultures.

Even as traditions become blended by cultural mixing, transnational migrants are “deterritorialized” from their localities of origin and “reterritorialized”
(Levit and Jaworsky). That is, relocated, mixed, and brought into juxtaposition with alternative practices. Living in a transnational state, then, comes with pressures of conforming to acculturation. While breaking through boundaries and borders, current transnational cultural processes and movements of people have been accompanied by arduous increases in identity politics (Schiller), making the process of assimilation challenging and convoluted. Migrants who struggle for social positions confront the boundaries of these identity politics. In a set of networks and social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged (Faist), migrants find themselves within social boundaries that interrupt and divide the distribution of people and resources.

The growth of migration runs hand-in-hand with the rampant expression of exclusive, essentialized nationalisms: particularly in Morocco, a recently independent country established upon Arab nationalism and a homogeneous population. Transnational processes seem to threaten the identity of the host country and its ingrained practices. My research and interviews conducted with sub-Saharan migrants in Oujda exemplify the difficulties inherent to the process of integrating into a society that is not prepared or accustomed to receive the “other” after a protracted nation-state building period.

With the existence of transnationalism, Morocco can no longer address migration from an exclusively Moroccan perspective. The practices, experiences, and expectations of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa must be considered when examining individual and institutional actors that play into the success of sub-Saharan incorporation into Moroccan society. Studying transnationalism of
migrants in Morocco means scrutinizing how social lives change when they are enacted across borders.

**Significance of the Border**

Place-specific contexts matter. Oujda is located on the Moroccan-Algerian border and serves as the primary entrance point for sub-Saharan migrants into Morocco: subsequently, it acts as a major migrant settlement area (Ammari). It represents a key location in which the nature of the border influences social interactions and spaces.

When global flows converge, social patterns and dynamics merge and clash to influence social arrangements and integration. Migrants’ place-making ability - and how they go about it - is shaped by prior experiences, cultural intersections, and articulation of identity (Levit and Jaworsky). And while the sanctity of borders is intrinsic to the separation of nations, humans continually create and recreate boundaries: moving, trading, and communicating across them, thereby making fluidity and change a part of all human social formations and processes.

Borders account for processes of partition, filtering, and hierarchization, and allow us to understand geographical formations that are marked as much by differentiation as by connection (Mezzadra and Nielson). Borders produce flow dynamics, focus on the processes of articulation, division, and interruption, and define contemporary spaces. Therefore, borders act to both include and exclude.

Sub-Saharan migrants become immediate outsiders at the border. In a space that has defined them as newcomers, they strive to occupy positions that necessitate
“belonging;” citizenship, labor markets, and communities. Borders are also essential to cognitive processes, as they establish conceptual hierarchies that guide action and thought (Mezzadra and Nielson). The border functions as both a physical and cognitive device to create a distinction between those who do and don't “belong.”

This process, then, sustains the act of division between the host country and those attempting to build a life within it. At the border, there is an intensification of existential stakes: domination, exploitation, subjection, power, and resistance come into play. When sub-Saharan migrants cross the border into Oujda, these complex relations between Moroccans and the “other” come to the surface. Bodies in motion challenge border regimes, and cause the making and unmaking of existing social spaces.

In addition, the practices of border reinforcement shape the conditions under which border crossing is possible and executed (Mezzadra and Nielson). A constant process of filtering out foreigners institutes a distinction between inclusion and exclusion. Border controls practice exclusion by determining a migrant’s worthiness to enter a space (by evaluating factors such as education, health, language, or readiness to integrate). Border controls may police the borders while stratifying the statuses of migrants at the same time (Mezzadra and Nielson). The increasingly complicated landscape of transnational migration challenges borders by producing several parameters that create movement across an increasingly diverse social space.

Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson wrote, “Porous boundaries and multiple identities undermine ideas of cultural belonging as a necessary
accompaniment to political membership. There are increasing numbers of citizens who do not belong.” Migrants struggle on a daily basis to overcome contemporary hierarchies and domination systems that borders produce (Mezzadra and Nielson). It is here, at the crossing of the border, where the struggle for inclusion in Moroccan society begins.
METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

I’ve collected my data through a series of personal interviews with sub-Saharan migrants and meetings with NGOs. I spoke with head figures at Oujda CNDH and Ain Ghazel to obtain insight to the workings of organizations providing assistance to sub-Saharan migrants in Oujda, as well as their perceptions on the question of integration in the area.

I met migrants through connections from my advisor, Soumia Boutkhil, as well as Hassane Ammari, a principle point of contact for many migrants in Oujda. After meeting with Jawad, a friend of Soumia, I met two sub-Saharan men who subsequently introduced me to several more migrants in the area. Hassane’s connections across the city proved helpful for meeting both migrants and organizations. I soon discovered that migrants I met directly through Soumia, Jawad, or Hassane were much more comfortable speaking with me than those that I met through other migrants: I presume this relates to a lack of trust that was previously established through a mutual relationship.

In total, I conducted eight loosely structured interviews with migrants (two men and six women, in the age range of 30 to 40) and three with organizations. Five migrant interviews and one with CNDH are used in my final findings. After trial and error, I found that casual interviews yielded better results than more structured: migrants were often hesitant to enter a formal setting or respond to prepared questions. Meeting in cafes and homes and having a conversation (rather than conducting an interview) proved to make interviewees more comfortable and
willing to share information. The challenges of meeting in cafes and homes were background noises out of our control that, at times, distorted podcast audio.

The goals of my interviews with NGOs were to attain basic knowledge on the structure of migrant aid in Oujda and the efforts being made towards integration. When speaking with migrants, I aimed to have a conversation that was personal, insightful, and interesting to listen to. Results on the latter varied: migrants who were visibly less comfortable speaking with me were not used in my final podcast findings as they provided little information. I did not include those who did not want to be recorded during the interview. I did, however, have personal and perceptive conversations with several migrants that were helpful, informative, and an honor to speak with.

I ensured that my research conformed to appropriate ethical standards by obtaining verbal consent from every migrant I spoke to, as well as consent to record their voice. Those who were uncomfortable with voice recordings were not, and therefore not included in my findings. Names were changed for those who wished to not be identified, and certain details are omitted to protect information.
POSITIONALITY

Positionality was difficult to overcome throughout the migrant interview process, most notably when I entered migrant homes. I crossed into their space as a stranger: my clothes, devices, and nationality placed me in a position of evident privilege. The questions I asked further created a dichotomy between us, as it became apparent that I was gaining insight to lives that stand in stark contrast to my own.

I addressed this by being unpresuming, establishing common ground in conversation, and clearly explaining why I was speaking with interviewees. I hope that listening with empathy and showing interest (rather than astonishment) in their stories allowed for a mutually respectful interaction. However, I believe that overcoming imbalances in a researcher/migrant relationship is often nonviable and difficult to overcome in the short timeframe available.

In this case, with a brief period of time to greet and interview a migrant, my position as a researcher must be acknowledged as one that may establish respectful and trustworthy working connections rather than close relationships, despite my preference of the latter. In order to present my findings in a manner that does justice to those I have spoken to, I have represented migrants’ stories accurately, adjusted names or information to protect sensitive information, and thanked them for their time spent with me. I extended gratitude verbally, and in the case of migrants who had to lose valuable work time or travel to meet with me, compensated monetarily.
The clear power imbalance present in the interview space was difficult to personally reconcile; I don’t feel that I, as an American student benefiting from the stories of migrants, have enough to give back to those who participated in my project. I am therefore incredibly thankful to and humbled by the people of Oujda who shared their time and stories.
FINDINGS

The following podcast series presents the findings of research conducted in the border city of Oujda, Morocco.

“Paco: Relationships and Community”
https://soundcloud.com/zoe-zuidema/paco-relationships-and-community

“Alex: The Job Problem”
https://soundcloud.com/zoe-zuidema/alex-the-job-problem

“Jennifer, Alice, and Mary: Families in Morocco”

“Mohammed of CNDH: The Moroccan Perspective”
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Through the testimonies of sub-Saharan migrants in Oujda, we see that the process of integrating into Moroccan society and constructing a life of favorable outcome is complex and arduous. The factors leading to these challenges are related to migrant agency as well as social dissimilarities out of their control.

The inability to find work (due to lack of documents and Moroccans’ reluctance to hire) creates an economic barrier between migrants and their environment. Lack of income makes economic participation and personal achievement nonviable, and the battle for economic capital requires potential socializing time. Unsuccessful endeavors for income, therefore, are limiting to both quality of life and ability to integrate. Unemployment restricts ability to engage in Moroccan society through the workforce, social circles, and generates a greater public division between Moroccans and migrants.

Working for provisions for one’s family occasionally creates an ancillary obstacle to integration for next of kin. Children spending their days with working parents, rather than at school or with Moroccans, are impeded from finding their own way into the population. The decision of migrant mothers to keep their children out of school for religious or language reasons produces the same issue: young migrants will not independently assimilate within the Moroccan structures designed to do the same for Moroccan youth. The intentional effort to restrict migrant children’s access to assimilation systems out of fear of failure surely proves to be, ultimately, more damaging to adeptness within current societal surroundings.
Absence of a strong and supportive community also presents an acculturation hurdle for the migrants I spoke with. In several cases, the hostile actions of Moroccans towards sub-Saharan migrants generate the necessity of self-initiated seclusion. For others, the demanding nature of daily life in Morocco results in the weary return home to attend to essential and basic needs of self and family. The scattered nature of the migrant population of Oujda does not allow for straightforward socialization opportunities. Convoluted information systems (such as Paco’s volunteer work to direct migrants to organizations) complicate the reception of aid.

Ultimately, harassment, little knowledge of support systems, living on outskirts, and intentional self-isolation leads to sequestered existence and the incapacity to affiliate with one’s newfound society.

Listen to the following podcast to hear further analysis on why, despite recognition of these factors, the “migrant issue” persists in Morocco.

“Conclusion: Present and Future”

https://soundcloud.com/zoe-zuidema/conclusion-present-and-future
LIMITATIONS

My study is fundamentally limited in several ways. The timeframe available for conducting research regarding a large population of human subjects was brief; this placed boundaries on how long I could stay in Oujda, how many migrants I could interview, and the length and extent of my final findings. With a short amount of time comes a limited possibility of interviews. While I am satisfied with the information I collected from those I did interview, I cannot draw extensive, overarching conclusions about the migrant population, as the small sample of those I spoke with do not represent the entirety of their community.

Varying factors affected the success of my interviews as well. The language barrier, at times, confined communication between parties and limited the information exchanged. Later, when editing audio, language differences proved to be a difficulty in organizing and analyzing details.

Ethical considerations, while necessary to the process of conducting research with human subjects and required for principled analysis, at times restricted the information exchanged during interviews or which material was usable. One female migrant I spoke to requested that I not record her; I didn’t, and, in turn, did not include her story in the final podcast. Uneven power dynamics also presented certain limitations. On occasion it was clear that the interviewee was not fully comfortable with my intimidating presence as an outsider, stranger, and researcher. In this case, migrants were hesitant to divulge information or speak candidly.
PERSONAL REFLECTION

Throughout ISP, I have been consistently amazed, humbled, and thought provoked by the experiences I have had and the people I’ve met. I have leapt out of my comfort zone on many occasions while independently encountering new people, moving to new places, and navigating the intricate and complicated world of fieldwork.

The process of conducting interviews and creating a podcast is exceptional preparation and development for my major in Broadcast News: I am excited to have had extensive “real world” practice this semester in making contacts, honing interview skills, and molding together pieces of many experiences to create one work with a conclusion. Learning how to approach strangers, establish a connection, and host a touching, interesting, and mutually respectful conversation is a skill that will contribute itself to many circumstances.

By hosting dialogues with migrants in Oujda, I interacted with a set of people I would, in my ordinary life, never have the opportunity to encounter. Sharing space and stories with those who are unlike ourselves creates common ground that, in the end, establishes us as more alike than different. Through this process comes the ability to respect and admire the lives and efforts of sub-Saharan migrants that act with integrity and intent.

The unequal power dynamic inherent to the researcher/migrant relationship is a dichotomy that I am still struggling to interpret. How can I, as an American student using migrants’ stories for the benefit of my higher education, give back in a way that is beneficial and worthwhile? I have been striving to understand the
significance of my interactions with sub-Saharan migrants in Oujda as experiences that will allow me to positively contribute to the migrant situation on individual and global levels.

The topic of migration is, after all, incredibly relevant during today’s worldwide struggle to accept and assist migrants and refugees. Contention of the issue is consistently brought into the spotlight of international news and aid efforts, and I am fortunate to have been involved with it so closely. As widespread attention is brought to migrants, I hope to continue unveiling individual experiences in an effort to consider migrants’ particulars through a journalistic lens.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


