A Feminist Reading of Algerian Women YouTubers' Social Media Presence

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Abstract

This research aims to identify and explore feminist languages and vocabularies curated and used by Algerian women YouTubers in order to popularise and disseminate new ideas and understandings around the position of women in Algeria and related themes. To answer this enquiry, I use a blend of research methods: qualitative semi-structured interviews with three Algerian women YouTubers, visual content analysis of their online social media posts and videos, as well as my autoethnography as part of this cohort, as a way to mitigate the lack of literature around Algerian women's presence on social media, and to paint a rich picture around the context from which Algerian women YouTubers' intrinsically feminist online productions emerge.

Few research studies have looked at the potential new information technologies, such as the internet and social media, are offering in advancing women's position within countries in the MENA region from the perspectives of feminist activists (Skalli, 2014). This research contributes to the literature by exploring the different ways in which Algerian women YouTubers' social media productions, which are not officially labelled as feminist, disseminate intrinsically feminist views and understandings that interrogate traditional narratives on women's position in society, gender relations and identities.

Analysis of Algerian women YouTubers' social media videos and posts shows that these women are, strategically and creatively, addressing themes and issues that are related to women's lived experiences within patriarchal Algerian society. These themes which I explore in this thesis are: Algerian women's position in the family, infantilisation and control; sexual harassment and beauty standards; Algerian women's visibility, freedom of movement, and occupation of public spaces. Additionally, this research argues that Algerian women YouTubers adopt different strategies in order to navigate both a patriarchal society that is often hostile to any endeavours aiming to promote women's emancipation, and a market-driven social media environment.

Author’s Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Acknowledgement

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, and the Most Wise. I am first and foremost grateful to Allah for guiding me along this path of knowledge, granting me the courage and patience to endure it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research focus and significance

This research focuses on the intrinsically feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers within their social media productions when addressing women's issues in Algeria. It delves into how these digitally crafted languages manifest a unique form of feminist resistance within the Algerian context. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to expanding our comprehension of how women in North Africa, particularly Algeria, utilise the internet and social media platforms to advocate for their rights and reclaim their freedoms.

While some academic studies have acknowledged the transformative potential of new media technologies in the lives of women in the MENA region (Shteiwi, 2003; Weaver, 2004; Skalli, 2006), this area of research remains largely underexplored. This study seeks to enrich the growing body of work on gendered practices on social media and YouTube, a topic that has been explored in previous studies (Chau, 2010; Wotanis & McMillan, 2014). However, much of the existing literature on women and social media primarily concentrates on Western contexts, emphasizing usage, empowerment, influence, participation, and interaction. In contrast, research on women and social media within the MENA region is limited, and existing work often centres around the politics and activism of the Arab Spring.

This research distinguishes itself by delving into the realm of Algerian women YouTubers who create seemingly light-hearted social media content. Yet, it asserts that these productions actually serve as a modern form of feminist activism among Algerian women. The central query that drives this thesis is an exploration of the feminist languages and vocabularies that Algerian women incorporate into their social media content to challenge patriarchal perceptions of women in Algerian society.

Research contribution

This research brings to light an increasing trend among Algerian women content creators on social media who create and share content that spotlights the contemporary challenges faced by Algerian women. They draw inspiration from their own lived experiences as Algerian women, employing social media platforms as a novel form of feminist resistance in Algeria. These women have meticulously crafted feminist languages and vocabularies unique to their context, using them to address issues that are central to the demands of the Algerian feminist movement, which has its roots in the 1940s but gained significant momentum in the 1980s, especially in response to the challenges posed by the implementation of the Family Code. This thesis delves into the multifaceted social media productions and online presence of these Algerian women social media content creators, unveiling their role as agents of this novel form of feminist resistance. The significance of their work becomes evident through the lens of three overarching themes, summarised below, that have emerged through the analysis of the content created by my research participants. These themes directly resonate with the central objectives of the Algerian feminist movement, catalysed by the repercussions of the Family Code's implementation in 1984.

The first theme revolves around the role of Algerian women within the family, addressing issues related to their experiences of infantilisation and imposed control. These themes resonate with the Algerian feminist movement's longstanding call for the abolition of the male guardianship system. The second theme tackles the persistent issues of sexual harassment and the pressure to conform to normative beauty standards. Both of these issues are closely tied to the Algerian feminist movement's overarching aim of achieving gender equality in Algeria. The third theme encompasses the topics of visibility, mobility, and the active presence of Algerian women in the public sphere. These aspects are intricately linked to the fundamental demand for women's freedom of movement within the Algerian feminist movement. In essence, this research highlights the transformative role played by Algerian women YouTubers who employ innovative digital methods to amplify the feminist discourse in

Algeria and advance the goals of the Algerian feminist movement while challenging existing norms and constraints imposed on women in the country.

Research aims and objectives

The primary aim of this study is to unveil the possibilities and challenges that arise when Algerian women YouTubers create and disseminate social media content that serves as a platform for communicating and embodying feminist values. This objective seeks to explore the intricate interplay between these content creators and their chosen medium for expression. An important objective is to elucidate the diverse methods employed by Algerian women YouTubers to create social media content that addresses a broad spectrum of issues directly impacting Algerian women in their everyday lives. Rooted in the awareness shaped by their lived experiences, this research delves into the nuanced narratives woven by these content creators to challenge the second-class status traditionally attributed to women in Algerian society. To this end, this research aims to explore the feminist languages and vocabularies strategically employed by Algerian women YouTubers when discussing an array of themes, including their experiences of systemic infantilization and control, various forms of sexual harassment and exclusionary beauty standards, and the societal limitations imposed on women in Algeria, encompassing their freedom of movement, access to resources, and their presence in both virtual and physical public spaces. The research contends that these novel and alternative approaches to Algerian feminist activism are effectively carrying forward the legacy of the Algerian feminist movement holding a significant potential capable of challenging societal taboos and sowing the seeds of change within Algerian mindsets. This is evidenced by the transformative discussions unfolding in the comment sections under these thought-provoking videos.

Theoretical and methodological frameworks

In terms of methodology, my research employs a multi-faceted approach, combining visual content analysis with semi-structured interviews and autoethnography. Originally, I set out to explore the overall experiences of Algerian women YouTubers from a gender perspective, given their underrepresentation and the consistent negative feedback they receive in comparison to their male counterparts on the platform. After conducting interviews with three prominent Algerian women YouTubers, it became evident that their online presence embodies a novel form of feminist resistance. Consequently, I refocused my research to centre on unravelling the feminist languages and vocabularies embedded in their social media content through a visual content analysis of their productions. Although the interviews did not yield the data saturation initially expected, they provided valuable insights and context for my research findings. When combined with the visual content analysis and my autoethnographic work, they collectively shed light on this emerging form of Algerian feminist resistance within the digital realm.

Informing my research are a plethora of feminist theories, encompassing various dimensions such as patriarchy—specifically 'Classic Patriarchy' prevalent in North Africa, the Muslim Middle East, and South East Asia (Kandiyoti, 1988)—along with the private/public sphere division, the concept of familial honour within patriarchal societies, gender classification (Douglas, 1966), social constructions of femininities and masculinities, online popular misogyny, the male gaze, gendered looking practices, the politics and the economy of visibility. Through the lens of these feminist theories, I conducted a comprehensive analysis of the social media content produced by Algerian women YouTubers. Furthermore, I integrated these feminist analyses with insights garnered from interviews with the participants and relevant personal narratives from both myself and other Algerian women, as part of my autoethnographic practice in this research. Further elaboration on these methodologies is provided in Chapter Three, demonstrating the profound impact of feminist theories on my understanding and interpretation of the data.

The structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In **Chapter 1**, I provide a general introduction to the research project, highlighting its significance, aims, and objectives. **Chapter 2**, is dedicated to establishing the critical context of this research. In this chapter, I offer a concise yet comprehensive overview of women's position in Algerian society, tracing its historical development to contextualise the emergence of Algerian women YouTubers and their intrinsically feminist social media productions. This historical exploration includes a detailed examination of women's roles in Algerian society throughout contemporary history, as well as an account of the Algerian feminist movement and its significant struggles for advancing women's rights. By delving into this context, I create a backdrop against which we can appreciate the unique nature of my participants' social media productions, which I argue constitute a novel form of online Algerian feminist activism. These women's innovative approach significantly contributes to the enduring efforts of the Algerian feminist movement in achieving gender equality in Algeria. Additionally, within this chapter, I delve into the colonial history of French mainstream secular feminism, acknowledging its profound influence on Algerian society's perspectives regarding feminism and women's rights movements. Finally, I conclude the chapter by providing a brief historical overview of the internet and social media in Algeria.

Chapter 3 serves as the methodological framework for this research. Within this chapter, I trace the evolution of my research aims and questions, and elucidate the reasons behind the shift in my primary data collection method, transitioning from interviews to visual content analysis. A key focus in this chapter is the embracing of feminist research ethics, which prioritise recognising and amplifying participants' voices. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of researcher reflexivity, acknowledging the complexities of the researcher's positionality and the intricate power dynamics inherent in the research process. This chapter delves into the significant value that my research has derived from the inclusion of women's

experiences and lived realities, which extends to my own involvement through the practice of autoethnography.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 serve as the primary analytical chapters within this thesis. In the course of these chapters, I undertake the task of identifying and thoroughly examining the varied feminist languages and vocabularies utilised by Algerian women YouTubers within their social media content. These creatively curated feminist narratives are instrumental in shedding light on, addressing, and ultimately challenging deeply-rooted gender norms that constrain the lives of Algerian women. These feminist languages and vocabularies are organized within three thematic sets, which, as the analysis unfolds, reveal their alignment with the core demands of the Algerian feminist movement. This alignment offers a deeper layer of understanding, emphasising the pivotal role played by my participants' social media productions in advancing the goals of the Algerian feminist movement within online digital platforms.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the examination of themes concerning the status of Algerian women within the family structure, focusing on issues of infantilisation and control. Within this chapter, I extensively investigate the feminist languages and vocabularies that my participants have carefully crafted and effectively employed in addressing the challenges and restrictions encountered by Algerian women. These challenges revolve around the traditional societal perception of Algerian women as "permanent minors." Prominent Algerian women YouTubers such as Miss Cha, Mlle Maziw, and Nour Brahimi employ creative and strategic approaches to draw attention to and challenge themes associated with the male guardianship system in Algeria. It's worth noting that this system has been a consistent target for reform and abolition within the Algerian feminist movement, particularly in the wake of the implementation of the Family Code in 1984 (Smail Salhi, 2003, 2008, 2009).

Chapter 5 delves into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers in their resistance against different forms of sexual harassment, as well as exclusionary and normative beauty standards. These issues correspond closely with the

fundamental demands of the Algerian feminist movement in its long-standing struggle for gender equality within Algerian society. In this chapter, I explore my participants' social media content and unravel their creative strategies in curating and employing feminist discourse. They create a space through their social media content where well-needed conversations, perspectives, and alternative narratives on issues related to gendered identities and gender-based violence take place. This chapter underscores the transformative role that these women play in reshaping conversations on these critical subjects.

Chapter 6 focuses on the themes of Algerian women's visibility, their freedom of movement, and their presence in public spaces. I dedicate this chapter to the examination of feminist languages and vocabularies curated by my participant, Nour Brahimi, within her social media content on travel as a single Algerian woman. Through her content, she actively advocates for and enables Algerian women's freedom of movement and their rightful presence in public spaces.

Chapter 7 serves as the general conclusion of this research. It revisits the main findings and contributions, shedding light on the significance of this research. Furthermore, it reflects on the study's limitations and provides insights and directions for future research in this field of study.

Chapter 2: Critical Context

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to contextualise the emergence of Algerian women YouTubers who are actively producing and sharing social media content to communicate feminist values. This enquiry departs from the position that an increasing number of Algerian women YouTubers are creating social media content that creatively addresses an array of issues facing Algerian women in their everyday lives as a result of their awareness (shaped by their lived realities) of the second-class status attributed to women in Algerian society. In this chapter, I aim to offer a contextualised history of contemporary Algerian society as well as Algerian feminist cultures, within which my participants' intrinsically feminist social media practice can be situated. This encompasses an overview of women's position in Algerian society throughout its contemporary history along with an account of the Algerian feminist movement and the major struggles it has led in the betterment of Algerian women's rights throughout the country's modern history. This chapter also includes a section where I explore the colonial history of French mainstream secular feminism as one of the principal influences on Algerian society's views on feminism and women's rights movements. I end this critical context by providing a brief history of the internet and social media in Algeria.

The past 10 years have witnessed a rise in Algerian youth making YouTube videos, and while the majority of these producers are men, there is a significant number of women YouTubers breaking taboos in Algerian society through their visibility and outspokenness. My research aims to add to a growing body of work on gendered practices on social media and YouTube (Chau, 2010; Wotanis & McMillan, 2014). While there is voluminous literature about women and social media regarding subjects of usage, empowerment, influence, participation and interaction, mainly in Western contexts (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007; Citron, 2014; Chen, 2012), there has been relatively little research on women on social media vis-à-vis societies

in the MENA region, and the small body of work that exists tends to focus on the politics and activism of 'the Arab Spring'. In contrast, this study delves into the work of Algerian women YouTubers producing 'everyday' social media content and argues that these often times-playful social media productions can be read as a modern creative and strategic form of Algerian women's feminist activism.

In my endeavour to offer a rich picture of the historical and social context from which my participants' intrinsically feminist productions emerge, with its different intersecting settings, such as the gendered presence of Algerian women on social media and their everyday online experiences in general, I employ and critically engage with autoethnography and storytelling as a feminist research method to inform these strikingly understudied fields of inquiry. Following in the footsteps of a large number of feminists who employ confessional discourse in all its diverse forms (memoirs, autobiographies, autoethnographies, oral storytelling etc.) as a research method in their scholarly works (Moraga & Anzaldua, 2015; Collins, 2000; Cvetkovich, 2012; hooks, 1994; Ettorre, 2017), I draw on my personal lived experiences as an Algerian woman, who grew up and has spent most of her life in Algerian society, interacting with the internet and social media, and eventually deciding to research Algerian women YouTubers. As an Algerian woman turning 31 years old in 2023, I have particular understandings on the position and gendered experiences of younger (Gen Y and Gen Z) women in my country, a perspective that I have built from personal readings, personal experiences and observations, and stories that I have gathered from family and friends, school, popular culture, and the internet. Throughout this chapter, I refer back to these understandings and narratives as a way of engaging with relevant academic research around themes of women's position in Algerian society and their online gendered presence and experiences.

Embraced by feminist academics in a diverse array of research fields and disciplines, the confessional discourse, including autoethnography, has been established as an incredibly effective feminist practice with multiple possibilities that can be employed to enrich feminist knowledge and open new critical paths. Ann Cvetkovich (2012) explains that confessional

forms of feminism have offered visibility to scholarship shaped by identity politics and opened up the path for establishing new fields of enquiry. This means that feminist scholars, such as Cvetkovich and many more (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ettore, 2017), have paved the way for feminist researchers such as myself to be able to use confessional forms of feminism (such as personal stories and first-hand stories of, for instance, everyday gender inequalities, patriarchy, and misogyny that Algerian women experience) in order to produce credible and innovative feminist scholarship. In this respect, and through my use of autoethnography and storytelling, I endeavour to increase the visibility of the voices of the women from my community, as well as my own voice as part of this cohort, inspired by many feminist scholars and researchers who have paved the way in this respect, such as the likes of bell hooks, Sara Ahmed, Patricia Hill Collins, or Lila Abu-Lughod.

Elizabeth Ettorre describes autoethnographers to be "storytellers theorizing our stories as political." She adds that personal stories are transformed into political realities by revealing "power inequalities that are inherent in human relationships as well as the complex cultures of emotions embedded in these unequal relationships" (Ettorre, 2017; p. 357). Furthermore, Ellis and Bochner (2000) explain that through autoethnography, researchers are able to "reach several layers of consciousness that link the personal to the cultural" (p. 739). In the same vein, through my practice of autoethnography and storytelling, I aim to unravel knowledge rooted in the political understandings of the social positioning and inequalities experienced by the women whose stories I mention in this thesis, as well as my own experiences as a member of this digital-age generation of Algerian women (Ettorre, 2017; p. 358). By documenting and analysing the first-hand experiences of Algerian women from my own community, this work also endeavours to challenge the homogenising representations that have long been present in the literature on women from North Africa and the Middle East, and attempts to contribute by adding to the academic representations of the diversity of women from North Africa (Smail Salhi, 2008).

An overview of women's position and the feminist movement in Algerian society throughout its contemporary history

Algerian society is patriarchal, and the notion of the family in it is central (Fanon, 1965; Jansen, 1987; Knauss, 1987; Benali, 2009). Accordingly, in traditional Algerian society, individuals are only perceived through and in reference to the family unit, and this, of course has particular implications for the lives of women and girls. This traditional way of assigning gendered roles and identities to individuals within Algerian society was later institutionalised through the implementation of the Family Code, which in many of its articles, refers to the Algerian woman only as a wife, a mother, or a daughter, i.e. perceiving her exclusively through the institution of the family and based on her relationship to a "male guardian", rather than as an autonomous individual (Smail Salhi, 2009; Lazreg, 2019). I would like to start by exploring the notion of the family in Algeria, before moving on to discuss how major events in Algeria's contemporary history caused considerable shifts and changes to the traditional structure of the family, and therefore shaped the status of women within it, as well as how the Algerian feminist movement responded to these events and changes.

Throughout my life as an Algerian woman, the notion and the reality of family has been central to my life. I grew up in a nuclear family consisting of my parents, me and my siblings, as did many families around us. However, many of my peers lived within bigger families, or what is referred to as extended families, consisting of parents, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, all living within the same household. This was the norm before and during French colonisation, as Abidogun and Jean-Jacques (2016) explain:

> Family life is structured primarily around the nuclear family, especially in urban centres where the majority of Algerians reside. This is a fairly recent structure as before French occupation, most Algerians, urban and rural, lived in extended family systems. It was commonplace for families to live with or near their

> husband's parents. Then later, when parents were older, their children's families would take care of them. (Abidugun & Jean-Jaque, 2016; p. 48)

Radjia Benali (2009) gives an overview of the nature of the traditional extended Algerian family, describing women's position in it. She explains that the traditional Algerian family is a hierarchical entity where superiority goes to parents over children, and seniors over juniors. The absolute authority goes to the father, who is the only one who makes major decisions and judgments for the family and its members. Furthermore, the superiority of men over women is an aspect that is central to this hierarchy. The Algerian traditional family is patrilineal, and men are perceived as the most important part of it. They work outside the house and provide for the family, while women are traditionally expected to stay at home, take care of the children and do the housework (Benali, 2009).

Furthermore, Benali discusses an idea that proves very important for understanding the traditional position of women in Algerian society: spatial divisions within the Algerian family household. The Algerian family is divided into two opposing spaces: a feminine space, which is private, secret, and closed off, represented by the inside of the house for women; and a masculine, public and open space represented by the outside for men. This notion represents a big part of my life growing up and living in a conservative Algerian family; I was, and still am, constantly reminded by everyone that the outside belongs to men and that my natural place to be is inside the house. As a child, I longed to discover the outside world and engage in activities that involved going out of the family home. The restrictions grew as I grew older. One instance out of the many I can recall of these restrictions was when I was around 10 years old and my grandparents went to Mecca for the Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj). The pilgrimage is considered a very important event in a Muslim's life, and all of the family members were gathered at my grandparents' house, waiting to welcome them back to their home. It was night time and all the men and children were outside waiting for my grandparents' car to appear. In my excitement, I went out as well, to be one of the first to see and welcome them. However, one of my male family members told me to go back inside because I was a girl. I remember

his words causing me so much pain, as I could not understand what being a girl had to do with being kept inside.

The private/public division in relation to the traditional Algerian family structure that Benali (2009) discusses is very crucial to this project, as it extends to reach online spaces and translates into a multitude of gendered practices on social media and the internet in general. I have often noticed that Algerian women and girls on social media, whether my friends or not, abstain from using their real names and real profile pictures. I read this as a manifestation of the public/private division that Algerian women and girls are commonly expected to adhere to within Algerian society. I know it is the case for myself, as I was feeling reluctant to share my real identity and pictures of myself on my Facebook account, not because I did not want to, but because I felt forced to keep myself concealed and hidden because of the fact that I am a woman, and I feared my family's reaction to that. I refer to this story in detail in later sections of this chapter.

Patriarchal families believe that their honour and value reside in the chastity of their women (Mernissi, 1985), and that the status and prestige of the family depends on the women's 'good and moral' conduct; therefore, the traditional Algerian family gives great importance to the "social invisibility" of women. The more women are socially unseen, the more they are valued and the more the men of the family are viewed as powerful and the family's status as well established (Benali, 2009). In my own family, both my grandmothers and great-grandmothers never went to school, nor did my mother's aunts; only men were allowed and encouraged to get an education either in Qur'anic schools in rural areas or in French schools in urban cities. During French colonisation, women were customarily married at a young age: for instance, my great-grandmothers married at the age of 13 and kept giving birth until they reached menopause. Contraception options were not available at that time, so women in my family were giving birth to at least 10 children after marriage.

During the French colonisation of Algeria, women were described as being oppressed on two fronts: by the French coloniser, who saw them as "the oppressed of the oppressed"

(Cooke, 1989 cited in Leonhardt, 2013); and by the Algerian man. Fadila Ahmed described this situation in powerful terms: “we, the women of Algeria, have two jailers: colonialism… and the apathetic creatures who cling on to customs and traditions inherited not from Islam but from their ignorant fathers. The second jailer is worse than the first” (Al Manar, 24 July 1953, “Les deux geoliers de la femme” cited in MacMaster, 2007; p. 97). Zahia Smail Salhi (2008) argues that the increased oppression of Algerian women was the result of the coloniser’s mission of emancipation, which targeted Algerian women and in turn made them into the symbol and the bearers of Algerian identity and honour. This, in turn, pushed Algerian men to increase their veiling and seclusion. Algerian women’s bodies became the battlefield of a war for national dominance: the colonisers against Algerian men, who constructed and enforced an Algerian patriarchal nationalist regime, which in its turn instrumentalised women’s bodies.

Smail Salhi (2009) explains that the Algerian feminist movement was born in the 1940s during the French colonisation of Algeria. It emerged and developed within a set of circumstances starting with the French armies’ extreme violence during the initial conquest of Algeria in 1830. It involved a policy of exterminating entire villages, as part of the colonial forces’ efforts to overpower the Algerian resistance. This barbaric policy included not only the theft of people’s lands and the abduction of women and children, but also the systematic rape of Algerian women. Smail Salhi (2009) explains that the French armies weaponised rape as an act of colonial dominance, and it was in most cases deliberately committed in front of the victim’s husband and family, making it a punishment not only of Algerian women, but also of their men-folk. In the following quote, Smail Salhi describes the consequences this vile crime has engendered upon Algerian women’s lives, specifically the new weight it ascribed to their bodies in the way they came to be perceived as repositories of entire families’ honour:

> Transforming the bodies of the colonised women into arenas of violent struggle, granted the honour of the male kin of the victim more relevance, and the trauma greater poignancy. As what became the central feature was not the violence done to women but the wounded honour of the family or even the whole tribe.

> This resulted in women's seclusion, and total exclusion from public life. (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 114)

An enormous increase of poverty within rural areas was a direct result of French colonisation due to the fact that the best lands were expropriated by the settlers. In addition, Algerian families started to rely on men as the sole wage earners as they became reluctant to allow women (who had previously worked in the fields) to work in the settlers' fields to protect their family's honour. As a result of this increasing poverty and shifts in gender relations, Smail Salhi (2009) explains that tensions grew inside the Algerian family and life became unbearable, especially for Algerian women, who were described as the oppressed of the oppressed, while Algerian men rehearsed and replicated their own (and the nation's) experiences of colonial oppression on Algerian women and girls, including the mistreatment and humiliation they would receive outside the home from their French employers. In the following quote, Smail Salhi gives a detailed description of the condition of women under colonial rule, the rise of veiling, seclusion, and the ill-treatment of women by their men-folk, all constituting reactions against colonialism in Algeria:

> The colonial condition of the country resulted in the dramatic deterioration of the condition of women both in the rural and urban centres. The colonial presence of the French increased veiling, seclusion and unequal treatment of women often as a reaction against colonial rule and Western ways. As such within the domestic realm, women maintained an identity strongly resistant to colonial influences and became the guardians of tradition and cultural values. On the other hand the home became a place of safety, a refuge where the man, constantly undermined by colonialism, could regain his pride and identity. (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 114)

These new dynamics that were taking over within the Algerian family, prompted by the colonial condition, whereby the bodies of Algerian women became the sole repositories of their entire tribe's or community's honour, as Smail Salhi (2009) explains, incited the French colonisers to attempt the assimilation of the Algerian people through the exclusive targeting of its women. Fanon's book *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (2001) is an important analysis of this issue. He explains that in its attempt to culturally dominate Algerian society, the colonial administration set a clear and straightforward political doctrine that encompassed the following:

> If we want to hit the Algerian society in its deep contexture, in its resistance strategies, we must start to conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veils under which they conceal themselves and in the houses where the men hide them. (Fanon, 2001; p. 19)

Moreover, Fanon further explains that the French coloniser's new 'humanistic' agenda, which declared that its objective was to rescue the 'humiliated' and 'marginalised' Algerian woman, only resulted in furthering forced veiling and seclusion. Smail Salhi explains that at this stage (the 1940s), the cause of the Algerian woman had gained traction on both an international and a national level, and a number of Algerian nationalist parties who had never shown interest in the 'woman question' – as they believed that the liberation of Algeria should be the primary and sole concern of any political activity in Algeria – started to become interested in it, such as PPA (Le Parti du Peuple Algérien: The Party of the Algerian People) and the MTLD (Le Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques: The Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Freedoms). In 1943, the UFA (Union des Femmes d'Algérie: The Union of Algerian Women) was created, supported by the PCA (Parti Communiste Algérien: the Algerian Communist Party), the only Algerian political party to openly promote gender equality (Smail Salhi, 2009).

The 8th of May 1945 saw tragic events in which large-scale killings were committed by the French armies, police, and colonies against thousands of Algerians in various Algerian

cities, notably Sétif, Messila, Guelma, and Kharrata. These massacres followed a series of demonstrations carried out by Algerians to celebrate the victory of the Allies in World War II and to demand the independence of Algeria from French colonisation. Algerian women were strongly present within these popular demonstrations as, for the first time in the modern history of Algeria, women from all ranks took to the streets and joined the nationalist opposition to French colonialism. This in turn, made a great number of other political parties show interest in the cause of women's equality in Algeria. On the 2nd of July 1947, AFMA (Association des Femmes Musulmanes Algériennes: The Association of Muslim Algerian Women) was created by Nafissa Hamoud and Mamia Chentouf[1]. AFMA, along with UFA, carried a social programme reaching both rural and urban areas, which consisted of helping the families of the May 1945 victims by distributing food and clothes to the poor, spreading political awareness among ordinary people, and encouraging them to educate their girls as well as boys.

One extremely significant period in the contemporary history of Algeria is the war of independence against the French occupation, during which women's position within Algerian society took a new turn as they played an active role in the revolution. My first understanding of this came via the representation of the conflict in the famous film by Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), which is described as one of the most accurate representations of this important event in the history of Algeria (Smail Salhi, 2009). I first watched this film on the Algerian national television with my parents and my younger sister when I was around eleven years old (2004). I admired women being represented as fighters, nurses, and messengers. But I did not get to know of this conflict from the screen only, as I also remember a tale my

[1] Nafissa Hamoud is known for being the first woman doctor in the Kabylie region and for playing an important role in the Algerian revolution. She was the president of the UNFA (Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes: The National Union of Algerian Women) in 1966. Mamia Chentouf started militating in 1944 while studying at the University of Algiers to become a midwife; she was 22 years old at that time. She founded the UFMA with Nafissa Hamoud and was the first president of the UNFA after the independence (Smail Salhi, 2009).

maternal grandmother told us whenever she recalled the times of the French occupation (by "us" I mean all the family members: children, adults, men, women, girls and boys, when we would all gather at my grandparents' house during holidays or family celebrations). This story happened during the war of independence, around 1958, when the National Liberation Front (FLN) had been constituted, recruiting all the educated Algerian men and the very few educated women to spread awareness about the revolution among the Algerian people and encourage them to join its ranks.

A woman called Soria Bendimred and three men came to my great-grandparents' house. Bendimred talked to the women of the family about the ascending war and how, in her view, it will definitely bring independence to the country. My illiterate grandmother told us how she had admired this educated young woman and her strong belief in the inevitability of independence. The four FLN members stayed the night. However, the next morning, shortly after leaving my grandmother's house, they were killed by French soldiers. My grandmother from my father's side lived in the same neighbourhood and was on her way to work that morning (she worked as a housekeeper in a French household), when she saw Bendimred and the men's bodies exhibited and called "fellaga" (an Arabic term literally meaning "bandit", given by the French colonisers to people affiliated with the Algerian war of independence). After seeing that horrible scene, my grandmother immediately quit her job and swore not to have any contact with French settlers ever again.

There is a rich literature documenting the different ways in which the status of women in Algerian society has been impacted by the war of independence (Fanon, 1965; Chapin Metz, 1994; Turshen, 2002; Salhi, 2003; H. Gray, 2009; Leonhardt, 2013). Helen Chapin Metz (1994) explains that during these wartimes, Algerian women, accustomed to always being at home, found themselves participating in the war and this gave them the opportunity to discover new perceptions of themselves and to reimagine and practice independence outside the home (95). Smail Salhi (2009) explains that unlike this popular view that presumes Algerian women suddenly left their homes to participate in the Algerian struggle for independence (a view that

I also used to adopt), in reality, they had already been taking part in political and social work, such as that carried out by the AFMA and the UFA. This, in turn, as Smail Salhi argues, prepared them for the new roles they would undertake within the 1954 armed revolution.

Smail Salhi (2003) explains that during the French colonisation of Algeria, specifically during the national liberation struggle, which lasted about 8 years (from 1954 to 1962), Algerian women carried out a rebellion that was simultaneously against the French occupation of Algeria, as well as the patriarchal attitudes embraced by the traditional Algerian society that restricted their freedoms. During this critical period, Nafissa Hamoud and Fatima Benosmane[2], the leaders of AFMA and UFA respectively, the two leading women's associations in Algeria at that time, expressed their utmost support for the national liberation struggle and, along with their members, joined the ranks of the freedom fighters:

> Nafissa Hamoud, the leader of AFMA, was the first woman doctor to join the freedom fighters in 1955, and was followed by Fatima Benosmane the leader of the UFA who was arrested and tortured in 1957. Their example was followed by several female nurses who responded to the call of the FLN, and female university students, following the May 1956 strike organised by UGEMA (Union Générale des Etudiants Musulmans d'Algérie: the General Union of Algerian Muslim Students) . (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 115)

It has been widely documented that Algerian women carried out a vital role in the national liberation struggle, as they actively kept the revolution moving forward by undertaking a wide range of critical roles, such as fighting alongside men, carrying weapons, planting bombs, and nursing the wounded and the sick. Smail Salhi explains how this new status brought about radical changes to the lives of Algerian women and challenged the patriarchal attitudes that were governing Algerian society: "Women's new status as activists during the

[2] Fatima Benosman is an Algerian militant who is known for her active role within the Algerian feminist movement as well as the Algerian revolution. She continued her fight for democracy and women's rights even after independence (Smail Salhi, 2009).

war not only altered the division of labour between women and men, but also challenged the wider power of patriarchy, threatening to erode its power and privileges" (Smail Salhi, 2003; p. 27). Moreover, Smail Salhi explains that the participation of Algerian women in the war of independence caused for them a major move from the private to the public sphere, a shift that occurred within the Algerian society in a pragmatic way and which had been accepted by the Algerian people as normal and needed. This shift empowered and allowed Algerian women to defy major social taboos, change the concept of honour, and challenge the forces of the patriarchy, as well as helped to change world opinion on the Algerian revolution (Smail Salhi, 2009).

Adrienne Leonhardt (2013) argues that even after playing a vital role in the war of independence, Algerian women found themselves back to the same traditional position of marginalisation that society had assigned to them and claims that the National Liberation Front (FLN) was primarily concerned with independence and never had women's liberation on its list of priorities. It is also worth mentioning how Algerian women were oppressed by the French occupation (who claimed to have come to Algeria for emancipating and civilizing its people**,** not dissimilar to what the U.S. claimed to be doing in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001), especially during the war of independence, when 2,200 women were detained and tortured (Turshen, 2002), while women who were suspected of being nationalists were subjected to rape, as this was the French colonisers' preferred method of torture given the conservative nature of Algerian society and how the virginity of women is highly regarded (Vince, 2010). With this ruthless war that lasted for nearly eight years, and the French systematic resettlements of rural populations, Algerian society experienced societal displacements that broke the ties that people had had with their ancestors' lands, their extended families, and clans (Metz, 1994).

This long and ruthless struggle, during which Algerian women courageously fought the French occupation, eventually culminated in the independence of Algeria in 1962. Algerian women's role in achieving this independence was simultaneously fundamental for the

attainment of their own liberation as their participation in the national liberation struggle challenged, to a great extent, the patriarchal attitudes governing Algerian society. However, the end of the war brought about a major desire towards restoring the Algerian society to its pre-colonial 'original state' after years of traumatic military violence, displacement of entire villages, and the disruption of the religious and cultural values of Algerian society. Smail Salhi explains that this desire for a return to an "original state" was exclusively and vehemently aimed at recovering the social roles that had been shifted during the war for national liberation. Therefore, this directly influenced the new positions which Algerian women were assigned after the war:

> Interestingly enough, the roles of women were seen at the top of the list of things that should be restored to their original places and, in a society where cultural values have been dislocated for so many decades by the forces of occupation, women were quickly identified as the repositories of these values and the guardians of traditions and customs, all fundamentally important components of the Algerian national identity. (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 116)

The ideological context during the early years of post-colonial Algeria was characterised by the presence of two disparate factions: one liberal, which advocated for the advancement of women's rights and believed in the necessity of their full integration into society; and the other conservative, which promoted the restoration of Islamic cultural values and authenticity. With such differing views, independent Algeria's first government, under president Ahmed Ben Bella, included women in its efforts to rally multiple sectors of society in its socialist programme. To this end, the government created the UNFA (Union Nationale des Femmes Algeriennes: National Union of Algerian Women) in 1962, a state-affiliated and controlled organisation. However, Smail Salhi (2009) explains that the UNFA remained a formal state organisation that did not work with women on a grassroots level, whether in urban or in rural areas, and nor did it attract Algerian feminists. Thus, it did not work for the benefit

of Algerian women at this very critical time but rather served as a mechanism of gender regulation. Moreover, the belief that the revolution had failed reigned among women and progressive men due to the fact that Algerian women's position in society started to gradually shift from active participation to silent victimhood. This was exhibited in the presence of a big gap between the government's official discourse on women's role and rights, and the realities that Algerian women were living.

In 1976, the situation started to change relatively for the better for Algerian women, as the government, under president Houari Boumédiene, carried out a referendum and agreed on a new constitution, which criticised the ways in which women's rights had been restricted by the old feudal systems, and stated the government's commitment in promoting the emancipation of Algerian women, following in the steps of the Algerian revolution. The new constitution of 1976 also stated that equality of the sexes and freedom of movement were guaranteed by law, while also acknowledging that the status of women in Algeria still needed improvement and emphasised the state's efforts to achieve this, under a democratic socialist regime adopted by a government committed to promoting justice, fighting backward thinking, and changing the justice system in support of women.

Although said to be protected by the 1976 constitution, Algerian women's citizenship rights were threatened when the constitutional commitment to freedom of movement was broken by a ministerial order prohibiting them from travelling unaccompanied by a male relative. Big demonstrations were organised following the prohibition of a group of women students from traveling to their universities abroad: "On 8 March 1980, a huge demonstration was organised to mark International Women's Day, and demand that the order hampering women's freedom of movement be abolished. In the end, Chadli's government retreated: the ministerial order was cancelled" (Messaoudi and Schemla, 1998; p. 49).

The following year was the start of a difficult and long struggle for Algerian feminists and women's rights activists as the government, presided by Chadli Bendjedid at that time, started preparing a pilot study of a proposed new Family Code, which the newspapers

described as a clear obstacle to the emancipation of Algerian women. Following the news, hundreds of outraged feminist activists organised a sit-in in the offices of the UNFA and demanded to see the classified text of the pilot study. The UNFA dismissed Algerian feminists' demands and argued that Algerian women had nothing to discuss in the matter, since they were not aware of their rights (Messaoudi and Schemla, 1998). Smail Salhi (2009) explains that this incident caused the last ties between the UNFA and Algerian independent feminists to be definitively cut. Simultaneously, as Smail Salhi argues, a real feminist movement started to take shape within post-colonial Algeria, as independent Algerian feminists fought for the rights of Algerian women despite the oppression they were subjected to from the government as well as from Islamist groups. This became clear through the emergence of a number of new women's groups, such as the Algerian Association for the Emancipation of Women and the Committee for the Legal Equality of Men and Women. The Family Code ended up being passed into law in June 1984, despite the intensified demonstrations led by Algerian feminists, including one organised on December, 23rd 1981, where women war veterans joined young feminist activists and expressed their rejection of the Family Code (Smail Salhi, 2009).

The "Code de la Famille" of 1984 has been described by feminist scholars and women's rights activists as a piece of legislation that legalises men's superiority within Algerian society (Knauss, 1987; Lazreg, 1994; Smail Salhi, 2003; Daoudi, 2016). Smail Salhi (2003, 2009) explains that the Algerian Family Code considers women as minors under the law and codifies their subordination, treats them as non-citizens, and defines their existence and roles within society exclusively as daughters, mothers, or wives. Marnia Lazreg (2019) explains that the Family Code legalised the disparity in women's rights regarding personal autonomy, divorce, polygamy and work outside the home, thus opening up the path to the creation of a society where men are legally empowered over women. With all of that, Lazreg argues that the Family Code represents an infringement upon women's rights as full Algerian citizens, particularly since the Algerian government has otherwise officially emphasised its commitment

to the equality of all citizens regardless of sex and recognised the need to raise the status of Algerian women.

In Article 48 of the Family Code, women are designated as procreators and are legally required to breastfeed and provide care for their children until they reach adulthood. Additionally, Article 39 mandates that women must obey their husbands by law and demonstrate submission and servitude not only to their husbands but also to their husbands' parents and extended family members. Furthermore, the same article states that women can only partake in paid work if their husbands grant them permission (Smail Salhi, 2003; 2009). These structural inequalities manifest across various aspects of Algerian women's daily lives, significantly impacting their autonomy, constraining their choices, and perpetuating traditional gender norms. Understanding the implications of the Family Code within the lives of Algerian women is pivotal for grasping the backdrop that shapes the themes explored by my participants through their social media content. In the forthcoming analysis chapters of this thesis, we will delve into how the inherently feminist topics addressed by my participants and their critiques of conventional gender roles intersect with or mirror the key demands of the Algerian feminist movement especially within its struggle against the oppressive laws outlined within the Family Code.

Doris H. Gray (2009) traces back the debate about the legal status of women in Algeria to the period after the country's independence from French colonisation in 1962. Gray further explains that the emergence of Algeria as a newly founded nation-state, characterised by political, social, economic, and cultural instability, and the position it aimed to occupy within the Arab/Muslim world, globally, and in the Mediterranean, were all factors which greatly influenced the ways Algeria decided to legally approach gender relations. In the following quote, Gray further describes the characteristics of the debate about women's rights in post-colonial Algeria:

> [T]he debate about women's rights in Algeria can best be described as anarchic. Straddling differing identities, many of which are imposed from outside, women

> in post-independence Algeria have at times seen remarkable progress, followed by setbacks, starts, and turns. As the nation emerged from a nine-year-long struggle for independence, one of the bloodiest of its kind, the role of women remained intertwined in the process of defining a post-colonial identity, political direction, and a path for economic development. (Gray, 2009; p. 46)

One of the identity markers of post-colonial Algeria that Gray (2009) argues had the most influence on the introduction of a highly conservative Family Code is the Islamic identity. Gray explains that positioning Islam as central to the Algerian national identity has given rise to radical Islamic movements, which in turn prompted the government, led in 1984 by President Chadli Benjedid, to issue a set of laws that rendered women legal minors in relation to inheritance, marriage, divorce, and child custody (Gray, 2009).

Much like the way Algerian women's heightened oppression and seclusion have been interpreted as a form of resistance against France's ‘civilising mission’ (Smail Salhi, 2008), Gray (2009) posits that the oppressive and paradoxical character of the laws implemented by newly independent nations can definitely be traced back to the impact of colonialism's ‘civilizing mission’. This notion finds further clarification in the United Nations' Human Development Report, as outlined below:

> The colonial imprint can be marked. Indeed, it is often difficult to determine which legal processes are genuinely traditional and which can be seen as a hybrid by-product of colonial manipulation and control. An added complication in separating authentic from imposed practices is that colonial rule and its “civilizing mission” unilaterally claimed responsibility for introducing modern values, beliefs and institutions to the colonies. (United Nations’ Human Development Report, 2004; p. 58)

Despite all the negative outcomes the Family Code has brought upon the lives of Algerian women, Marnia Lazreg (2019) explains that it has raised the consciousness of

women when it comes to taking more seriously the implementation of their rights, as well as not being adequately represented by government-affiliated women's organisations and associations. This awareness in the aftermath of the Family Code has pushed Algerian working women towards the creation of their own associations. Smail Salhi (2009) explains how the institution of the Family Code has prompted the return of independent women's organisations that work on an underground or grassroots level, such as SOS Women in Distress, which provides shelter, protection, and empowerment to divorcees, battered, and abandoned women with children, and helps them find employment and integrate back into society.

One key episode in the history of postcolonial Algeria with disastrous effects on the lives of Algerian women is commonly known as 'the Black Decade', or the civil war of the 1990s. This started in October 1988, following violent riots in the capital led by thousands of young Algerians protesting against the serious crises that were overwhelming the country: massive unemployment, a serious housing crisis and severe austerity measures. Following these protests, the FLN (the party which had governed the country since its independence in 1962) opened democratic elections for other parties to take part in, and the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) won the first round of the elections. Then, subsequent elections were cancelled, and following these events, there started a spiral of vicious political conflicts, with atrocious crimes and violence being committed against civilians.

Women were the most affected by these vicious terrorist attacks, as Nedjma Dziri argues in her article: "مأساة المرأة الجزائرية خلال العشرية السوداء" ("The Tragedy of Algerian women During the Black Decade" (2018)). Dziri offers a detailed account of what Algerian women went through during those terrible times, and she argues that even though the Black Decade has ended, women are still living in its traumatic aftershock. In particular, she focuses on the use of rape as a weapon of intimidation. She states that more than 18,000 women filed complaints with the police, but the real number is much higher, as most Algerian families prefer not to tackle issues linked with honour and reputation. What made life even harder for these

women is the fact that the government promised to provide them with social, financial compensations, and mental healthcare in 1999, but help was not provided until 10 years later. Many of these women were shunned by their families, some of them became mentally ill and stayed in mental hospitals, while others were forced to get married to older men and treated as if they were the ones who had committed those crimes; hundreds of them became homeless (Dziri, 2018). During this period of national instability, poverty and illiteracy increased, especially among women and girls in rural areas, because of the terrorist threats that affected them. Smail Salhi also discusses this specific period in the history of Algerian women, and specifically describes the consequences that rape victims continue to suffer in Algeria:

> Because Algerian families feel shamed by the rape of a female relative, they condemn the survivors of rape to even more suffering, as they end up homeless or (in the best of cases) in charity hostels. The silence imposed on the subject of rape in Algeria is not only the work of individual families, but also that of the government, which fails to condemn organised rape as a crime against humanity, and fails to acknowledge that its victims are victims of torture, in need of support and counselling. (Smail Salhi, 2003; p. 34)

Yet Smail Salhi (2009) also explains that Algerian women did not give up their fight for the betterment of their rights during the decade of terrorist violence, as this decade also witnessed thriving women's movements in Algeria. During these challenging times, Algerian women's movements were not intimidated by the threats of the terrorists to the point of disappearing, nor did they abandon their struggle to repeal the Family Code. Algerian women adopted different resistance strategies. Perhaps the strongest of these was the fact that they continued to lead a normal life despite the dangerous, violent atmosphere and war prevailing in those years. Algerian women continued to live, to send their children to school, go to work, run errands, and tend to their duties. Smail Salhi beautifully describes Algerian women's acts of great resistance during those deadly times:

> In brief, these women stood for life and for the continuance of life in Algeria despite the roaming danger of death in an extremely dangerous and hostile environment. This in itself is an extraordinary act of resistance and societal cohesion. (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 121)

Politically and socially, Smail Salhi explains that Algerian women became even more actively engaged within society despite their status as victims of terrorist violence. They asserted their role as agents of change by actively resisting Islamic fundamentalism. Smail Salhi documents how thousands of Algerian women occupied the public sphere through organised demonstrations, and voiced their strong rejection of a fundamentalist regime, which they expressed was a threat to the whole society and not only women:

> On the 2nd January 1992 women were the first to stage massive demonstrations across the major cities of the country against the FIS and their victory of December 1991. They called for the cancellation of the electoral process in which many women's voices were taken by the FIS through the proxy vote, and warned of the danger of Algeria becoming an Islamic republic. Their banners carried slogans which read, 'No Iran, No Kabul, Algeria is Algerian', 'Algeria: Free and Democratic', 'Let's save the principles of the republic'. (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 121)

These demonstrations and organised public meetings were routinely held by Algerian women for the purpose of occupying the public sphere, which the terrorists were trying to take complete hold of, as well as provide women with the necessary knowledge to combat fundamentalism and produce alternative discourses. These organised demonstrations were rich and creative in their ways of exposing the atrocities committed against Algerian women, as well as providing a platform for the voices of the survivors to be heard through displaying photographs of the victims of terrorism, shouting anti-fundamentalist slogans, and the use of media to display the courageous testimonies of gang rape survivors (Smail Salhi, 2009).

This section of the critical context was intended to provide an abbreviated history of the position of Algerian women within contemporary Algerian society, as well as a brief account of the Algerian feminist movement, which represents the backdrop against which current Algerian feminism, notably the digital feminist activism my participants are practicing, can be understood. Through a number of events that typify the contemporary history of Algeria and the position of women within it, such as the French colonial period, the war for national liberation, the institution of the Family Code, and the 'Black Decade' of the 1990s, I demonstrate some of the main issues Algerian women were struggling with, as well as militating for, within the Algerian feminist movement after its birth in the 1940s.In this thesis, I delve into the contemporary struggle of Algerian women as they continue to advocate for their full citizenship rights. Through the lens of Algerian women YouTubers, we will uncover how my participants shed light on issues central to the demands of the Algerian feminist movement, spanning from its origins in the 1940s and gaining renewed momentum in the 1980s, prompted by the challenges posed by the Family Code. Within their social media presence, my participants address three primary themes, all of which align (whether consciously or unconsciously) with the fundamental aspirations of the Algerian feminist movement, catalysed in response to the Family Code's effects:

- The role of Algerian women within the family, their subjugation, and imposed control (this aligns with the Algerian feminist movement's demands to abolish male guardianship). I elaborate on this in Chapter 4.
- The pervasive problems of sexual harassment and conforming to beauty standards (both intricately linked to the pursuit of gender equality). I address the implications of this on contemporary Algerian digital feminism in Chapter 5.
- The visibility, mobility, and active presence of Algerian women in public domains (directly linked to advocating for freedom of movement). I explore this further in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, I will explore how Algerian women YouTubers confront these challenges by highlighting how they translate into daily instances of misogyny and oppression, effectively constraining the lives of Algerian women. Notably, these women adopt unconventional endeavours for advocating change; they do not necessarily partake in the conventional feminist activism of joining associations, organising workshops, or participating in demonstrations. However, this thesis extensively explores the innovative approaches through which my participants express their passion for the betterment of Algerian women's rights by creating and disseminating content across social media platforms.

The colonial history of French secular feminism and its impact on Algerian society's views on the feminist movement

In the previous section, I outlined how the status of women in Algeria has been significantly impacted by French colonialism, both as an oppressive force to women, through different forms of torture and rape, and as a driving factor that pushed Algerian society to further seclude women and restrict their freedoms as a way to counter the French 'civilising mission' (Fanon, 1965; Knauss, 1987; Smail Salhi, 2008; MacMaster, 2009). I argue that this is one of the major factors which, to this day, fuels Algerian society's unwillingness to engage in productive discussions about women's rights in Algeria. Growing up as an Algerian woman and through my frequent use of the internet, specifically social media, I have noticed how debates about women's emancipation in Algeria – even when those are not overtly feminist – are often demonised, dismissed, and described as stemming from French colonial legacies through their alignment with feminist values. Additionally, through my interview discussions with a number of Algerian women YouTubers, and analysis of their social media productions, I came to notice my participants' wariness to embrace the feminist label or to openly identify

as feminists, even though these women are creatively engaging with what I would deem feminist causes and issues within the multitude of their social media productions.

My reading of this is that the labels of ‘féministe’ and ‘féminisme’ are continuously being associated with the trauma that French colonialism has ingrained in the collective memory of Algerian people. This has caused these labels to acquire a taboo status and to be weaponised against women, as they are commonly used, both online and beyond, to invalidate and dismiss women’s efforts to advance their position and status within Algerian society. Moreover, what I will further explore in this section, and which I argue is another factor that continues to push Algerian people to reject feminism as a movement both on a national and international level, are the exclusionary attitudes grounded in colonial and orientalist legacies, which have found their way to present-day French feminist practice and continue to unravel through media representations and popular culture, and shift public opinions.

As it is the case for a great number of women in Algeria and the rest of the world, topics around women’s rights and feminism have already been garnering a great deal of attention and concern. I had my own understandings and views – although naïve and uninformed at times – around these topics before starting a PhD in Women’s Studies, shaped by my lived experiences, my local culture, my parents, the people whom I have been surrounded with, television, and social media. The latter played an important role in introducing me to the different attitudes Algerian people exhibit vis-à-vis feminism, both as a national and an international movement. Social media and the internet in general have also opened my eyes about French feminism, the exclusionary attitudes it adopts in the mainstream, and the ways it influences both supporters and detractors of feminism in Algeria due to the long history that connects the past and present of Algeria and France, as outlined earlier.

In order to understand the ways in which thoughts and traditions that are founded on colonial and orientalist legacies have found their way into modern feminist scholarship and practices, including into French secular feminism, I rely on two prominent works on this subject: *The Eloquence of Silence, Algerian Women in Question* (1994) by Algerian sociologist Marnia

Lazreg, which explores the constructions and uses of the notion of difference within feminist practice, as well as assessing colonial scholarship and its impact on women in the Middle East and North Africa; and *Separate and Dominate: Feminism and Racism After the War on Terror* (2015) by French sociologist and feminist Christine Delphy. In this work, Delphy critically reflects on French secular feminism, especially the ways in which it is entangled within the state's promotion of secularism, or what is known in France as 'Laïcité', and how this entanglement has resulted in the marginalisation of Muslim women and the reproduction of racist and Islamophobic discourses in French feminism and the French public and political sphere more broadly.

Lazreg explains that all Western feminist thought and practices that reproduce colonial traditions are entangled within the notion of 'difference', which she explains is an internalised bias towards women who come from different cultures and experiences. Feminist practice that adopts this bias tends to highlight prejudices against women who are regarded as 'different' and/or neglect their everyday realities and experiences, which further alienates them and categorises them as the 'other'. In the following quote, Lazreg describes the circumstances leading to the conceptualisation of the notion of difference:

> The collapse of the colonial empires, the rise of consumer societies, and the crises of the late capitalist states have formed the context within which assertions of "difference" have emerged. The celebration of difference between women and men, homosexuals and heterosexuals, the mad and the sane, has since become the unquestioned norm. (Lazreg, 1988; p. 97)

Within the French context, Christine Delphy (2015) explains how the notion of difference has been utilised in the process of the total exclusion of groups labelled as ' others', meaning they are believed to never be able to fit into what is perceived as 'the universal norm' due to their 'difference' that is somehow irremediable. A process of 'othering' takes place in which the dominant group, or 'the ones', alienate the dominated, ascribing any failures that

may result out of this alienation to a presumed lack of skills and attributes in the dominated group.

While pondering upon this explanation, I recall a debate televised on 'France 2', in a popular talk show that my parents used to watch regularly called 'On n'est pas couché'[3]. The guest of this particular episode was Caroline Fourest, a famous French feminist, writer, and journalist who came to the show to present her then newly published book with Bangladeshi-Swedish writer, physician, and feminist, Taslima Nasrin *Libres de le dire: conversations mécréantes* (*Free to Say It: Disbelieving Conversations*, 2010). While defending some of the arguments she had included in her book, one of the presenters of the show – Eric Naulleau – started debating her on a section that I find extremely problematic, where she talks about French women who wear the face veil or what is referred to as the Burqa. She claims in the book that French women who choose to wear the face veil sometimes are just "some converts" who went on a "mystical trip" to some Muslim country and came back as "Salafists" and "cobbled together a sectarian Islam" (My translation from French). The presenter pointed out that it was quite ironic and hypocritical to pride herself on being a humanist, and yet not have the mental capability to make the effort to appreciate the perspective these women are coming from, as well as denying them the agency of choosing their own path to happiness and self-fulfilment. To this she replied that, as a feminist, she could never find it acceptable for a woman to cover her face and that it is a known fact that the face veil is a sectarian phenomenon more than it is a religious one (On n'est pas couché, 2010, 34:28). Although speaking about a different case of women being categorised as different – in this case because of their culture and not religion, as in the case of Fourest's subjects – the following quote from Lazreg provides an interesting insight into what it means to be categorised as different and denied your voice unless you completely disassociate from your culture or religion of origin. This articulates what

[3] On n'est pas couché. (2015, June 8). *Caroline Fourest - On n'est pas couché 24 avril 2010 #ONPC* [Online video]. Retrieved October 27. 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O5aMEa7ylY

Fourest is subjecting those French Muslim women to and exposes the problematic logic of Fourest's position:

> When Arab women speak for themselves they are accused of being 'pawns of Arab men.' The implication is that an Arab woman cannot be a feminist (whatever the term means) prior to disassociating herself from Arab men and the culture that supports them! In the end, global politics joins hands with prejudice, thereby closing a Western gynocentric circle based on misapprehended difference. (Lazreg, 1988; p. 88)

Fourest's case is an example that fits exactly into Delphy's explanation mentioned previously. We can see how French feminist Caroline Fourest, although herself a lesbian woman and therefore a member of an oppressed group, expresses a fixed idea on what principles feminism should stand for and which women it should represent and advocate for, which is also informed by narratives of the preservation of 'French republican values' and 'French Laïcité', of which Fourest herself is a big advocate and defender. This idea is what Delphy calls 'the universal' or 'the norm'. Consequently, through a process of 'othering', anything that does not fit into 'the norm' is considered 'the other' and is automatically stigmatised, labelled as politically contentious and dangerous, and never given a chance to be understood or included.

As mentioned above, although Fourest is a lesbian woman, she still holds a strong privilege that allows her to classify people into hierarchal categories. She is usually present in prime time television shows. On the one hand, there is the extensive and interchangeable use of terms such as: "intégriste" (fundamentalist), "islamiste" (Islamist), and "fanatique" (fanatic). On the other hand, violence against Muslims is rarely discussed, but when doing so, it is broadly referred to as 'racism' and rarely as what it really is: Islamophobia. While Muslim veiled women are usually absent in debates discussing their lived experiences and personal choices, Fourest is entitled and privileged enough to speak on their behalf or about them in an othering way, denying them any agency, and describing them as adopting a 'sectarian' Islam and not

being smart enough to choose her version of freedom and emancipation. For Fourest, and others with her mindset, a woman who chooses to cover her head or face could only be oppressed, never liberated. Within the same context, Lazreg explains that the act of representing women from different cultures, races, or ethnic groups gives mainstream or dominant-group feminists a form of power over their subjects, or what she terms 'a power of interpretation'. She argues that this power is borrowed from a male-centred society, pointing out the irony that feminism, as an intellectual movement, is presented with when reproducing the same power dynamics it purports to combat:

> It is borrowed power that gives academic feminists engaged in interpreting difference status and credibility […]. The misinterpretation of "different" women is a form of self-misinterpretation. It bespeaks a repression of one's femaleness and glosses over the fact that the representer is also engender and remains far from having achieved the freedom and capacity to define herself. (Lazreg,1988; p. 97)

Fourest's views regarding veiled women are widely propagated among mainstream French feminists, intellectuals, and women's rights activists. Since this group of feminists has the privilege (cultural, social, class-based) to share their position on national French television and social media, their views are the most widely heard and circulated, contrary to the public exposure available to Algerian or non-white and non-secular feminists. Christine Delphy is one of the few French feminists and sociologists who has strongly opposed the agreed-upon claim by French feminists that 'the veil is a sign of oppression', which implicitly alludes to the conclusion that Muslim women who choose to wear the veil are undoubtedly manipulated, hence they are rarely included in discussions about their own experiences with the veil (Delphy, 2015).

Delphy (2015) asserts that the unfair law of the veil ban in France is a typical manifestation of the dynamic of oppression which France's Laïcité is characterised by, resulting in the exclusion of veiled Muslim women from both the public and the private job

sectors, as well as being forbidden from accompanying their kids in school outings, all in the name of the emancipation of women and the protection of 'the universal values' which France's Laïcité strongly upholds. Furthermore, Delphy explains how French Muslim women's veils have been deemed to be the epitome of what the West sees as vile and dangerous in Islam and Muslim countries, instead of being understood from the perspectives of the women who choose to wear it. It becomes apparent that this narrative can be seen as a form of political and imperialist weaponisation of white feminism to indirectly sustain colonial oppression on both cultural and political fronts.

Fourest's case represents a real-life manifestation of French secular feminism's exclusionary attitudes and practices represented by her use of a language of dominance and superiority. These oppressive attitudes are widely propagated through popular talk shows such as the one mentioned above, during which Fourest also made the following statements expressing her views on religious blasphemy in her book with Taslima Nasreen (2010):

> I think that blasphemy is what makes religions better, I think that thanks to blasphemy in France we now have secularism, freedom of expression, and women's rights. It is thanks to blasphemy that we have pushed the limits of the church, and I think it's going to work the same way in the Muslim world, and when some people try to tell me it's going to move forward slowly with some small reforms within Islam, no it's not going to work like that, it will work exactly like in the Christian West, with great blasphemers, people who will take enormous risks to push the limits of freedom of expression very far and who will make Laic Muslims appear as a form of middle ground, instead of the ones occupying it at the moment who are rather the fundamentalists in certain countries. (My translation from French)[4]

[4] On n'est pas couché. (2015, June 8). *Caroline Fourest - On n'est pas couché 24 avril 2010 #ONPC* [Online video]. Retrieved October 27. 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O5aMEa7ylY

Here, Fourest makes a rushed and misinformed generalisation against an entire religion she knows scarcely about (as demonstrated in her stigmatisation of veiled and niqabi French Muslim women). Instead of acknowledging the richness and diversity within Islam, Fourest dismisses the experiences and voices of those who adhere to it. Her strategy aims to convince audiences that religious systems are inherently regressive, demanding substantial reform through strategies like blasphemy and denigration. This narrative, she suggests, is essential for these systems to align with the French government's 'Laïcité' and the values upheld by the French republic. This portrayal not only reveals her lack of understanding but also highlights her failure to engage intellectually and empathetically with a belief system different from her own. Fourest's approach, however, extends beyond individual perspectives, as it illustrates a much larger issue—an issue deeply intertwined with systems of dominance and oppression. Fourest's statements reflect not just her own limited comprehension, but it also embodies a broader framework of stigmatisation and marginalisation, and aligns with larger hegemonic structures that perpetuate Islamophobia and misogynistic oppression.

In the same vein, Sara Farris (2017) author of the concept of 'Femonationalism' (which essentially describes the contemporary alliance between the discourses of Western feminists and those of nationalist and xenophobic movements under the banner of the war against the veil and the Muslim patriarchy) affirms that what unites feminists from different backgrounds in their battle against Islam in France is the strong belief in the superiority of the Western model of emancipation and human rights, and that it is the sole model that guarantees gender equality. Farris further explains that the agreement between actors of feminism, and those of nationalism, perpetuated by neoliberalism, comes from an inherent belief in the superiority and advancement of Western European values and gender relations, compared to the ones Muslim women are taught in their cultures of origin, making them 'agentless objects'. This obsession over "saving" Muslim women from their oppressive cultures, parents, and men leads to the complete dismissal of the real struggles these women face, such as the exploitation they experience through care and domestic labour. Farris's critique mirrors

aspects central to Chandra Talpade Mohanty's influential essay "Under Western Eyes" (1988). Mohanty contends that the oversimplified portrayal of non-Western women and the binary distinction between Western and non-Western experiences diminish the complex realities Third World women navigate. This critical lens unveils how discourses rooted in notions of Western superiority, undermine the agency, diversity, and intersectionality within the experiences of Muslim women and reinforces a reductionist perspective that fails to address the multi-layered power dynamics at play.

Moreover, Farris (2017) explores the ways in which Muslim women, as well as non-Western (migrant) women, are affected by the unfair and ungrounded representations of them in western European 'cultural imagery', and explains that these representations both inform and are informed by ingrained racist stereotypes as well as economic incentives. She also draws attention to "a massive deployment of media apparatus" and explains how the media has played an immense role in promoting anti-immigration and Islamophobic agendas, using feminism within a nationalist framework, the product of which is the irremediable image given to Islam as an inherently oppressive religion. In the following quote, Farris gives several prominent examples of a similar use of the media from the early 2000s:

> One has only to think of the enormous media display to which the West has been subjected, particularly since 9/11: the bombing of Afghanistan presented as necessary to liberate Muslim women from the burqa; draconian immigration laws in the Netherlands passed to purportedly avoid the "import" of brides from Morocco or Turkey; or, more recently, the portrayal of Syrian male refugees as responsible en masse for the sexual aggressions against and robberies of women during the New Year's Eve festivities in Germany. (Farris, 2017; p. 12)

Despite the significant efforts undertaken by the Algerian feminist movement to improve women's rights and the positive reforms it has achieved throughout the country's contemporary history (Smail Salhi, 2009), as outlined in the preceding section, it is apparent that this movement still faces widespread rejection within wider Algerian society. A rejection

that can be directly linked to French feminism's exclusionary colonial agendas, pushing Algerian society to have reservations about French feminism and feminist movements in general, and keeping Algerian women from identifying as feminists or organising to protect their own rights/ fight their own oppression.

This rejection is noticeable both online and offline, where there is a collective dismissal of the women's cause in Algeria. Unfortunately, this dismissal has impeded meaningful discussions about women's rights and freedoms in the country. Furthermore, terms such as 'féministe' and 'féminisme' have not only acquired a taboo status but have also been weaponised against women, both online and offline, to discredit and undermine women's efforts to enhance their position and status within Algerian society. I argue that this rejection of anything related to women's rights in Algeria or the feminist movement, whether on a national or international level, continues to be maintained by exclusionary attitudes found in contemporary French secular feminist practices. These practices of mainstream French secular feminism that are founded on racist and Islamophobic misinterpretations are bound to spread within Algeria, a country that has been colonised by France for more than 130 years, and whose modern realities continue to be impacted by said colonialism.

Such manifestations of a feminism that is built on prejudice against Algerian culture is a result of years of biased scholarly works that pervaded in Algeria's colonial past. This point is sustained by Lazreg (1994, 2019), who demonstrates a connection between scholarly work produced during the colonial period and contemporary feminist studies on Algerian women, with their critiques of both Algerian men and women predominantly focusing on Islam as a religion and culture. Lazreg identifies this obsession with denigrating Islam by both colonial and feminist practices over the past hundred years as the 'Religion Paradigm' and explains that it is grounded in an orientalist tradition that is based on the belief that Islam is an outdated and backward belief system and misconceived representations of Islam in popular culture. Furthermore, Lazreg argues the 'Religion Paradigm' has engendered a lack of consideration for historical context when it comes to understanding how social relationships and the structure

of Algerian society have evolved over time, and so it treats these aspects as if they exist independently of their historical context. Not only that, but the 'Religion Paradigm' has also led people to perceive Algerian society as fundamentally separate and very different from other societies due to its Islamic beliefs and the way they are portrayed in popular culture. In the following quote, Lazreg explains that even after Algeria's independence in the 1960s, French studies on Algerian women continued to adopt a colonial attitude in the way they were condescending and degrading to their subjects:

> Studies of Algeria and its people began to take a more dispassionate, even if questionable, and at times objective outlook at the turn of this century, as colonial social science became institutionalized. However, studies of women remained, with a few exceptions, patronizing one-sided and generally unable to comprehend their subjects' lives […] Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, various monographs on women appeared with the aim of "guiding" Algerian women toward the ideal of French womanhood and downgrading their religion and customs, even at a time when women were displaying the kind of behaviour French women should have commended. (Lazreg, 2019; p. 17)

This point is also confirmed by Farris (2017) in her description of the different aspects that were central in shaping the false and unfair representations of Muslim (migrant) women in France. Farris talks about the emergence of sociological studies on gender and migration with a special focus on the effect of migration on Maghrebi women and how the common premise of these studies is that migration has a positive and emancipatory impact for these women, since it pulled them out of their presumed oppressive and backward cultures. Since the start of the 1970s, sociological studies on gender and migration have been informed by the evolutionary paradigm, which shaped the prevalent conviction that rejecting the values of the society of origin was essential for women's integration into France. Farris also draws attention to a continuity between the past and present concerning the identification of Muslim women as the embodiment of the traditional and backward female *other* in France. This

continuity links depictions and views of Muslim women as oppressed to present controversies over wearing the Muslim headscarf in public schools and its eventual ban in 2004.

Farris explains that narratives purporting the emancipation of non-western women in France, which are particularly aimed at Muslim women, have been directly linked by scholars to colonial and racist legacies and institutions. She further asserts that exploring the racist and colonial foundations of French right-wing parties, as well as the sexual fantasies embedded within their nationalist and xenophobic ideologies, is imperative in order to understand the roots of the misrepresentations of non-western (Muslim) migrant women as oppressed subjects waiting to be rescued. Furthermore, it shows us the existence of an unresolved conflict whose two parties are ex-colonial subjects and western European nationalisms.

Furthermore, Lazreg (2019) researches the unfair and rushed judgments passed by contemporary researchers in regards to Algerian women, whom she critiques for simplistically describing Algerian women as “oppressed” while completely disregarding and erasing their struggles throughout a turbulent and painful history impacted by the complexities of colonialism, revolution, and gender relations. She also explains that these biased judgements passed against Algerian women are a clear sign of ‘the underside of difference between women’ and are a strong reminder that feminism cannot only focus on one aspect of transgression done to some women by men and oversimplify this consciousness to include and represent an entire region. Additionally, it identifies a need for decentralisation and deracialization within the feminist practice, i.e. ‘giving up a sense of entitlement for some and overcoming disability for others’ (Lazreg, 2019; p. 8).

Lazreg (2019) criticises another aspect of what she terms “feminists’ modes of representation of women from the Third World”, which is the presence of a bias that is grounded in the dynamics of global politics. In other words, when feminists’ attitudes towards women from economically deprived areas in the world are influenced by the political attitudes of the powerful governments towards these same disadvantaged areas. According to Lazreg, this political bias is best illustrated through representations of difference in feminism; mainly

when feminists look for and sensationalise what is different in other cultures: “Mary Daly selected infibulation as the most important feature of African women as reported to her by Audre Lorde. Local customs such as polygamy and/or veiling, wherever they take place, appear decontextualised and are posited as normative absolutes” (Lazreg, 2019; p. 9).

An important aspect that is commonly present in the process of propagating the notion of ‘objectified otherness’ against Third World women is the use of Third World women themselves in this process. Lazreg criticises the Western mode of feminist practice for using individual Third World women as representatives of millions of women in their societies, reinforcing the notion of difference as ‘objectified otherness’:

> The totalitarian character of the existing representation of difference appropriates differential items haphazardly, and incorporates them into a structure that becomes autonomous and stands for the lived reality of Third World women. An abstract anthropological subject deemed “oppressed” is thus created. Studying this constructed subject is not for the purpose of understanding her as such as it is to gather documentary evidence of her “oppression”. Ironically, the language of liberation reinscribes relations of domination. (Lazreg, 2019; p. 10)

Accordingly, Farris talks about the group of French feminists from North African descent who hopped on the anti-Islam bandwagon and presented themselves as representatives of the totality of Muslim women in France. Examples of these feminists whom Farris refers to are Loubna Méliane, Chaddortt Djavann, Jeannette Bougrab, and Fadela Amara. The latter is the founder of the association Ni putes ni soumises (roughly translated as: “Neither Whores nor Submissive”), which has been criticised for its support of the Islamophobic instrumentalization of feminism in France. Farris describes the negative results this situation has engendered:

> Arguably, the public prominence accorded to women of migratory background who joined the feminist secular front in denouncing Islam's alleged "exceptional" misogyny and the practice of veiling has contributed to push into the shade the many women and Muslim organisations who protested the anti-veil laws—for instance, Mamans Toutes Égales, the collective of mothers, which includes many Muslim women; the group Le Collectif des Féministes pour l'Égalité; and Femmes dans la Mosquée, a collective of Muslim women. (Farris, 2017; p. 48)

Furthermore, Lazreg points out the fact that Asian-American feminists have identified a feminist practice within Western culture that involves making Third World feminists choose between their feminism and their ethnicity or culture. This practice identifies two groups of Third World feminists: one who believes feminism is a monolithic system of thought and behaviour, and therefore they reject it and uphold their ethnicity and culture above it; and another, which believes feminism stands above their cultures, resulting in Third World female intellectuals getting caught up in a feminist practices where they are either constantly defending their culture against feminist misinterpretations, or reaffirming the primacy and validity of Western feminism by dwelling on a set of practices 'deemed disreputable, but always sensational' (Lazreg, 1994).

Following on from Lazreg, I argue that the nature of French feminism, which is the most propagated mode of secular feminist thought in Algeria, has divided Algerian women into two very distinctive camps: on the one hand we have the ones who embrace this model in its entirety and therefore reject their culture and/or religion of origin; and on the other hand, there are those who dismiss the very idea of feminism as a whole because of their sole exposure to the French model of it. The latter group continues to be hostile to the local culture and religion in Algeria. This is not to deny the existence of Algerian women who have reconciled their feminism with Islam and their Algerian culture, they evidently do exist, however they are less prevalent than the two above-mentioned camps.

Lazreg (2019) draws attention towards major and dominant issues surrounding the nature of feminist scholarly work on Third World women, such as the constant documentation of existing stereotypes, the dismissal of Third World women's accounts when they do not feed into the stereotypical image that is already established, as well as the "incipient ghettoization" of knowledge surrounding Third World women. Moreover, she makes an important comparison between the accommodation of African-American feminists to "white" middle class feminism and that of Third World women, especially those from North Africa and the Middle East. She notes that African-American feminism feeds into an assertion of black feminist epistemology which is fully grounded in the experience of slavery. Such a framework is majorly missing from feminist scholarly work about Third World women, as there is typically a lack of a full understanding and knowledge from within the local history, background and dynamics of the institutions this feminist scholarly work criticises, aggravated by the application of a foreign 'conceptual frame of reference' and following external standards (Mohanty, 1988; Farris, 2017).

Another important point of comparison Lazreg (2019) draws attention to is the nature of academic feminist scholarship on American women versus the one on women from the Third World; the former 'taking on an air of normalcy' and is generally critical without being condescending to its subjects, with their cultures and backgrounds being portrayed as perfectible and not rejected in their entirety. Conversely, feminist scholarship on Third World women commonly emphasises existing misconceptions and stereotypes by providing explanations but little understanding of gender differences in these societies. Furthermore, Lazreg indicates the different factors that make feminist scholarly works on women from North Africa and the Middle East produce a notion of 'irremediable difference' from other women. One of these factors is the language used to describe these women, such as the one used in the translation of French feminist Juliette Minces' book *The House of Obedience, Women in Arab Society* (1982). Another instance of such language use can be found in the use of labels such as "Islamic women", "Arab women", or "Middle Eastern women" to refer to all Algerian

women regardless of whether or not they are Arab or Muslims. Lazreg asserts that the use of such labels is due to its production of the reality it names. For instance, the label “Islamic women”, despite it not representing the entirety of Algerian women, is still used to refer to them because it invokes a set of characteristics deemed problematic which are associated with the concept of Islam (Lazreg, 2019).

This is to say that present-day exclusionary and oppressive forms of feminist practice, manifested notably within the French model of secular feminism, adopt and are entangled within what is known as ‘the notion of difference’ (Delphy, 2015), as also highlighted by Lazreg as ‘objectified otherness’. Scholars confirm a link and continuity between contemporary exclusionary feminist practices and colonial and racist legacies and institutions (Mohanty, 1988; Lazreg, 2019; Farris, 2017). Furthermore, I have shown how French feminism that is grounded in notions of internalised prejudice against women from different cultures and experiences perpetuates oppressive and exclusionary practices throughout a multitude of areas, such as in popular culture, where we have observed the use of a ‘language of dominance’ as well as the ‘power of (mis)interpretation’ by prominent French feminists. In addition to that, I explored examples of the deliberate deployment of media on a large scale to perpetuate unfair and ungrounded representations of Muslim women in the cultural imagery of the West, as well as to spread racist and Islamophobic agendas using feminist discourse (Farris, 2017). These exclusionary and racist narratives also become evident within academic feminist research, through practices such as when feminist researchers focus on highlighting prejudices and sensationalising differences in their representations of women from the Third World. The aforementioned practices, I argue, play a significant role in sustaining the rejection of anything related to women's rights or the feminist movement in Algeria. Therefore, my research aims to illuminate the diverse strategies employed by Algerian women YouTubers to create content that amplifies the voices and experiences of Algerian women. They do this while addressing the prevailing silence surrounding women's issues in society. Additionally, they navigate the challenges posed by a Eurocentric and exclusionary form of feminism rooted

in colonial legacies. Such feminism is often used to discredit my participants' and Algerian women's presence on social media.

A brief history of the internet and social media in Algeria

The internet is a 'hot topic' in Algeria and in this section I offer a brief history of its introduction into Algerian society, as well as an appraisal of significant debates around its usage via social media networks. As my research focuses on the gendered use of the internet in Algeria and women's presence on social media, I demonstrate how these fields of inquiry are tremendously understudied in Academia. Therefore, I turn to the examination of debates, discussions, and statistics surrounding the internet and social media in Algeria. These discussions are prevalent on websites, within popular culture, and in newspapers. Following a review of articles from Algerian newspaper websites such as Al Watan, Ennahar, and El Khabar, as well as viewing videos of Algerian TV shows addressing this topic, it becomes evident that discussions about the internet in Algeria encompass a spectrum of topics. These include how people utilise it, its accessibility and penetration, the broadband market, preferred websites for Algerians, and the growing concern over internet addiction among the youth. However, discussions about the internet and social media from a gender perspective are seldom raised in Algeria. Whereas in the previous section I was able to relate family memories to the written histories of Algeria, I have personal experiences of internet controversies and pleasures, and I will again reflect on my life to help develop a richer picture of Algerian internet use, especially in relation to online gendered engagement.

The internet was introduced to Algeria in 1993 and controlled by the Research Centre for Scientific and Technical Information (Cerist). This is an Algerian public institution created in 1985, which specialises in science and technology and is overseen by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research; at this stage, the internet was only used by the government (Cerist, 2018). In 1998, a ministerial decree was issued allowing private sector

companies to provide internet services to the Algerian people and internet broadband services became available in 2003 (Romero, 2011). My first memory of the internet is of noticing cybercafés, around 2006. I was only 14 then and I remember never daring to go to a cybercafé because of my father's continuous talk about how badly people are using the internet in these places. To me, cybercafés were a place of discovery where you would connect to the world outside of your town or country. But when I look back, I realize cybercafés were not that appealing when it comes to the way they appeared from the outside: they were usually small and quite dim-lit spaces with big old computers and dirty keyboards (I eventually was able enter cybercafés and use the Internet there when I was 19 years old). Romero (2011) discusses how when the internet was first available for the Algerian public, cybercafés were very restricted and surveyed by the police. The names, addresses, dates of birth and national ID numbers of people who frequented internet cafes were all retained, and cybercafés' owners were ordered to report any suspicious activity by visitors. In addition to that, Romero discusses the introduction of a new cybercrime bill by the Algerian government in May 2008, following reports of government and financial institutions' websites receiving about 4000 hacking attempts per month:

> The bill criminalises online activities such as hacking, stealing of personal data, promoting terrorism and crimes online, blackmailing, and copyright infringement. This bill was followed in May 2009 by the creation of a new national security service focused on cybercrime. It allows police officers explicitly to inspect and control Internet cafes in order to prevent terrorist activities. (Romero, 2011; p. 30)

In relation to internet users' demographics in Algeria, a study in 2010 ("l'ideatic" and "med&com") concluded that young people aged 26-35 were the largest group of internet users (31.1%), closely followed by those aged 15-20 (29.4%), with 17.2% of users being 15-19 years old. The majority of Algerian internet users were either enrolled in university (55.3%), studying

in high schools and middle schools (25%) or in a professional job (37%) (N'TIC Magazine, 2010).

The internet was introduced to homes via Djaweb in 2001, a subsidiary of Algérie Télécom, the state-owned company for fixed and mobile telephony, internet and satellite telecommunications, and this enabled more people to connect to the internet. This increased connectivity included me. My first experience of online connection was at a friend's house: we were supposed to use the internet for our homework but instead we logged on and searched for pictures of our favourite Anime characters. The idea that the internet is a space where you can search for and find anything that you want was fascinating for me to say the least, because it felt like a window I could look through and discover other worlds. I remember having long discussions with my father, trying to convince him that we needed the internet in our life and him opposing that. After being introduced to homes, the internet was made more accessible by introducing 3G connection in Algeria in 2013, making it possible for people to connect to the internet anywhere using their phones. This expansion led to even more discussions and debates disseminated on TV shows, social media platforms, newspapers and websites about how the Algerian people are approaching this new technology that is taking up an important space in their lives.

Another common subject related to the internet in Algeria is how and what do Algerian people use the internet for? Several statistical studies have explored this question, and perhaps one of the most important and recent ones, is the investigation done by the Algerian digital communication agency 2PI. The study entitled "Algeria Digital Trends" was carried out during the months of July and August of 2017, involving 15,000 responses. The report revealed different information regarding internet usage in Algeria from which I have selected the most relevant for my research. The study established that in a population of 41,300,000 Algerians (in 2017), about 20,800,000 are internet users. 51% of these users are men, whereas 49% are women. The study indicates that these numbers have changed from being 70% of male internet users versus 30% of female users in 2013, which shows that the number

of women connecting to the internet is increasing. Another relevant result from this study is related to the Algerian population's connection habits, which shows that social media networks come at the top of Algerians' most preferred sites to visit on the internet, with YouTube as the number one visited website (Algeria Digital Trends, 2017).

With the use of social networks predominating Algerians' internet usage, many discussions have been tackling the ways Algerian people are approaching these platforms. In 2017, the private TV channel Beurtv aired a two-hour show on this subject. The two journalists and two presenters of the show were joined by two guests: Younes Grar, an expert in technologies of information and communication, and popular Algerian YouTuber Youcef Zerouta. The discussion was wide-ranging, and there was much criticism of the monopoly of fixed internet broadband by the government-affiliated company Algérie Telecom, the slow and expensive internet service, and the lack of E-commerce in Algeria. When the conversation turned to social media, the journalists and their guests agreed that social networks in Algeria are not used in the most creative way, and that social media in Algeria is predominantly used for chatting and dating. The presenters argued that little had changed since the introduction of social media sites, and one of the journalists argued that this is due to the closed nature of the Algerian culture where men and women cannot interact freely with each other in public spaces, leading to social media being considered a safe space for them to get to know each other (Beurtv, 2017). Now that I come back to these discussions and debates about the use of social media in Algeria after having explored the different ways in which Algerian women YouTubers are occupying these online spaces, I can only confirm that Algerian women are indeed doing great work in utilising the internet and social media platforms in very strategic and creative ways, which are working to challenge dominant and oppressive narratives about women in Algeria.

Another similar theme that was discussed in the same show is marriage through social media networks. Both guests and journalists on the show believed that this is a normal occurrence that can happen to people in these times where technology is merging within our

lives, and that it could work out just as it could not, depending on the people involved in it, not the social media tool itself. Short interviews were carried out with several pedestrians in the streets of Algiers to have an idea about Algerian people's opinions on marriage through social media. The responses were varying from people approving of it and believing that it is absolutely normal, to others disapproving of it and arguing it is against the cultural and traditional norms of society. YouTuber Youcef Zarouta claimed that Algerian people fear the new social media technologies because they do not fully understand them (Beurtv, 2017). Reflecting on this after having carried research on Algerian women YouTubers' use of social media, I read this as traditional Algerian society's reluctance to open up to new ideas, norms, and roles of individuals, which is why I argue that Algerian women YouTubers' online presence is working into shifting the traditional narratives that exist within Algerian society on different matters such as women's occupation of public spaces, gendered relations, and normative dominant images about masculinity and femininity.

Saci Soufiane, in his article " تكوين الهوية الرقمية للشباب الجزائري، مقاربة سوسيولوجية لاستخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي" (Creating the Digital Identity of Algerian Youth, a Sociological Approach to the Use of Social Networks), argues that social media networks are now the number one source of Algerian youth's information and knowledge about foreign cultures, and their exposure to the world. He further explains that these interactive platforms allow people to exchange their cultural, scientific and political perspectives and provide them with an alternative source of news and information where they can criticise whatever information they receive, therefore it is a tool used to promote awareness between individuals and it is a very important factor for social change (Saci, 2018).

Within these numerous debates about the internet in Algeria, there is little discussion on Algerian women's online presence, although, according to my observations as an avid social media user, women are now strongly present on a variety of social media platforms. While there is media commentary on famous Algerian women YouTubers, regular Algerian women and girls using the internet are neglected. The only example I have found of media

discussion of ‘ordinary women’ is from the TV show in Beurtv, “Emission Impossible”, where one of the journalists discussed the need for an internet education for young Algerians in schools, and he gave an example of the girls who put their pictures on their social media profiles and others copying them without consent, photoshopping them and using them for harmful purposes.

As I have previously mentioned, I did not have a full interaction with and access to the internet until reaching twenty years old. Hearing about social media networks from my friends and family members who had access to the internet at that time made me extremely excited to get to know and explore these virtual spaces myself. I remember arguing with my parents about wanting to have full access to the internet so that I can have my own Facebook account where I can express myself freely and creatively. I had not had a great school experience, and with my constant struggles dealing with bullying, achieving good grades to please my parents and making friends, I was longing for a space where I could be myself, showcase the identity or the image that I wanted to be known for, and make new friendships. After finally being able to have a stable internet connection, I was able to create my own Facebook account, where I shared my personal interests with my friends and people whom I got to know on the platform. One of my favourite activities was sharing my drawings on Facebook and getting all the feedback from my friends there. It felt as if I had my personal art exhibition where I could express myself, and an audience with whom I could share what I was passionate about. That was extremely fulfilling vis-à-vis my personal growth and sense of achievement. Thus, social media created a space of freedom, connection, and control over my own image and identity.

Another facet that I have been introduced to through Facebook was getting to interact with males. Growing up in a conservative Algerian Muslim family, I have always been taught that, as a Muslim woman, I have to avoid interacting with males and that there is no such thing as male and female friendships. Of course, no romantic relationships before marriage are permitted either. However, seeing girls and boys around me (maybe coming from less strict families), being friends and having fun together during my time in primary, middle and high

school, made me question my family's instructions and wanted to have male friends too. Facebook was the only place where I could make friends of different genders and interact with them in a way that I could have never done outside the virtual realm.

Facebook became my way of getting a sense of freedom, away from parental surveillance, and also a way of achieving a sense of identity with what I chose to post on my account. However, it's important to note at this stage that, similar to many other girls on the platform, I refrained from using my full name as my personal ID on Facebook and avoided sharing personal photos. As a result, individuals whom I hadn't previously met in real life were unaware of my family name and appearance. That did not take away from the fact that I felt like my Facebook profile depicted exactly the way I am and how I wanted people to know me. Even though there have not been extended talks about social media with my family (unlike the ones about premarital relationships for example), I had the feeling that showing my true identity on social media would have caused me trouble with them. I think that is because there has always been a general feeling that we, the girls/women in the house, were expected to stay concealed and unknown to the outside world. In fact, I still remember an expression that my father used to tell me since I was a child: "tu dois passer inaperçu" which literally translates to: "you must go unnoticed". He believed that being unnoticed puts you out of harm's way, and even though he used to say that this ideology goes for him as a man as well, deep inside I felt like it affected us women more than men, because we are the ones who are always expected to stay at home and conceal our identities.

Similar themes to the ones I refer to through my personal experiences of social media use are discussed by Toumi Fadhila and Yasad Zahia (2017) in their research titled: دراسة تحليلية لقضايا المرأة عبر صفحات الفايسبوك : الحضور الرقمي للمرأة الجزائرية عبر الفضاءات الافتراضية (The Digital Presence of Algerian [Women] via Virtual [Spaces]: Analytical Study of Women Issues through Facebook)(title translated by the original author of the study). Toumi and Yasad have carried an analytical study on Algerian women's Facebook pages in order to investigate their digital presence and representations in virtual spaces, specifically Facebook. Here, they argue that

social networks have offered Algerian women the opportunity to engage in new communicative experiences in which they enjoy more freedom, away from the often restrictive cultural norms they are submitted to as women in Algerian society. Toumi and Yasad, however, argue that this freedom is not entirely complete, as Algerian women are often forced to conceal their digital identities using fake names and pseudonyms, in order for them to not be recognised and to be able to freely discuss issues that are of interest to them in ways that are more original and alternative to the ones used in traditional media.

Furthermore, Toumi and Yasad (2017) contend that although social media networks have offered Algerian women new possibilities in asserting themselves online and changing some of the stereotypical images that have long been associated with them, they are, to a great extent, still bound by the traditional gender roles that society has assigned to them, and this is translated into their content, which is often focused on topics such as shopping, cooking recipes, fashion, hair and makeup, marriage and pregnancy stories, polygamy and family honour stories etc. To this end, Toumi and Yasad argue that the Algerian woman's digital presence shows how she is, to a great extent, still trapped within the traditional and cultural roles and attributes of the Algerian family.

Loubna H. Skalli, in her study titled "Communicating Gender in the Public Sphere: Women and Information Technologies in the MENA" (2006), emphasises the need to explore the different ways in which women from the MENA region utilise media, if we want to better understand their presence in and occupation of the public sphere. Accordingly, Skalli argues that women have come a long way in impacting and redefining the public sphere in the MENA region despite the marginalisation and exclusion they are often faced with, and that information technologies are serving as an enabling tool for that. Greatly impacted by regional differences, gender, class, and age, Skalli describes women's use and access to the internet in the MENA region as limited and slow, and explains that one of the factors restricting women's internet access are the exclusionary patriarchal ideologies both online and beyond. In this study, Skalli specifically discusses the ways in which gender activists are making use of the internet in

raising awareness about gender issues and challenging forms of institutionalised gender oppression in the MENA region.

A number of academic studies have indeed started considering the potential of new media technologies, mainly the internet and social media, in liberating women from social isolation, increasing their voices and creating alternative discourses on gendered relations and womanhood in the MENA region (Shteiwi, 2003; Weaver, 2004; Skalli, 2006). Although these studies have called for further and more in-depth investigation of the ways in which women from North Africa and the Middle East are creatively making use of the internet and social media in the advancement of their position within a context that commonly rejects their presence in the public sphere, this field of inquiry remains severely understudied. Hence, my research aims to address this gap by highlighting the creative presence of Algerian women YouTubers in online spaces. Through their content creation, they not only amplify women's voices and visibility but also challenge prevailing stereotypes about women. Additionally, my project sheds light on the endeavours of Algerian women content creators who do not conform to the thematic patterns identified by Toumi and Yasad (2017) in Algerian women's social media content. Contrary to these trends, my participants venture into domains traditionally reserved for male content creators, such as comedy sketches, travel vlogs, and educational content.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this chapter was to offer a comprehensive contextualisation of the historical and socio-political backdrop against which the inherently feminist social media content created by Algerian women YouTubers emerges. Additionally, this chapter seeks to contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of the intricacies surrounding women's rights and feminism within the Algerian context.

In the initial section of this critical context, an overview was provided regarding the status of Algerian women and the feminist movement in Algeria throughout its contemporary history. This section explored the central role of the family within Algerian society, its hierarchical structure, and the patriarchal attitudes it exhibits towards Algerian women. It delved into aspects such as spatial divisions within Algerian households that confine women to the domestic sphere and the notion that the family's honour is tied to the chastity of its women. Furthermore, it investigated how these attitudes have influenced the social positioning of Algerian women and their historical connection to the country's colonial past—a period during which the Algerian feminist movement originated, underwent multiple reforms, and now continues to advocate for the rights and full citizenship of Algerian women.

The second part of this chapter built upon the argument that Algerian women's status within society has been significantly shaped by the country's colonial history, as detailed in the first section of the critical context. It explored the colonial history behind French secular feminism and its impact on Algerian society's perspectives on feminism. Specifically, it examined how biased and exclusionary practices rooted in colonial ideologies and scholarship have permeated contemporary French secular feminism and continue to influence how Algerian society perceives feminism, women's rights, and the willingness of Algerian women YouTubers to self-identify as feminists.

The third and final part of the critical context provided a brief history of the introduction of the internet into Algerian society and an assessment of significant debates surrounding its usage, including social media networks. While writing this section, it became evident that there is a substantial lack of studies and discussions regarding the gendered use and practices of the internet in Algeria and the presence of women on social media, both within academic discourse and popular culture. Although a few studies (Shteiwi, 2003; Weaver, 2004; Skalli, 2006) have called for investigations into how women from North Africa and the Middle East creatively employ the internet and social media to advance their standing in a context that

often rejects their presence in the public sphere, this field of inquiry remains significantly underexplored.

This chapter has established a foundational background to assist the readers of this thesis in comprehending and valuing the unique position of my participants within contemporary Algerian feminism, within the current Algerian digital landscape. It sheds light on the challenges they address in their work and the innovative approaches they employ to navigate the tension between the colonial influences of French feminism and the concurrent necessity for an Algerian feminism that is truly inclusive and liberating.

Chapter 3: Methodology

> I am grateful that we are collectively searching as feminist thinkers/theorists for ways to make this movement happen. Our search leads us back to where it all began, to that moment when an individual woman or child, who may have thought she was all alone, began a feminist uprising, began to name her practice, indeed began to formulate theory from lived experience. (hooks, 1994; p. 75)

Introduction

In this chapter, I will tell the story of how I conducted my research, including its unconventional start, which shaped it to become not only an academic endeavour contributing to the academic literature in Women's Studies but also a life-changing experience for an Algerian Muslim woman who was introduced to, and eventually embraced, feminism, through employing feminist theory to answer her research queries. Doing a PhD for me was not only about conducting academic research, but it was also – although sometimes unwittingly – about continuously exploring, and reclaiming aspects of my identity, my agency, and my voice as an Algerian Muslim woman-turned-feminist researcher. As much as I thought that these were two separate processes that I have experienced during my PhD journey, I have come to learn they in fact ought to be inseparable. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) explain that, while conducting feminist qualitative research, a researcher's own position, values, and identity must be reflected on and explored in order to hone their research interests and the questions they aim to answer. Ramazanoglu and Holland add that researchers always bring along their values and different aspects of their identities into their research, which is why they need to be explicit about what aspects they value over others (for example, aspects of my identity that I argue influenced my research and my positionality within it are: a practising and visibly

Muslim woman, Algerian woman who is passionate about the advancement of women's rights, academic researcher, feminist researcher, YouTuber at some point during my PhD). Moreover, Ramazanoglu and Holland clarify that these decisions will help researchers identify their projects' theoretical, ontological, and epistemological positions:

> These decisions are more manageable if you see them as conceptualising your starting point by making explicit what you already believe about gender and power, clarifying how you already think about authoritative knowledge, and considering whether you want to make any changes in order to tell the best possible story about what you want to know. (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; p. 149)

In my case, I started my PhD journey as an Algerian woman coming to the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York with a set of queries about women's position in contemporary Algerian society and how this is reflected in the content Algerian women YouTubers create and share on different social media platforms. I began my research with a set of assumptions which I then learned from feminist research ethics not to leave unchecked or uninterrogated. I elaborate on some of these in the following section.

Research story

My feminist research journey started when I was offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree in the UK after getting my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English and Didactics of Literature at the University of Djillali Liabes, Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria. Growing up in a financially humble family with a stay-at-home mother, and a father who was the sole wage earner, within a community that holds very traditional views on women, pursuing higher education in a foreign country meant that I would have to overcome many economic, social and cultural barriers. Additionally, I do not particularly lead the typical fulfilled and successful academic career of someone who has always considered themselves an

academic researcher or had a clear academic career vision, and this is due to the demotivating environment in my previous Algerian university, where undergraduate, as well as postgraduate, students were primarily encouraged to pursue grades instead of building an academic and intellectual mind and path. Add to that my community's belief that a woman's highest achievement is getting married and starting a family of her own, thus, pursuing post-graduate degrees up to a PhD was the only option for me other than being confined at home waiting for marriage. All of these circumstances made pursuing a PhD in the UK my only opportunity to escape a controlling and strict environment due to my community's patriarchal views on women. This is one of the factors which had the most influence on my choice of the fields of inquiry I aimed to investigate, as well as the research methods I chose to use. My initial aim, which I later discovered aligns with feminist research principles, was to not only endeavour to elevate the voices of Algerian women YouTubers, but also shed light on my voice as a researcher who deals with very similar barriers and constraints shared by the women whom I chose to research. This specifically led to my interest in exploring the value of practising autoethnography in my research.

Having no background knowledge of doing a PhD in a UK university and never having envisaged to do it before for the reasons mentioned above, I found myself facing the big challenge of figuring out a topic which I would spend five years of my life researching. After a long and challenging process of thinking and reading, I finally decided to explore my interest in Algerian women's rights and position within society, inspired by my own gendered experiences with social media and the internet. I eventually chose to research how Algerian women YouTubers expressed themselves on and experienced, social media platforms, with a special focus on YouTube and Instagram. Growing up in a strict family and in a society that holds traditional patriarchal views on women made me extremely interested in those women who managed to mitigate a multitude of cultural, social, and economic barriers that are often weaponised against women in Algeria in order to keep them (or indeed, us) silent and invisible

within public life. These women creatively and strategically represent themselves and their values publicly on the internet and I wanted to explore that.

After choosing a topic to investigate, I started looking for a second home for myself and my research, where I can be supported mentally and academically. Fortunately, I found the perfect place for that and got accepted as a PhD candidate at the University of York's Centre for Women's Studies. From that moment started the life-changing experience of being introduced to a multitude of feminist thought which I had never encountered before. As I discuss in detail in my critical context, feminism is badly reputed within Algerian society, and even though many Algerians, both women and men, do raise awareness about injustices committed against women in Algeria, many of them, wittingly or unwittingly, steer away from using the label "feminism". This is due, as I explore in the previous chapter, to the French forced mission of emancipation that caused a colonial trauma within the Algerian collective memory, and which to this day is being attached to the feminist movement, both nationally and internationally, and used to attack and dismiss any fruitful discussions related to women's rights in Algeria. In addition to that, there is the exclusionary attitudes grounded in colonial and orientalist legacies, which have found their way to present-day feminist practice, notably to French secular feminism which still has the most impact on Algerian society due to Algeria and France's common history.

I, myself, as I mention above, was only aware of the feminism coming from France and was unable to reconcile it with my cultural and religious background and identity. However, this perception on feminism was entirely altered when I became part of the Centre for Women's Studies community and learned about the history of feminism, how feminism is a movement that is envisioned to serve all women from all walks of life, and because of that, whenever infiltrated by thoughts and practices that would turn it into an exclusionary movement, such as imperialist, capitalist, orientalist, or neoliberal thoughts, it has continuously been challenged by feminists themselves, in order for it to keep growing and improving as a movement, and for it to eventually include all women from all backgrounds. For instance, Chandra Talpade

Mohanty in her introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991) discusses the critiques raised by Third World women around the nature of the definition of feminism and explains:

> The term feminism is itself questioned by many third world women. Feminist movements have been challenged on the grounds of cultural imperialism, and of short-sightedness in defining the meaning of gender in terms of middle-class, white experiences, and in terms of internal racism, classism, and homophobia. All of these factors, as well as the falsely homogeneous representation of the movement by the media, have led to a very real suspicion of "feminism" as a productive ground for struggle. Nevertheless third world women have always engaged with feminism, even if the label has been rejected in a number of instances. (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; p. 7)

Cheryl Johnson-Odim in the same book in the chapter titled “Common Themes, Different Contexts: Third World Women and Feminism”, develops this discussion thoroughly and explains that the 1960s early radical feminism was defined as antiracist and anti-imperialist, however, this did not last as it has mostly been displaced by the greatly popular liberal feminism, which did not focus on racism and imperialism as major feminist issues. Johnson-Odim further explains that even though there exists more than one school of thought on feminism among First World feminists, there is a widely accepted perception among Third World women that the mainstream feminism emerging from white, middle-class Western women is narrowly defined as a struggle against gender discrimination only. Many feminists have critiqued this narrow definition of feminism, including hooks (1981, 1984), Moraga and Anzaldua (2015), Joseph and Lewis (1981), Okeyo (1981), Hull, Scott, and Smith (1982), Savane (1982), Smith (1983), and advocated for the need to broaden the definition of feminism to make it relevant to the struggles of Third World women such as racism, economic exploitation, and imperialism (Johnson-Odim, 1991).

In the context of the Middle East and North Africa, Marnia Lazreg (1988) discusses several issues in the conception of feminist thought regarding women from this part of the world. She argues that there exists a continuity between the normative definitions made by the traditional social science on North African and Middle Eastern societies and academic feminist practice vis-a-vis these societies. One example Lazreg uses to illustrate this, is the "tenacious focus" on religion in the scholarship on women in the Middle East and North Africa, or what she termed "the religion/tradition paradigm", a combination of orientalist and evolutionary assumptions, resulting in a reductive and ahistorical conception of women from this region (1990). As for the case of Algeria, Lazreg argues that a great deal of the feminist scholarship on Algerian women is a continuity and reproduction of the themes defined by the French colonial and neo-colonial discourses and epistemology. This connection between the colonial discourse and feminist discourses on Third World women from Algeria, Lazreg explains, has resulted in the perception of Algerian women as a single monolithic subject whose lived realities are subsumed under the religion/tradition paradigm (Lazreg; 1990, 2019).

Thinking back about the position I was situated in vis-à-vis my relationship with feminism, I cannot think of a better way to have indulged myself in feminist scholarship and eventually not only reconciled it with my identity but also be empowered by it, than to do research in a setting that introduced me to feminisms that I could identify with – such as Third World feminism, transnational feminism, intersectional feminism, Islamic feminism – which luckily in my case was the Centre for Women's Studies at The University of York. This is where my research project stopped being just an academic endeavour and became a vision-altering experience and the beginning of my feminist consciousness. Coming to the UK, and specifically to the Centre for Women's Studies, has been an eye-opening experience for me. Apart from it being an experience that has allowed me to discover and understand different parts of my identity, which I would not have discovered had I not left my community, this journey has also introduced me to the feminism I now embrace in both my personal and academic life: a feminism that is all about women creating the tools that would allow them to change their

situation and that of other women in their communities to eventually lead better, safer, and fairer lives. In addition, this feminism extends its ideals of justice and critical thinking to other forms of oppression besides those which affect gender relations: it also tackles issues of race and class, as well as issues of colonialism, imperialism, and global ecology. I was introduced to all of this through the remarkable works of a great number of feminists such as bell hooks (1994), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), Lila Abu-Lughod (2013), Christine Delphy (2015), Azza Basarudin (2015), Sara Ahmed (2017), Marnia Lazreg (2019) and many more.

I recently had an interesting discussion with a friend of mine from Syria about a Syrian drama series called Bab Al-Hara, which was popular at the time it first aired in 2006, in most North African and Middle Eastern countries including Algeria. I told my friend how this show helped me acquire some of the knowledge I have now about Syrian Arabic and how I found it interesting, as it portrayed some of Syria's history during its French mandate in the early 1920s. My friend did not share the same position as mine and explained to me that she had never liked the show specifically because of the way it portrayed gender relations within Syria at that time, as it showed women mostly confined within the domestic sphere, while the men occupied strong positions in the community and controlled every aspect of women's lives. My friend added that the show reaffirmed and emphasised those patriarchal structures at a time when we needed, and still need, to abolish them. I commended my friend's critical thinking at a very young age and at a time when, as she explained, she was still not aware of the different inequalities women in her community and around the world were subjected to. On a funny but equally important note, my friend joked about how she felt like she was the only member of her family who points out problematic behaviours and aspects in many life situations, and that it sometimes made her feel like the killjoy of her family. I resonated with my friend's experience and remembered Sara Ahmed's (2017) powerful account of the journeys and experiences she and so many other women and feminists have gone through in the process of embracing feminism, and how being perceived as "the feminist killjoy" was a critical part of this journey, as she explained how embracing a feminist lens makes you recognise many oppressions

within our world, including sexism and racism as “Feminism challenges the universal” (Ahmed, 2017). I reassured my friend that what she feels is quite natural, very important, and liberating for her and other women, and I further explained to her how intersectional feminism takes it further by not only pointing out oppression but also by giving it a name, which makes it easier to communicate these issues to others and work on finding solutions for them (Ahmed, 2017).

This short story is a real-life illustration of the two stages that I, and undoubtedly so many more women, have experienced when it comes to our awareness of the state of women’s rights within different areas of our lives. We have the state which my Syrian friend is experiencing at the moment, and which I also went through before starting my PhD, where I could see so many oppressive behaviours towards myself and other women based on our gender but could not find the appropriate names and explanations to make sense of these actions and the motives behind them. Sara Ahmed (2017) aptly describes this part of a woman’s journey to feminist consciousness as follows:

> Over time, with experience, you sense that something is wrong or you have a feeling of being wronged. You sense an injustice. You might not have used that word for it; you might not have the words for it; you might not be able to put your finger on it. Feminism can begin with a body, a body in touch with a world, a body that is not at ease in a world; a body that fidgets and moves around. Things don’t seem right (Ahmed, 2017; p. 22).

And then there is a second stage which I believe I am currently in, after getting to know and embracing feminism, which has given me the tools to understand and make sense of the different experiences I lived and questioned for so long as a young girl and a woman in Algeria. In addition, by evoking this story here, I wanted to give a small glimpse into the autoethnography I have practised throughout my research and show one of the reasons behind choosing it as my first data production method. Here, autoethnography allowed me to articulate and make sense of, my (as well as another woman’s) lived experience that is directly

linked to a key aspect of my research: our awareness, as women of our position within society and the different gender based oppressions carried against us.

Sara Ahmed, in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), explains that “Feminist work is often memory work”, and emphasises the significance of women’s personal stories and histories as the primary source leading them to reach feminist consciousness. Accordingly, I believe that evoking my stories as an Algerian Muslim woman through autoethnography, which shows my journey into embracing feminism and which continuously informs my data analysis and the general process of my research, as well as evoking memories and stories I collected from other Algerian women, is imperative to the feminist nature and goals of this study. In my research, I have come to understand that the everyday experiences of oppression that my participants live/witness are translated into the content they share on social media, and since there is little attention on the everyday aspect of Algerian women’s lives in academic scholarship, I believe that my engagement with the literature documenting the position of Algerian women in society would be more valuable if coupled with examples of those everyday oppressions from my own experiences, and those of other Algerian women, through autoethnography and storytelling.

My practice of autoethnography in this research, which involves the recollection of personal stories and memories as well as stories of women from my own community, was significantly inspired by feminists who saw the value in combining feminist theory and practice such as Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (2015), Patricia Hill Collins (2000), and bell hooks (1994). Patricia Hills Collins in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, describes her journey in reclaiming her voice as an African-American woman as well as regaining the agency and power to replace definitions made by dominant groups about her life, with her own definition, derived from her personal lived experiences and those of women from her community. In doing so, Patricia Hill Collins challenges the abstract and complex way in which theory is often presented, making it appreciated by the educated elites only, who also hold the exclusive right to interpret

experiences and produce theory. Therefore she made sure her work could be read and understood by her own community through presenting complex ideas from both scholarly and everyday life in a form that is both rigorous and accessible. In the following quote, Collins describes the methodology she used in writing *Black Feminist Thought,* in which she reclaims the use of ideas and experiences derived from her everyday life as well as those of women from her community as credible scholarly work:

> I used a distinctive methodology in preparing this manuscript which illustrates how thought and action can work together in generating theory. Much of my formal academic training has been designed to show me that I must alienate myself from my communities, my family, and even my own self in order to produce credible intellectual work. Instead of viewing the everyday as a negative influence on my theorizing, I tried to see how the everyday actions and ideas of the Black women in my life reflected the theoretical issues I claimed were so important to them. […] Theory allowed me to see all of these associations with fresh eyes, while concrete experiences challenged the worldviews offered by theory. (Collins, 2000; p. viii)

This Bridge Called my Back (Moraga & Anzaldua, 2015) is another example of feminist scholarship that embraces women's everyday stories and lived experiences in all of their diverse complexities. Among the diverse themes this seminal collection of writings deals with are the ways in which Third World women and women of colour derive feminist theories from their personal racial/cultural backgrounds and experiences. This is illustrated through a varied selection of perspectives and thoughts in the form of intimate letters, poems, personal conversations, interviews and more, testifying to the value in interpreting feminist theory from women's most personal experiences documented in a rich variation of languages and styles.

bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) is yet another important example testifying to the value in deriving the political out of the personal. In the chapter "Theory as Liberatory Practice", we come to learn the story of how hooks found peace and freedom in making sense

of all the injustices she witnessed as a child from an African-American family and community. hooks tells the story of her childhood lived experiences of critical thinking, reflection, and analysis and how this experience of “theorising”, even though at that time she did not label it as such, was a source of healing and liberation. Furthermore, hooks emphasises the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice, because, as she argues, lived experience and theorising are two processes that are ultimately reciprocal. In the following quote, hooks explains this bond between theory and practice in terms of her personal feminist experience:

> Reflecting on my own work in feminist theory, I find writing —theoretical talk— to be most meaningful when it invites readers to engage in critical reflection and to engage in the practice of feminism. To me, this theory emerges from the concrete, from my efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to intervene critically in my life and the lives of others. This to me is what makes feminist transformation possible. Personal testimony, personal experience, is such fertile ground for the production of liberatory feminist theory because it usually forms the base of our theory making. (hooks, 1994; p. 70)

The main questions my research was aiming to answer from its outset were as follows: How do Algerian women experience YouTube as content creators? What key topics and ideas are articulated in Algerian women’s YouTube videos? What is the public perception of these women and their content, as represented by the comments on their videos? And what might an autoethnographic methodology add to these understandings? The research methods I chose to help me answer my research questions were: interviews with prominent Algerian women YouTubers; content analysis of the comment sections under their relevant YouTube videos (which I ended up not doing as my research questions have later changed as I will explain in detail in the upcoming sections); visual content analysis of their videos; and autoethnography, within a qualitative methodology. In the following sections, I discuss each one of my research methods in detail, and I talk about how my core research method changed from semi-structured interviews to visual content analysis of my participants' social media

content on YouTube and Instagram. This has also made my research questions evolve to wanting to explore and discuss Algerian women YouTubers' intrinsically feminist languages and vocabularies as my main research query.

Reflexivity, power relations, and ethics in feminist research

It has been long established that reflexivity is a crucial practice for sound feminist research, although identifying a specific methodological process with which reflexivity can be implemented continues to be one of the challenges feminist scholars face. Practising reflexivity is commonly known as all endeavours of examining and reflecting on the different power relations exercised within the research process. In other words, it is the examination of the different factors shaping the research process, such as the foundations of the knowledge production of the research and the constitution of its process as well as the researcher's social situation (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Feminist researchers have strongly emphasised the need for critical reflection on the different contexts and practices involved in knowledge production as a way of exploring the relationships between empirical research, social experience and the researcher's engagement with social concerns (Wilkinson, 1988; Harding, 1991; Bhavnani, 1993; Parker, 1994; Anderson & Doherty, 2008).

When it comes to the difficult task of putting reflexivity into practice, some scholars, such as Bola et al (1998), argue that reflexivity should be achieved collectively instead of individually, as the individual researcher's critical reflections are bound to be restricted by the limits of their knowledge, experience, culture etc. Still, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) insist on the productivity and potential of consciousness and understanding of power relations that can be reached through attempting to be reflexive in research. In her seminal article about reflexivity within feminist psychology, Sue Wilkinson (1988) gives an overview of what reflexivity is essentially about, despite confirming the difficulty in pinning down a specific definition for it. Wilkinson, thus, explains that reflexivity is, in its simplest forms, a 'disciplined

self-reflection' of one's research process in all its different aspects such as its origins, nature, and activity. Wilkinson further identifies two inseparable aspects of reflexivity that feminist research ought to integrate: personal reflexivity and functional reflexivity.

Personal reflexivity is concerned with the researcher's own identity with its various facets such as, for example, a woman, a feminist, an academic etc, as well as their personal commitments and values, and the examination of how these different factors inform and influence one's research concerns and academic queries. As for functional reflexivity, it asks epistemological questions about the research itself rather than the researcher or what Wilkinson described as "a reflexive examination of the nature and function of the research enterprise" (495). Rhoda Unger (1983) exemplifies this examination by using questions about, for example, the way a researcher's choice of methods and ways of result interpretation are influenced by their life circumstances, ideologies and values.

When it comes to attempting to be reflexive within the different stages of my research, I would say that my practice of this included several conscious reflexive decisions as well as analytical reflections: conscious decisions and reflections upon power relations and influences between myself as a researcher and my participants, and the research setting I am studying, as well as ethical decisions in all my research stages, including my fieldwork with its different data collection methods. Primarily, one important factor I had to consider is the fact that within the dialogue of knowledge construction that is created by both the researcher and the researched, a power imbalance is bound to take place. In other words, power is not equivalent between the different parts of this dialogue (Wilkinson, 1988). Feminist research principles urge us to recognise this reality and consciously reflect on the ways it affects our research processes.

In the upcoming sections, I give examples of the reflexive conscious decisions I have taken within this research including during data collection using autoethnography, qualitative semi-structured interviews, and visual content analysis. In addition, I would like to talk about an important aspect of my research that I have reflected upon, which is the idea that a number

of feminist researchers have reported uneasiness when researching anti or non-feminist women (Herman, 1994; Piela, 2009). Piela discusses how at first, she was unconsciously avoiding the input of anti- and non-feminist women within the internet social groups she was studying. However, after deep reflection, she concluded that the most sensitive and ethical decision would be to include all the voices of the women she was researching and that silencing some of them would be in fact unethical and does not fall into feminist research aims and purposes. In the context of my research, even though none of my participants expressed anti-feminist sentiments, either in the interviews or in their social media content, some of them have, at times, distanced themselves from feminism by, for example, refusing to answer their commentators about whether they considered themselves feminist or not. During my analysis of the visual content of my participants' videos, I was careful to identify and counteract any biases or prejudices against them because I have also been through that: I also at some point in my life, did not want anything to do with feminism, and even now, after learning so much about it and reconciling it with my identity, I still find it hard to openly disclose that I am a feminist to everyone around me, and I, at times, have to deny my subscription to it, to avoid any verbal attacks or judgements. As such, I have remained mindful of such bias and empathetic about the personal and cultural reasons why some of my participants may have hesitated to identify as feminists.

Upon embarking on this research journey, and getting introduced and acquainted to feminist ways of doing research, I have come to realise the great importance allocated to the ethical aspect of conducting feminist research, or any research for that matter. Thus, I tried my best to conduct my research in an ethical manner by taking a number of ethical decisions that aim to protect, to the best of my ability, the identities of all participants in this study (including myself) throughout its different stages, as well as elevate their voices. Before, during, and after conducting my interviews, this was translated into a number of conscious decisions such as ensuring only women who are legally able to consent to taking part of this research to be accepted as participants (women over 18 years old), ensuring they all receive and sign

the consent form as well as reminding them of their right to withdraw from this research at any time if they wish to. During interviews, I made sure to protect my participants', as well as my own, physical safety, by conducting face-to-face interviews in places that were public, which my participants have chosen, in daytime, as well as being accompanied by my father who did not interfere within the interview atmosphere but ensured my personal safety in a city I have never been before. Another measure I have taken to ensure my research was conducted in an ethical manner was to remind my participants at the beginning of each interview that they have every right to ask for both the recording and the interview to be stopped at any time, as well as approached topics that I deemed could be uncomfortable to them, such as the negative and hateful comments they regularly receive online, with care and sensitivity.

Anonymity is an important aspect when it comes to minimising the vulnerability of participants in research and is ought to be reflected upon thoroughly if and when ethics in research are considered. In the case of my research, I asked my participants if they would like to be anonymised before the start of the interview, as well as invited them to revisit their decision when the interview ended. Additionally, even though all of the five Algerian women YouTubers I interviewed asked not to be anonymised, I have made the conscious decision to refer to them in my research by the pseudonyms they have chosen to be known by on their YouTube channels, instead of their legal names even though those are publicly available online. I have also made sure to inform my participants that their words will be quoted in publicly available accounts of the research; however, anything that may identify an individual or third party directly in speech will be anonymised or omitted (such as names, locations, social media user names, comments).

Anonymity was much harder to grapple with when it comes to the personal stories I have included as part of my autoethnographic practice in this study. The first step I took in this respect was to anonymise all conversations with women who have consented for their stories or input to be included in this research, whether friends, colleagues, female family members, etc. However, when thinking about certain stories in earlier drafts of this thesis, I realised I

refer to my parents and specific family members, and talk about relevant experiences with them. Upon ethical reflection, I decided that it might be unfair to implicate people in my research recollection of memories and storytelling when they have not consented to being included in that way, so I have tried to maintain the focus on my experience, i.e., tried to frame and phrase the point I try to make through storytelling around the event as experienced by myself and referred to relatives in more vague and general terms, only indicating personal categories like gender or age where that was specifically relevant to the argument. Another way I use to approach this issue is by using the passive tense in order to redirect the tension from the person who might feel offended, for example, when speaking about my experiences of being parented as an Algerian Muslim girl and woman.

Autoethnography

> As a feminist and vulnerable self, I am learning how to move in and out of the text as writer, observed, observer, and participant—never as "truth sayer." I see myself as "a storied subject" among other storied subjects—"storying the I." (Ettorre, 2017; p. 368)

The data production method I initiated my research with was autoethnography. Coming from an unstimulating and lacking academic environment in my former Algerian university, I was faced with an extremely difficult learning curve trying to figure out a way to appropriately start my research. Thus I was advised by one of my supervisors to experiment with autoethnography in order to find my way into my research. In retrospect, this was the best decision I have made during my PhD journey, as it gave me a well-needed push while attempting to write down my very first pieces, as well as provided my research with valuable insights throughout its different stages and informed its various themes. As I have mentioned before, this was the research method with which I could achieve my desire to import some of

my personal experiences as an Algerian woman into my research, as I have deemed them very important. In the following quote, Anderson (2006) talks about how central the aspect of self-understanding is within the practice of autoethnography, which is something that also shaped and drove my autoethnography in this research project:

> Autoethnography is somewhat unique in research in that it is particularly likely to be warranted by the quest for self-understanding. Some scholars bristle when I say that: it sounds too Freudian to them. But self-understanding does not need to be Freudian, or Rogerian, or new-age mystical. The kind of self-understanding I am talking about lies at the intersection of biography and society: self-knowledge that comes from understanding our personal lives, identities, and feelings as deeply connected to and in large part constituted by—and in turn helping to constitute—the sociocultural contexts in which we live. (Anderson, 2006; p. 390)

Leon Anderson (2006) identifies two approaches to the practice of autoethnography: an analytic and an evocative one. Anderson identifies the analytic approach to autoethnography as the one where the researcher is not only a full member of their research group or setting but also where they are visible as such within their written work and engaged in an analytical research agenda to achieve better theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. Anderson (2006), alongside other ethnographic researchers (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont; 2003), emphasises the merit of 'analytic autoethnography', which is also compatible with traditional ethnographic practices in that it is sustainably analytical, as opposed to 'evocative autoethnography', which has been known for its total rejection of the analytic and realist traditional value of ethnography.

As I reflect on my own autoethnographic practice, I believe that my research goals and assumptions align with those of analytic autoethnography for a number of reasons that I will be discussing next. First and foremost, according to Anderson (2006), a key feature of autoethnography is that it is conducted by a Complete Member Researcher (CMR), which

means that the researcher is a complete member of the social world they are studying and takes a “dual participants-observer role” (Merton, 1988; p. 18). One of the advantages of being a complete member researcher according to Adler and Adler (1987; p. 67) is that they are able to “[approximate] the emotional stance of the people they study” to a great extent. Within the context of my research, I see this aspect of autoethnography play out in the way I carried out visual content analysis of my participants’ social media content in my search for the feminist languages and vocabularies they creatively use when they talk about their experiences of oppression in Algerian society. Because of my CMR position within my research, I was able to recognise and identify, to a great extent, the situations which represent moments of gendered marginalization and vulnerability for my participants even if those were not explicitly stated, and therefore I could locate the intrinsically feminist ideas that were used by my participants in response to those experiences.

Another aspect in which I believe my autoethnographic practice follows analytic autoethnography more than it does evocative autoethnography is that it scopes beyond personal experience and reaches out to stories of participants other than the autoethnographer’s, while evocative autoethnography, as Anderson (2006) explains, is heavily focused on the autoethnographer’s subjective experience. In fact, in my research, my autoethnographic input has been extensively guided by the data I have gathered through qualitative semi-structured interviews and visual content analysis. This can be seen as the way my research attempts to mitigate one of the aspects that autoethnography has been vastly criticised for, which is the autoethnographer’s tendency to fall into self-absorption in their research and overshadow experiences of other participants and lose sight of the main social enquiry the research is aiming to address. In practice, this is translated in the way my autoethnographic input was first guided by the need to fill a gap in the literature while writing my first contextual pieces around Algerian women’s everyday experiences of social media and internet use, for example.

Rosaldo (1993) argues that one of the problems that present-day autoethnographers might fall into is the tendency to be self-absorbed in their texts. However, Anderson (2006) suggests that author saturation in autoethnographic texts is not an underlying problem but rather a symptom that can occur when there is not adequate engagement with other members of the social field under study. The way in which my research attempted to avoid the problem of 'self-absorbed digression' that might occur when using autoethnography is that, as I mentioned above, my autoethnography is both guided by the data I gathered from my interviews and the visual content analysis of my participants' social media content, as well as only referring to my autoethnographic input when it is relevant to each specific stage of my research. An example of that would be the way I referred to my personal stories of internet and social media use as an Algerian woman when I was writing about the topic of Algerian women's everyday use of social media and was faced with a scarcity of academic literature around this topic.

As for analytic autoethnography's advantages, it is argued to give researchers the opportunity to reflect on their reactions to their participants' activities in light of their own biography (Schwalbe, 1996; p. 58), which is a feature that can promote the researcher's reflexivity. However, this 'mutual informativity' as Anderson (2006) refers to it, needs to be combined with the autoethnographer's visibility, activity and reflexive engagement in the text in order to properly engage in reflexive analysis. Another advantage to analytic autoethnography that Anderson (2006) mentions is how it gives researchers the ability to access special types of data that a researcher who does not personally identify with the social world under study cannot access. In my research, I could witness this advantage through the impromptu long and deep discussions (which can be considered as informal interviews) I had access to with my Algerian female friends and colleagues about the status of women in Algeria and our shared experiences of gendered marginality.

Autoethnography has been identified as a feminist research method by many feminist scholars (Allen & Piercy, 2005; Ettorre, 2017) and has been defined as "a method of being,

knowing and doing that combines two concerns: telling the stories of those who are marginalized and making good use of our experience" (Allen & Piercy, 2005; p. 156). Ettorre identifies several aspects showing that autoethnography is a feminist practice such as:

> (1) autoethnography creates transitional, intermediate spaces, inhabiting the crossroads or borderlands of embodied emotions; (2) autoethnography is an active demonstration of the "personal is political"; (3) autoethnography is feminist critical writing which is performative, that is, committed to the future of women; and (4) autoethnography helps to raise oppositional consciousness by exposing precarity. (Ettorre, 2017; p. 359)

Ettorre (2017) differentiates between autobiography and autoethnography, two ethnographic practices that are often thought to be similar. She explains that unlike autobiography which places the "I" in a personal context, be it political or not, and derives perspectives from that, autoethnography places the "I" within wider cultural and political contexts.

In her introduction to autoethnographic ways of doing research, Tessa Muncey (2014) identifies several reasons why academic researchers might find themselves compelled to use autoethnography within their research. I could identify with a number of them, such as the fact that my own experiences as an Algerian woman have indeed led me "to certain topics to satisfy this personal experience" (Muncey, 2014; p. 19), and in my case, some of these topics are Algerian women's position within society and Algerian women's ways of self-expression across different social media platforms, which was also followed by me starting a YouTube channel and getting to experience this on a personal level. In addition to that, these experiences have directed me to the specific questions I have chosen to answer through my research project. The paucity of literature on Algerian women's diverse everyday social media uses is another reason why I resorted to autoethnography as a data production method, which was also a reason listed by Muncey (2014). Within my research, an autoethnographic practice is useful and necessary in the way it is forwarding my individual voice not only as the researcher but

also as an Algerian woman who shares similar traits and socio-cultural practices with her participants. This gives the opportunity for the researcher's voice to be heard in an area that is relatively underrepresented, but it also gives insights into what it is like for a researcher to prioritise their voice along with their participants and the different ways these interplay in the analysis of data.

Muncey (2014) mentions the fact that some researchers' desire to share their experiences in their research is repressed by their (or their institution's) commitment to conduct 'proper' research, whereby "proper" academic research projects cannot include the researcher's subjective personal accounts. I have experienced the opposite of this in my own departmental context, as I was encouraged from my first days at the Centre for Women's Studies to experiment with autoethnography, and I understood the importance of acknowledging our inevitable subjectivity as researchers within our research (Harding, 1987; Haraway, 1988; hooks, 1990; Oakley, 1998; Anderson, 2011). Thus, in my PhD journey I have never felt repressed by the 'unrealistic' belief that proper research has to be devoid of personal experience. In the same vein, Muncey (2014) argues that subjectivity enhances academic work and that the healthiest ways of utilising it is to admit to the unavoidable presence of a connection between researchers and their research and build their work on it, for "we are observers and participants of our own experiences: you cannot separate who you are from what you do." (Muncey, 2014; p. 8)

When touching upon the benefits of conducting autoethnography in research, Muncey refers back to her PhD journey, which she carried out as a mature student, bringing to it more than 25 years of experience as a nurse and nurse educator. She confirms that it was impossible for her to separate this wide and rich experience from her academic study. She further discusses how, through autoethnography, she was able to discover the different influences that shaped her lived experiences and world-view, "from specific teachers to individual patients, from family members to key authors" (21). In the same way, the main method with which I practiced autoethnography while doing research was through evoking the

numerous past and present lived experiences I could remember and which I deemed relevant to the themes my research deals with; experiences that belong to me as well as those of the people I have grown up with, those who shaped my life and the way I see and experience it (parents, extended family and friends). I have also referred to stories and experiences that were shared with me during spontaneous discussions about the oppression and marginalisation of women in Algerian society with people I met during my PhD journey, with their consent. An interesting thing about these discussions, particularly those that happened between me and other Algerian women, is that they took place spontaneously without me talking about my research or asking questions with an intent to help gather data for it. These discussions would take place in the most organic way which, upon reflection, made me realise how important and central the themes of this project are in the lives of Algerian women.

One of the values that autoethnography can add to research is the breadth of awareness and understanding that a researcher can achieve from drawing parallels between other individuals' lived experiences and their own. This is a value that I have gained from using autoethnography throughout my visual content analysis of Algerian women's content on both YouTube and Instagram. An important example of this phenomenon from my research is when autoethnography helped me to appreciate what it means to be a woman negotiating issues of independence and power within the social constraints established by the Algerian family and society. In my research, I refer to my very first experiences navigating my relationship with my father and often getting into conflicts with him as a result of my attempts to challenge social barriers that prevent me, as a woman, from putting myself in the public eye. I talk about the first time I decided to have a Facebook account that fully represents me, using my full name and a profile picture showing my face, and how this resulted in a heated argument with my father. I also discuss the first time I decided to start a YouTube channel, the mental conflicts I endured, and how frightening it was to imagine my father's reaction to it.

Documenting these experiences in itself has added value to my research as it reflected on my understandings of the personal and political significance of my participants' choice to

put themselves in the public eye as Algerian and/or Muslim women. Added to that is the juxtaposition of my experiences with those of my participants', which made me more aware of the different layers and specificities that exist within this precise theme of my research. For example, in my interview with Algerian YouTuber Miss Cha, I came to know that she, too, endured a lack of support and objections from her family in regards to her YouTube endeavours: something that I had not expected to know before my interview with her because she projects such a confident and liberal persona on her YouTube and Instagram channels. Miss Cha talked to me about the impact of her parents' authority over her decisions, as well as their total objection to her YouTube venture when she first started it in 2013. She shared that she had been forced to delete videos of herself that she had publicly posted on YouTube and upload other ones, where she made song covers but without showing her face. In 2016, Miss Cha gained enough courage to reupload new videos where she showed her face, however this time, even after overcoming the barrier of her parents not accepting her YouTube journey, Miss Cha was yet again faced with the objection of her one-year-older brother. Prior to getting access to Miss Cha's YouTube story, I did not expect that we would share similar experiences of parental conflict and restriction, as I had imagined her social and cultural environment to be quite different from mine. I have come to know Miss Cha from her different social media accounts as this very outgoing and outspoken woman, who lives in the beautiful and vibrant capital city of Algiers, and who has many friends, male and female, whom she frequently hangs out with in different places around Algiers. So the thought of her coming from an environment where she was actually restricted from pursuing her passion for YouTube as a woman was not anticipated by me.

Before this, I had always linked women being restricted and controlled strictly to traditional and religious households, where women are forced to wear the hijab and cannot leave the private sphere freely. This belief of mine changed after drawing parallels between my lived experiences of temporarily putting myself in the public eye as a woman, and those of Miss Cha. Such personal links could only be gathered from interviews and autoethnography,

because the existing secondary scholarship does not offer such stories or insights. Added to that is the fact that social media glamourises and masks the difficult realities behind the entertaining videos of these Algerian women YouTubers, which made my interview and autoethnographic method even more valuable and urgently needed for the ways in which it revealed the hidden realities of my participants' lived experiences as publicly visible, outspoken Algerian women.

Another way autoethnography has helped me deepen my understanding of certain aspects of my research is through giving depth, sense, and purpose to personal experiences, to which I would not have given importance and space in my study had I not utilised them, along with my participants' stories, within my data collection and analysis. All of a sudden, these stories ceased to be mere personal experiences and became vessels for an added consciousness of the structural reasons and influences behind those experiences. An example of this is when an instance of Miss Cha's YouTube beginnings aligned with an experience of mine, which in result confirmed a hypothesis about a phenomenon I have been observing for a long time within my community. My hypothesis was that, by default, a great number of Algerian women are regarded as not deserving of autonomy and control over their own lives no matter their age. However, this situation may change in the condition where a woman has achieved a higher social, academic, or financial status that is highly regarded in her family and the socio-economic environment she belongs to. I.e. respect towards Algerian women and the elevation of their voices to some extent is conditional on whether or not they reach certain levels of achievement at work and/or in education and/or class. This, of course, does not apply to Algerian men who, by default, are born with an unconditional privilege to control all matters of their lives and those of their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. Of course, this is a hypothesis that I have made about an aspect of gender relations within my community, which aligns with Miss Cha's experiences within her family. However, I am careful not to claim that we can draw from it a simple generalisation that would apply to all communities in Algeria or other societies and cultures worldwide, as it is essential to recognise that power dynamics

between men and women can vary significantly in different societies and cultures. Certainly, gender dynamics often involve men exerting influence or authority over certain women in their lives, such as their sisters, mothers, wives, or daughters. This influence may be present regardless of factors like social class, education level, or other characteristics. However, it's important to acknowledge that power dynamics are complex and nuanced. The extent of men's influence can vary depending on factors like social class, disability, ethnicity, and other intersections. Additionally, not all men's influence over women is absolute or uniform.

As per my observations, the status that grants some Algerian women a certain amount of autonomy and relatively elevates their voices within their communities differs from one family to another. In some families, a higher status is achieved when daughters get married, while in others it is when they achieve financial independence. In other cases, it is when they pursue higher education degrees. This was the case for Miss Cha, as she explained to me that in her second attempt to upload videos of herself on YouTube, the fact that she was a university student and was doing well academically made her parents reconsider their decision of preventing her from presenting herself on YouTube. This, however, was not the case for me, as studying at university did not allow me to get my voice heard in my family. However, this situation changed when I moved to the UK after receiving a fully funded scholarship from the Algerian government. Suddenly I was being asked by my father about my opinion on different family matters and I started making my own decisions about my life, such as travelling to different destinations. Of course, living abroad made this easier, as I was living independently from my family, but a difference in the way I was perceived at home has definitely taken place. This specific experience of mine, combined with the different observations I have made growing up in an Algerian family, gained more sense and meaning when juxtaposed with the lived experience of another Algerian woman from a different part of Algeria (Miss Cha). This has deepened my understanding of the unexpected ways Algerian women are both vulnerable and empowered by education, career, having a public voice etc.

Autoethnography in my critical context

In the previous chapter, I developed my literature review, which I refer to in this thesis as my critical context, and whose aim was to offer the reader a comprehensive contextualisation of the socio-political and cultural history of contemporary Algeria, particularly in relation to women's rights and their position in society. This contextualisation serves as a backdrop against which the content created by Algerian women YouTubers, characterised by the communication and enactment of feminist values, can be understood and analysed. Within this critical context, I used my particular understandings of women's position in my country, perspectives that have been built from personal readings, experiences and observations, stories I have heard from family and friends, school, cinema and the internet, and I presented these narratives as a way of engaging with relevant academic research. My critical context, firstly, provided a comprehensive overview of the position of women and the feminist movement in Algerian society throughout its contemporary history. Secondly, it explored the colonial history of French secular feminism and its consequential influence on the perception of the feminist movement within Algerian society. Lastly, it offered a concise historical account of the internet and social media in Algeria.

Deciding to use autoethnography within my critical context felt like the most logical and natural course for my research to take due to the fact that its aims and questions originated from my personal experiences and observations as an Algerian Muslim woman, who is also an avid social media user. The research questions for this project were heavily influenced by my personal experiences as an Algerian woman. These questions guided me to explore various aspects within the critical context. Concurrently, my investigation into the historical background of Algerian feminism and its relevance to today's digital Algerian feminism further enriched my comprehension of both my own experiences and those of my participants. This process has provided me with insights into my participants' position, as well as mine, on the current map of Algerian feminism and its significance in the present day.

As for the benefits of autoethnography for my critical context, rather than it being a piece of writing where I simply list different scholarly works on the themes pertaining to the research, incorporating autoethnographical pieces where I use personal stories from my lived experiences as well as those of other women adds a new dimension of consciousness and awareness for both the researcher and the reader. Within my research, one example of this is when I refer to family memories in my engagement with written histories on Algeria, such as linking scholarly works on the role of women during the Algerian revolution against the French occupation with stories of my grandmother's experiences during this period. By evoking live and personal testimonies, I hope to follow the tradition of great feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga (2015), and bell hooks (1994), who stress the importance and value of bringing to light knowledge that comes from within our experiences and communities, because otherwise this knowledge would be invisible to the public.

Mitigating the lack of literature around topics of Algerian women's everyday use of the internet and social media is another way my critical context benefitted from incorporating autoethnography. There exists copious literature on women and social media, regarding their usage, empowerment, influence, participation and interaction mainly in a Western context (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007; Citron, 2014; Chen, 2012), while the small body of work focusing on women and social media in an Arab Muslim/ North African setting tends to focus on the politics and activism of 'the Arab Spring'. This is where my personal experiences of internet controversies, as well as enjoyment, in Algeria have been useful in helping me to develop a wider and more complex picture of Algerian women's internet use, especially in relation to gendered engagement with the net and social media.

Autoethnography through my own YouTube channel

The motivation behind creating my own YouTube channel stemmed from my desire to gain insights into the experiences and practices of my research participants on the platform.

However, my YouTube endeavour did not unfold as I had initially imagined. I had to privatise all the videos I had uploaded due to the negative feedback I received. Despite this setback, the experience proved to be highly valuable, as it allowed me to personally understand what it means to be a visibly Muslim Algerian woman, openly presenting myself in the online public sphere. Moreover, running the YouTube channel taught me so much about its practicalities, especially when it comes to dealing with the challenges of moderating numerous negative and hostile comments. I was confronted with the reality of online trolling and harassment, which I realised can escalate alarmingly fast when an Algerian woman is visible in the digital realm.

I launched my YouTube channel on January 13, 2018, and on the very same date, I uploaded my debut video. I posted my last video on November 28 of the same year, and about a month later, I decided to make all my videos private. Thus, my YouTube channel remained active for approximately 10 months. Throughout this period, I managed to upload a total of 6 videos. From the moment I shared my first video, I began receiving numerous negative comments that heavily criticised my visibility as an Algerian Muslim woman in the online space. As part of my autoethnographical practice, I documented my experience with starting a YouTube channel, thinking of the type of content to make, filming the content, editing and publicly posting it on YouTube and other social media platforms, and interacting with the comments I was receiving. Even though, as I previously mentioned, my experience with running a YouTube channel had to be cut short, and the data collected during that period was limited and did not significantly contribute to my thesis, this experience helped me generate so much insight into the world of YouTube personal production, which my participants interact with daily. This, in turn, helped me design and shape my interview questions, and thus it became a way for me to develop a sense of how I could frame the significance of this experience in academic terms.

Perhaps one aspect of this experience from which I gained the most insights and which was the most eye-opening for me is the issue of the feedback YouTubers receive in their comment sections. From my experience, checking my comment section after receiving a notification on my phone or computer became harder and harder each time I uploaded a new

video, especially after I started to receive comments calling me horrible names and describing me as a ‘bad Muslim woman’ and ‘tainting the image of Islam and the true Muslim woman’ for travelling abroad alone, as well as the use of obscene and sexualised insults and threats. This developed an anxiety in me and was one of the main reasons why I decided to privatise all the videos I had once shared publicly on YouTube. Accordingly, when I was designing my interview questions, I took this area into consideration and made sure to ask my participants about their experiences with, and views on, their comment sections, and how they deal with negative and hateful comments. One specific question I decided to ask my interviewees was whether or not they made use of the filter that is provided in comment sections on YouTube, which filters out specific words and terms selected by the content creator. During the interviews, my participants talked to me about the importance of the filter feature in their YouTube practice. Miss Cha confirmed to me her use of this feature, as it allows her to delete all sexual and offensive terms as she does not want them to appear under her videos, so that her parents and other family members will not be hurt by them. Mlle Maziw expressed to me that hateful comments do not affect her at all and that she does not mind when people say bad things about her because, as she said: “if you are a woman doing YouTube in Algeria, you are bound to be hated on”. However, she said that she does not accept it when people comment hurtful and offensive things about her parents and family members, and so she also uses the filter feature, as well as, a ‘moderator’ to delete all offensive comments.

Through this experience, I gained another important insight that sheds light on the negative and violent social response towards Algerian women being publicly visible, particularly in online spaces. The hateful and misogynistic comments I received shortly after posting my first YouTube video demonstrate the active discouragement women face when they choose to be outspoken and visible. This realisation further emphasises the bravery of my research participants and the importance of their activism. In my third analysis chapter, I delve deeper into the connection between the societal punishment of women and the discouragement they encounter in occupying public spaces, both online and offline. I explore

social media content created by Algerian women YouTubers like Nour Brahimi, who addresses various topics such as the challenges of mobility while traveling within Algeria or abroad, solo travel for Algerian women, society's perception and reaction to women traveling alone, which hinders their mobility, traveling abroad while being visibly Muslim, and concerns about safety during travel. Through their social media presence, Algerian women YouTubers like Nour Brahimi actively reclaim and assert not only their right to mobility but also the rights of all Algerian women to occupy both online and physical public spaces. Their efforts are crucial in challenging and changing the prevailing negative attitudes towards women's visibility and freedom of movement.

In summary, while my YouTube channel didn't achieve the prominence I had hoped for, it served as an essential platform for gaining firsthand experience of the YouTube practice of my participants. It also provided crucial insights into the complexities of navigating the digital space as a visibly Muslim Algerian woman, and the difficulties of managing negative comments and online harassment.

Qualitative interviews

While autoethnography was the first data production method I used in my research, interviews were the method I initially centred my study around. Since my research originally started as a general enquiry about Algerian women's YouTube experiences as content creators, I deemed qualitative interviews as the most appropriate way to accomplish that. However, this could not be done the way I initially envisaged it to, due to not being able to reach the appropriate data saturation, which I will talk about in further detail later in this section. In terms of sampling my target participants, I set the following participant selection criteria. I needed my participants to be:

- All women,

- All Algerians,

- Have gained their popularity on different social media platforms primarily from their YouTube activity, i.e. they primarily identify as YouTubers,

- Therefore they should have publicly shared, and continue to share, videos on the YouTube platform,

- Self-presenting in their YouTube content, i.e. they do not conceal their faces in their videos, for example, by only narrating their videos.

Here, too, it is imperative to reflect on the way my personal history and positionality as an Algerian woman affected my choice of criteria which I decided to take into consideration when recruiting my research participants. First of all, it is clear that I have chosen to study Algerian women due to the fact that I grew up as a girl and woman in the Algerian society. As I briefly mentioned before, I decided to study Algerian women who create content on YouTube due to the fact that these women have overcome so many social and cultural barriers in Algerian society in order to rightfully occupy spaces on the YouTube platform, which has been commonly established in Algeria as a platform that is exclusive to men. As for the criteria of self-presenting within their YouTube content, this is because of the stigma attached to the presence of women on the internet in Algeria, thus self-presenting within their videos on YouTube and posts on Instagram or Facebook presents further challenge to these women. Therefore, I wanted to learn more about it from these women's perspectives. As for the type of YouTube videos they share, I did not want to limit my research to a specific genre but I preferred to leave it open for all types of content made by these women, including and not restricted to: beauty, travel, comedy, lifestyle, and educational videos. The same thing goes for my participants' ages: although most Algerian women YouTubers seemed to be young women aged 18 to 25, I did not want to restrict my participants' age range as long as they were adults and able to legally consent to participate in my research.

After receiving ethical approval for my fieldwork, designing my interviews, information sheets and consent forms, I started the process of contacting my prospective interviewees. I used emails as my initial recruitment tool, as it is advertised by the majority of Algerian women YouTubers as the most professional means to communicate with them. Thus I initially opted for it in hopes that my requests would not be disregarded. Unexpectedly, from the 30 emails I sent out in March 2019, I only received replies from 4 YouTubers (Besma MB, Wiss M, Purely Nana, and Selma Baddaoui). However, I could only fix the time and place for an interview with one YouTuber out of the 4 who had replied to my emails, as the rest did not follow up with our email exchange.

Due to the lack of responses to my emails, I decided to send messages to Algerian women YouTubers via Instagram direct messages, as I had noticed that it was a platform on which they were very active, for example by uploading Instagram stories on a daily basis. Messaging Algerian women YouTubers on Instagram generated more responses compared to emails, and I could get responses from some YouTubers who had not formerly replied to my emails, such as Miss Cha and Nour Brahimi. There were also a number of them who positively replied to my messages at first but never followed up in order to specify a date and place for an interview, even after I have sent them follow up messages. As for those whom I ended up interviewing, some of them preferred to move the conversation about the details of our interviews to WhatsApp as they feared our conversation could get lost amongst hundreds of messages they receive on Instagram daily.

When reflecting upon the reasons as to why I did not get enough replies from most of the Algerian women YouTubers I contacted, the large number of messages and notifications they receive on a daily basis seemed to be one important factor, which was indeed confirmed by the fact that some of them asked for our communication to be moved to WhatsApp so that it would be easier for them to follow up with my messages. Another potential reason could be that a great number of these YouTubers advertise their email addresses primarily for the benefit of brands and businesses to contact them for potential collaborations and sponsorships.

This is a matter that they openly and publicly state, and so they might prefer to dismiss emails that do not serve this purpose. In addition to that, not having access to a personal network of fellow YouTubers who are women and Algerian presented a disadvantage for me, as I was left with no choice but to “cold message” a number of them whom I had gotten to know from my personal use of YouTube and Instagram, and also from friends’ recommendations (I asked my friends and followers on social media to send me a list of their favourite Algerian women YouTubers). It is also worth mentioning that I have secured one interview through the method of snowballing, when YouTuber Miss Cha accepted to be interviewed and asked Mlle Maziw to respond to my request as they are close friends.

Consequently, I received responses from 4 Algerian women YouTubers: Nour Brahimi and Miss Cha, whom I ended up interviewing through Skype; and Mlle Maziw and Selma Baddaoui, whom I met with in person and interviewed in Algiers. In addition to that, I was able to conduct a fifth interview with Algerian YouTuber Amira Riaa, who never responded to my emails and messages, but whom I managed to meet and interview in London, during a meet-and-greet event she organised for her fans during her trip to the UK. So to recapitulate, I managed to interview five Algerian women YouTubers: Miss Cha and Nour Brahimi through Skype; and Mlle Maziw, Selma Baddaoui, and Amira Riaa, whom I interviewed in person.

In my thesis, I acknowledge that I conducted interviews with five Algerian women YouTubers. However, the majority of the data I utilize in my research is derived from just three of them. This selection is based on the distinction between those who align closely with the intrinsically feminist values and principles that underpin my project and those whose content falls more within the realm of "influencing" rather than promoting feminist ideals. While all five participants expressed their passion for advancing women's rights and position in Algeria, it became apparent that not all of them were creating content that directly addressed the oppressive traditional attitudes prevalent in Algerian society. For instance, Amira Riaa's online practice predominantly features brand endorsements and the promotion of luxurious lifestyles. Such content does not inherently challenge the patriarchal structures prevalent in Algerian

society or actively strive to address the oppressive norms experienced by Algerian women. Consequently, I consciously opted to focus my data analysis on the three YouTubers, Miss Cha, Mlle Maziw, and Nour Brahimi, whose content aligns more closely with the feminist values and principles central to the objectives of this research project. I wanted to understand how digital feminist activists uniquely and creatively use their online platforms and media to convey radical social justice messages. It therefore makes sense to focus my analysis specifically on those creators whose agenda is to push at the boundaries of patriarchal culture and discourse.

As I mentioned previously in this chapter, the process of shaping and designing my interviews has been vastly informed by my autoethnographic practice through recording my personal experiences as a temporary Algerian woman YouTuber. Thus, I made sure to include questions relating to all aspects that seemed to be potentially pivotal in the YouTube experience of an Algerian woman as a content creator: from how my participants had decided to embark on this YouTube journey and the barriers they might have faced because of that, to the type of content they share with their audiences, the feedback they receive for it, both positive and negative, and the ways in which they deal with this feedback. I also made sure to familiarise myself with each of my participants' type of YouTube content and personalised my questions accordingly when applicable.

One example of that is when I interviewed Mlle Maziw and asked her about a specific video of hers that I had watched prior to our interview and deemed to be potentially insightful for my enquiry. The video is titled "لو كانت التعليقات من الواقع"[5] (If the comments were from reality). In this video, we see Mlle Maziw enacting some of the recurring comments that she receives, which are often negative, criticising her for the way she speaks or the way she looks. I asked Mlle Maziw about this video and specifically the part where we see her with her hair and face

[5] Mlle Maziw. (2018, August 11). maziw's Mind - لو كانت التعليقات من الواقع - IF I WAS (If the comments were from reality) [Online video]. Retrieved September 18, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APuG6ZiVIG4

covered and eyes blurred, as she says: “In this video, I covered myself because there are some people who are saying that I have to do that so that I can get married and lead a normal life.” Mlle Maziw responded to my enquiry about this video by saying that she had made that video because she often receives negative comments, and specifically ones where men tell her that she should not be visible on the internet and that she should be modest by covering her face, otherwise she will not be able to get married. Mlle Maziw further explained that she knows many women who really want to start a YouTube channel but are reluctant to do so because of such negative/aggressive opinions held by society about Algerian women occupying public or online spaces. She also talked about her family’s support of her YouTube career and that it was one of the biggest reasons that made her carry on with it despite the negative feedback she continues to receive. Mlle Maziw also expressed her disappointment in the types of judgement and opinions made about women in Algeria to this day:

> it is not okay for people to stop women from doing YouTube for the sake of finding a husband, women are not living their lives just to get married, people who speak like this are still in the Jahiliya age[6], we are in the 21st century, so if you still think that YouTube is only for men and not women and that a woman’s appropriate place is in the kitchen then I am sorry you have to revise your way of thinking. (My translation from French and Algerian dialect)

Throughout its different stages, I tried my best to make my research inspired by feminist principles and ethics. One aspect of this was my decision to conduct semi-structured interviewing for its established compatibility with feminist research values in the way it gives research participants enough freedom to express themselves when and if they feel the need to, instead of restricting or directing their responses. As Reinharz (1992) explains, semistructured (or what is also often referred to as unstructured) interviewing is a qualitative data-gathering technique which, unlike structured interviewing, creates an open and free

[6] The word Jahiliya literally translates to ignorance in Arabic, and it is an Islamic concept referring to the period of time predating the rise of Islam in Arabia.

space for respondents to be unrestricted in the telling of their stories and experiences, which as a result offers interviewers more and better understandings of their participants. Added to this is the value of women being interviewed by women as Reinharz explains: “A woman listening with care and caution enables another woman to develop ideas, construct meaning, and use words that say what she means” (1992; p. 24). Reinharz also emphasises the value of open-ended questions in giving space for interviewees to respond to questions using their own expressions and stories, as opposed to close-ended questions which limit them with a specific set of answers to choose from. During my interviews, this translated into the way I asked broad questions about the different stages of an Algerian woman’s experience on YouTube, and then from there I could personalise deeper questions according to their answers. This allowed my participants to tell me about their accounts as freely and comfortably as possible.

Another value of open-ended interviewing, which Reinharz also affirms, is that it produces research that is grounded in the individuality of people’s differences. There are particular advantages to unstructured interviewing vis-à-vis researching women in the way it brings to light their voices, stories, and memories in the ways they wish to articulate them, which fights back against centuries of women having their voices ignored and often replaced by hegemonic institutional or exclusionary narratives (Reinharz, 1992). To this end, I made sure to keep my interviews largely unstructured and informal, using broad but understandable questions for my participants to feel comfortable expressing themselves in the way they wished to, about, for instance, their accounts of personal changes and growth after starting their YouTube journey.

Thinking of ways of making my participants comfortable and at ease during our interviews is another aspect I drew from the feminist approach of doing interviews. Building trust and rapport is a hugely important asset when interviewing people who are vulnerable in the public eye, such as the group of women who agreed to participate in my research. This aspect of interview ethics has been advocated by many feminists, such as Ann Oakley (1979,

1980, 1981), who encourages feminist interviewers to build a relationship of trust and rapport with their interviewees and rejects the exploitative nature of conventional, extractive interviewing practices. Within my own experience when interviewing Algerian women YouTubers, this was reflected in the way I talked and interacted with my interviewees, as I made sure to make them as comfortable and at ease as possible by smiling, giving them as much clarification and explanation as they needed, and answering any questions they had about myself or my research or any other subject. Indeed, Ann Oakley also argues that refusing to answer questions asked by interviewees is both exploitative and counterproductive (1981). In addition, I kept a very relaxed, cheerful and informal tone with my participants and tried to make them feel as if they were meeting a friend for coffee. For the women I interviewed in person, I made sure to choose the most convenient place for them to meet, and so, for instance, I ended up meeting Mlle Maziw in a coffeehouse in central Algiers, which she said was one of her favourite places to go to with her friends. And I met Selma Baddaoui in a restaurant near where she works, also in Algiers where we had lunch together.

At the start of my fieldwork, I was reluctant to conduct interviews in ways other than in person, because I felt like doing interviews online (through Skype for example) would not give me the opportunity to have a deep and open discussion with my participants in the way face-to-face interviews do. I was initially concerned that virtual interviews, for instance, would not allow me to easily build rapport with my participants or capture any facial or bodily cues expressed by them. However, since it was more convenient for some of them to meet online, I had to interview Miss Cha and Nour Brahimi through Skype. To my surprise, conducting interviews via Skype was as rewarding and fruitful as the ones I did in person, as my participants showed so much interest and enthusiasm for my research. This was reflected in the way they kept reminding me that they were ready to offer me all the help and information I needed about their YouTube experiences, as well as the way they seemed very comfortable and open during our interviews which each one of them lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. As for being able to catch facial or bodily cues during Skype interviews, this did not end up to be

an issue as I was able to capture my participants' facial expressions and movement quite clearly. Perhaps one of the most important instances of this and which offered so many new insights and ways of understanding my research data is when Miss Cha expressed to me her subscription to feminism. The way she asked me if I was on the same wavelength as her as far as our feminist politics were concerned, with a facial expression that showed hesitation and nervousness, felt particularly significant. In my analysis, I explain this by the stigma and judgements commonly associated with feminism and feminists in Algeria. Of course, after immediately responding to Miss Cha's question telling her that I am positively on the same wavelength as her, she went back to confidently and cheerfully telling me about her feminist ideas and values.

Building rapport with my participants was not difficult at all. As I mention above, right from the start my participants showed immediate enthusiasm and a warm welcome, and kept offering help. For instance, Nour Brahimi kept asking if I needed more information whenever she finished answering a question. Ann Oakley (2016) talks about her experience interviewing women for her Becoming a Mother study (1979) and also records an ease in making a rapport with the women she interviewed, who showed great enthusiasm for being part of her study, and so did Janet Finch (1984), who reported the following about her interviews for her study on clergymen's wives: "Women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to a woman researcher, even if they have some initial anxieties about the purpose of the research or their own "performance" in the interview situation." (Finch, 1984; p. 72)

In the same vein, I believe that one of the elements which helped me easily build a rapport with my participants is the nature of my research. I felt like my participants showed great interest and support for my research due to its focus on women. They seemed to be very enthusiastic and shared ideas that are very supportive of women and expressed themselves in ways that showed how central this subject is in their lives, this is something that was revealed later in the analysis as all the women YouTubers I interviewed advocated for women's rights in Algeria, whether or not they openly identified as feminists. Another aspect

of this is that all of them requested to not be anonymous in the study. I believe that they did so because of their enthusiasm and support for this research and because they wanted their voices as women to be heard without any restrictions or anonymity. Another element that I believe helped me build rapport with my participants is the fact that we share and navigate similar cultural and political contexts by being Algerian Muslim women.

Oakley (1981) also raises attention to issues of power and reciprocity that may arise during interviews. 'Cultural homogeneity' is an aspect that she discusses and explains that even though it may reduce the social distance between the interviewer and the interviewee, it does not eliminate the power imbalance that is bound to exist in a research interview setting. In the case of my research, a degree of cultural homogeneity was indeed present in my relationship with my research participants, as I share several identity facets that make me an 'insider' within the group I am researching, such as being a woman, Algerian, Muslim. Although not all my participants are visibly Muslim (Miss Cha and Mlle Maziw do not wear the Hijab), I share the characteristic of being a Hijabi with the rest pf my participants: Nour Brahimi, Selma Baddaoui and Amira Riaa. I was also a YouTuber at some point of my life and I belong to the same age group as my participants. These characteristics definitely made rapport-building and communication with my research participants easier. For example, it made understanding social and cultural cues and Algerian slang possible as I come from the same culture and society as these women as well as speak the same languages they do.

However, as explained above, this is not to say that a power imbalance would not take place in situations as the one within which my research is situated, and upon reflection on what could cause a power imbalance between myself as a researcher and my research participants, my educational status and the fact that I was conducting PhD research would be the first and most potent factor that could situate me in a position that would be taken as more powerful than that of my participants. At the same time, I knew that my participants' awareness of the fact that their input would be part of a research project that is conducted under the supervision of an ethical and well-established institution such as the University of York's

Centre for Women's Studies would make my request for interviews more credible to them that is why I made the choice to make this aspect of my research clear.

Another aspect that I reflected upon as being a power imbalance factor is the fact that I come from a different region in Algeria than my participants, as I come from a relatively small city in the west of Algeria while my participants all come from the capital city Algiers, except for Nour Brahimi who comes from Blida, which is a city that is very close to Algiers. This was, obviously, not a deliberate choice from my part, to have all my participants from the capital city, but it is something that happened by chance. Thinking of how this might have affected different stages of my research, the first aspect that comes to my mind is the popular Algerian belief, which I also held prior to conducting interviews, that women from small towns and cities and rural areas do not enjoy the same freedom and open-mindedness women from the capital and big cities do. Before conducting my interviews, I viewed the women I was set to meet, mainly the ones who did not wear the Hijab, as living a life in which there was no such thing as being restricted by family members for being a woman, as I believed they lived within very open-minded families and communities and were free to be and do all what they wanted. However, this did not prevent me from including questions about family restrictions based on gender and views of their communities about women in my interviews, because I knew that what I already held in my mind were prejudices and that the truth can be something else, and that is exactly why I wanted to conduct interviews with these women in the first place. Asking these questions indeed proved fruitful and showed me a reality of Algerian women's lives I had not considered before.

These insights and so much more have been uncovered through qualitative semistructured interviewing about the personal worlds of the five women YouTubers and content creators I recruited. However, the data generated from these interviews did not reach the saturation necessary for a research project that had originally been centred around interviewing as its core research method. Thus I moved to my third research method: visual content analysis. This method turned out to be particularly generative and has opened the

door for me to explore what I now see as a key focus of my research project: the feminist vocabularies and languages Algerian women use in their content on social media, namely YouTube and Instagram. Interestingly, so many parts of my visual content analysis have been illuminated by the data gathered from my interviews, and one major example of that is the fact that all five of my participants expressed their interest in speaking about women-related subjects and issues within Algerian society during the interviews, regardless if they particularly identify as feminists or not. This has elucidated my analysis of the videos in which my participants, openly or discreetly, tackle subjects that are inspired by women's (often oppressive) experiences in Algeria. To this end, even though I expected the interviews to be more central to my analysis, visual content analysis has generated more findings and the interviews have become a very helpful contextualisation of them. Along with autoethnography, the issue of not achieving the data saturation initially hoped for has been mitigated, which in this case has proven the value of utilising a blend of research methods in a feminist research project.

One interesting element which has emerged from the analysis of my interviews is how some of my participants identified themselves as being feminists and others did not. This has followed the conscious decision of mine not to bring up or ask questions about feminism. Being familiar with the sensitivities that exist around this term in Algeria, the only thing that made my enquiry centre around women's position and issues in Algeria was through asking my participants about their YouTube experiences as women in Algeria. By refraining from imposing the term "feminism" on my participants, I not only endeavoured to create space for them to self-identity but I also tried to minimise the bias and influence I would inevitably hold as a researcher/interviewer.

Visual content analysis

I originally intended to conduct visual content analysis for the purpose of exploring in general the content my participants create and share on YouTube. However, the semi-structured interviews with my participants opened my eyes to the potential their social media content holds for cultivating new feminist languages and vocabularies with which they (and those of us they “influence”) can continuously and actively challenge the patriarchal attitudes that Algerian society upholds and uses to restrict Algerian women’s freedoms, reducing us to second-class citizens. Therefore, the aim of my use of visual content analysis eventually evolved into identifying, exploring, and deepening understandings of these feminist vocabularies and languages. This, along with the fact that the data generated from my interviews did not reach the saturation I had originally aimed for, as I mentioned earlier, led me to situate visual content analysis as my main research method. Therefore, I decided to analyse the videos of my participants, taking into consideration their feminist vocabularies and languages, whether explicitly labelled as feminist or not.

Before delving into further details of the visual content analysis conducted in my research, I would like to briefly discuss the meanings and functionalities of the label 'feminist' as it pertains to my study. The label ‘feminist’ within the context of my research embodies a multifaceted significance and serves specific functions that illuminate the dynamics of Algerian women YouTubers’ engagement with digital media. My research started as a broad exploration of the content produced by Algerian women on YouTube. However, through insightful interviews, particularly with my initial participant, Miss Cha, a new dimension emerged: the content crafted by Algerian women YouTubers appeared to draw inspiration from feminist ideals, challenging the conventional norms that have long constrained Algerian society. The colonial underpinnings that contribute to the taboo nature of the "feminist" label in Algerian society, a theme I delved into in my critical context, have often led Algerian women, including my participants, to refrain from openly adopting the label. However, it became evident that a common thread united these Algerian women YouTubers: their digital narratives resonated

with feminist principles, such as advocating for women's rights and empowerment, critiquing societal expectations, opposing gender-based violence, and amplifying women's voices and experiences. This realisation prompted my curiosity to delve into the unique feminist languages and vocabularies employed to convey these themes.

The label ‘feminist’ takes on a distinct functionality within the methodology of my research, serving as a lens through which I identified the nuanced feminist languages and vocabularies present within the social media content curated by Algerian women YouTubers. Moreover, this label facilitated the identification of participants whose content embraced feminist principles beyond mere visibility, actively challenging oppressive norms and striving for transformative social change in Algeria. As I expand upon in Chapter 6, a key distinction exists between feminist activism centred on dismantling oppressive societal norms and that which stops short of achieving visibility, often leveraging this visibility for commercial gain within neoliberal capitalist frameworks. This strategic application of the "feminist" label enabled me to discern participants whose content aligned closely with the focus and objectives of my research. Consequently, I made the decision to exclude the analysis of YouTuber and social media influencer Amira Ria, given her content's emphasis on commercial visibility and gain, rather than systemic change in a social justice sense.

Upon completing the comprehensive analysis of my participants' social media content, a pivotal insight crystallised: the resonance between the work of my participants and the enduring concerns of the Algerian feminist movement spanning back to the 1980s. In Chapter 4, I delve into Algerian Women's Position in the Family, Infantilisation, and Control, exploring an array of digital content on this topic, including Miss Cha's video on "Algerian Brothers," which critiques the gender hierarchy and guardianship system within Algerian families. This mirrors a principal demand of the Algerian feminist movement: the eradication of male guardianship. Similarly, Chapter 5 unpacks how my participants confront normative beauty standards and challenge sexual harassment, mirroring the overarching objectives of the Algerian feminist movement, which persistently advocates for legal reforms, accountability for

harassers, and a culture of gender equity and respect. Nour Brahimi's social media content, featured in Chapter 6, resonates with the movement's call for Algerian women's constitutional right to freedom of movement, aligning with their demand for visibility, mobility, and occupation of public spaces. In essence, the ‘feminist’ label not only aids in deciphering the intricacies of my research but also serves as a bridge connecting the contemporary digital discourse to the longstanding struggles of Algerian feminism.

Returning to the visual content analysis process, I opted to incorporate Instagram content by Algerian women YouTubers, despite my research's initial emphasis on YouTube. This is due to the importance and relevance Instagram has within the YouTube practice of my participants. This was confirmed to me by Miss Cha during our interview, as she explained that many YouTubers, including herself, are active on Instagram in parallel with YouTube, to stay relevant in the eyes of their communities and audiences when they are not so active on YouTube. Due to the ease of making and uploading videos and pictures on Instagram (compared to YouTube, on which videos are usually much longer and have a more elaborate format) and its large outreach, YouTubers using Instagram are able to stay present on their audiences’ timelines, and therefore can sustain engagement whenever they upload new videos on YouTube. Moreover, Instagram is a visual social medium that has grown immensely in popularity over recent years among influencers in North Africa and the Middle East (Hurley, 2021). Because of this, and the fact that many of my participants’ activities on Instagram are politically potent and reflect their ideas on and concerns with women’s rights, I decided to take them into consideration throughout my analysis.

To make the process of selecting videos for my visual content analysis more manageable, considering the hundreds of videos and posts shared by my participants, my initial video sampling took into consideration two main criteria: 1) the popularity of the video, 2) its significance vis-à-vis Algerian women’s gendered experiences on- and off-line, which I initially gauged from the titles of the videos. An example of that is Miss Cha’s video “Algerian

Brothers"[7]; "Mlle Maziw's video titled "Comments: Haters vs Lovers"[8]; or Nour Brahimi's Facebook Reel, "Dear Algerian Men"[9]. These videos have all ended up being very culturally and socially challenging and revealed interesting particularities about my participants' gendered experiences as Algerian women who occupy online public spaces.

Let's take the process of sampling videos made by Miss Cha as an example: I looked for Miss Cha's most watched videos by applying the filter 'Most popular' provided for all YouTube channels. This gave me a list of Miss Cha's most viewed videos and from there I started watching those with intriguing titles and content, such as the one called "Les frères Algériens" (Algerian brothers). This specific video of Miss Cha gave me so much insight into her perceptions of a typical Algerian brother, the traditional position he holds within the family, and the gendered power dynamics that govern his relationship with his female sibling (played by Miss Cha herself in the video).

I initially chose the factor of popularity when selecting sample videos to analyse with the assumption that most videos that show Algerian women YouTubers in a position where they challenge, represent or discuss gender dynamics and power structures in Algeria would gain much traction due to the scarcity of this type of content in the Algerian context and the amount of public outrage it would cause. However, after going through all of my participants' videos, I decided to no longer apply this criterion as, on the one hand, I found out that in many cases there were videos that were in fact culturally challenging but did not achieve much viewership. On the other hand, so many videos that did not end up being insightful in my analysis were very popular for reasons such as the time they were published at. For example, Miss Cha is one of the very few first Algerian women to join the Algerian YouTube scene that was predominantly occupied by men, and so many of her very first videos are very popular

[7] Miss Cha (2016, April 25). Les frères Algériens (Algerian Brothers) [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0MZloWi_S4&t=168s

[8] Mlle Maziw (2016, December 31). H.S - Commentaires (Haters vs Lovers) (H.S – Comments (Haters vs Lovers)) [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTtFMGfWOGM

[9] Nour Brahimi (2022, March 2). Dear Algerian men. [Video]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=667863397967002

because of this factor. Miss Cha's video titled "انواع البنات في الإقامة الجامعية الجزائرية" (Types of girls in Algerian university dormitories) was released in 2017 and has accumulated over 250,000 views. This video falls under the comedy genre, featuring humorous skits that portray various types of Algerian girls residing in university dormitories. Miss Cha highlights the daily activities performed by these girls in an amusing and comedic manner, including cleaning, cooking, speaking on the phone with friends, studying, and eating. While the video has gained significant popularity, its themes were not directly pertinent to my analysis. Consequently, this prompted me to reconsider my selection criteria moving forward.

Concerning my sampling of content shared on Instagram, I did not want to limit myself to only content in video format but I also included Instagram posts, which usually include a combination of a picture, or several, with a caption underneath it where content creators add their own commentary or descriptions. These commentaries have proven to be very insightful and important in the analysis of Instagram posts. And here, too, I did not focus only on Instagram posts that had garnered hundreds of thousands of likes, but I kept my options open for all posts and videos which contained a culturally challenging idea, or an important discrete message about women's experiences in Algeria, and so on. As I mentioned before, I started my research focusing solely on YouTube as a platform on which a growing number of women are producing and publicly sharing content. As a frequent user of social media growing up in Algeria, I have observed that YouTube was the first website where we could witness the emergence of female content creators, many of whom self-presented in their videos, and who gained substantial numbers of followers. This was the main reason as to why I chose YouTube as a platform to focus on in the first place. Later on during my research, I came to realise how other social media platforms have become very popular among Algerian youth, such as Instagram and more recently TikTok. With all the visual affordances these platforms offer to its users, social network sites such as Instagram have become an essential part of these women YouTubers' online presence and practice. It allows them to express themselves freely and creatively, connect deeply with their audiences, as well as advertise their YouTube content to

greater numbers of people. This is why I decided to include Instagram in my analysis, as it has essentially grown to become part of these women's YouTube experience with its influence and multiple affordances such as the different video formats it offers, and the vast array of background sounds and content creation tools.

Krippendorff (2004) explains that content analysis' initial uses and methods were grounded on a 'narrow conception of science' that considered quantitative numbers and measurements as the only source of evidenced information. However, content analysis methods started taking newer approaches to keep up with and understand social phenomena that were generated by newer forms of texts and images. In the following, Krippendorff (2004) gives a definition of contemporary content analysis and its aims and methods:

> Content analysts examine data, printed matter, images, or sounds-texts-in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does. These are questions for which natural scientists have no answers and for which their methods are generally insensitive. (Krippendorf, 2004; p. xviii)

When it comes to situating content analysis within feminist research, Reinharz (1992) explains that content analysts, whether feminist or not, are interested in systematically counting or thematically interpreting cultural artefacts. These cultural artefacts are especially interesting for content analysts because they are produced by people and emanate from different contexts, such as their private lives, organisational lives, or popular culture. Accordingly, I see my practice of content analysis in my research as a feminist thematic reading of visual cultural artefacts produced by Algerian women YouTubers on social media, represented in the videos or posts they share publicly on the internet. Reinharz adds that researching cultural products through a feminist lens using the method of content analysis reveals patterns of patriarchy and misogynist culture. This is something that I also encountered in my content analysis of Algerian women YouTubers' social media content. Interestingly, Reinharz adds that even feminist literature can be the object of these interpretations. This

makes me think of the literature, both textual and visual, made by mainly French feminists, and which identifies itself as feminist but at the same time upholds or enacts oppressive and condescending tropes against Algerian Muslim women. And of course, the main type of visual data which I have analysed is one that opposes the dominant culture of patriarchy and misogyny present in Algerian society, Reinharz (1992) describes this popular culture created and chosen by women to resist male domination as 'the resilience of women's culture.'

Stemler (2015) argues that content analysts should make use of the richness of visual stimuli available in visually based content instead of relying on text-based linguistic analyses. This in fact was true for my own use of visual content analysis, as it proved to be very generative with the presence of a rich amount of visual content. This method has also allowed me to access a vast array of both old and new visual content as it is publicly shared by Algerian women YouTubers. There were also no time or place restrictions to access this source of data, as I was one click away from accessing it at anytime, anywhere. Additionally, visual content analysis allowed me to access data that has been created by these women without the influence of my interventions as a researcher. Thus, the feminist concerns and expressions these women exhibited in their social media content were not prompted by my questions, for example, but were shared solely because they fall into their interests as Algerian women content creators.

Leavy (2000) explains that cultural artifacts – in the case of my research, those are represented by my participants' audio-visual social media content – present an aspect of validity in the data they carry, and this is because they encapsulate themes and perspectives that exist independently of and precede the research process. This is true in the case of my research, as the themes related to women's rights and position in Algerian society I extracted from my participants' social media content already existed there before the start of my research, and what prompted me to look for those themes through content analysis was the fact that all of my participants expressed their interests in them during our interviews.

To provide a clear explanation of my visual content analysis process, I have divided this subsection into three distinct phases, with each phase consisting of several stages. This division aligns with Neuman's (1997) definition of content analysis, which involves three main steps: identifying a body of material for analysis, creating a system for recording the data, and recording the data itself:

> Content analysis is a technique for examining information, or content, in written or symbolic material... In content analysis, a researcher first identifies a body of material to analyse... and then creates a system for recording specific aspects of it. The system might include counting how often certain words or themes occur. Finally, the researcher records what was found in the material. He or she often measures information in the content as numbers... Content analysis is used for exploratory and explanatory research but is most often used in descriptive research. (Neuman, 1997; p.31)

Accordingly, the first phase of my visual content analysis encompassed several stages, including defining the research questions, selecting a sample for analysis, and familiarising myself with the data. The second phase involved the development of a coding framework, followed by the collection and coding of data. Finally, the third and concluding phase comprised the analysis of patterns and themes, interpretation of the findings, and drawing of meaningful conclusions.

As for the visual nature of my material, scholars have emphasised the applicability of qualitative content analysis (QCA) in relation to visual data, as evident in the works of Krippendorff (2004), Shapiro and Markoff (1997), and Schreier (2012). Despite its initial focus on the analysis and interpretation of textual materials, QCA has proven to be a versatile approach that can effectively accommodate visual data as well. While QCA is predominantly associated with the analysis of textual materials, it is important to note that this reliance on textual sources is primarily a result of convenience and habitual practice, rather than a

limitation of the method itself (Schreier, 2012). It is, as I also found, a perfectly sound method for the analysis of audio-visual media as well.

Phase One: defining research questions, identifying a body of material to analyse (sample selection), and familiarising myself with the data

The first phase of my visual content analysis comprised the following three steps: defining research questions, identifying a body of material to analyse (sample selection), and familiarising myself with the data. In the first step, I had to clearly define the research questions that would serve as a guide for my visual content analysis. At the initial stage of my research project, the research questions I was aiming to answer using visual content analysis were as follows:

- What key topics and ideas are articulated in Algerian women's YouTube videos?
- What is the public perception of these women and their content, as represented by the comments on their videos?

These had to be honed down following my decision to make visual content analysis the main research method in my endeavour to identify the feminist languages and vocabularies used by my participants in their social media content. Thus the new research questions developed as follows:

- What feminist themes are addressed in videos and social media posts created by Algerian women YouTubers?
- How do these women visually represent and communicate feminist ideas in their social media content?

The second step of the initial stage of my analysis involved the identification of "a body of material to analyse". In the case of my research, this is exemplified by a representative

sample of both YouTube and Instagram videos, as well as Instagram posts, created and shared by each of my participants. I selected a sample of a total of 50 videos and Instagram posts created by all three of my participants. The sample included a diverse range of videos and posts covering various topics related to women's experiences in Algeria. I selected videos based on titles that include clues related to experiences of womanhood in Algeria to narrow down the scope and focus of my analysis. This helped ensure that the content I analysed would be more likely to contain topics relevant to the thematic focus of my research. For instance, while browsing through YouTube videos and Instagram posts by Nour Brahimi, titles such as: "How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel", "FEMALE IN A HOSTEL! IS IT SAFE??", "why do I travel alone", directly caught my attention. Similarly, titles from Miss Cha's videos, such as: "Algerian Brothers", "when he asks for your number, the art of saying no," grabbed my attention. Additionally, Mlle Maziw's videos with titles like: "Mawazine Show – The suffering of everyday life (Girls/girls/woman)" and "8th of March, International Women's Day," also drew my attention.

The third step was to familiarise myself with the content I intended to visually analyse. This involved watching the videos and visual posts multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context, visuals, and messages being conveyed. This step also allowed me to further narrow down the selection of my participants' content, creating a list of videos and posts (a total of 38) that are closely aligned to the themes and objectives of my research project. The chosen content is presented in the table below:

Miss Cha (6 videos)
• "J'ai pas 15 ans" (I'm not fifteen) • "Les Frères Algériens" (Algerian Brothers) • "The art of saying no, كي يقلك مديلي نيميرو" (when he asks for your number, the art of saying no) • "حبيت ندير" TikTok"" (habit ndir TikTok) (I want to have a TikTok account)

- Instagram post about Miss Cha's arm hair
- "My [UNI] Room Makeover (غرفتي في الإقامة الجامعية)" (My room in University dorms)

Mlle Maziw (7 videos)

- "Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman)" (Mawazine Show – The suffering of everyday life (Girls/girls/woman))
- "دورك علابالك dork 3labalek - MADE IN WOMEN" (Now you know – MADE IN WOMEN)
- "H.S - Commentaires (Haters vs Lovers)" (H.S – Comments (Haters vs Lovers)
- "Le Sport et L'homme" (The Man and Sports)
- "(1+1= 10) (اليوم العالمي للمرأة 8 مارس)" (8th of March, International Women's Day)
- "سمحيلي يا بلادي" (Oh country forgive me)
- "H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast - أختي - ENP – Series" (H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast – My sister - ENP – Series)

Nour Brahimi (25 videos)

- "REALTALK # 1 | كيف أقنع أهلي ليتركوني أسافر " (REALTALK #1 How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel)
- لماذا أسافر وحدي (why do I travel alone)
- مع الأسف و شكرا (Unfortunately and thank you)
- FEMALE IN A HOSTEL ! IS IT SAFE?? هل بيت الشباب آمن ؟ (Is the youth hostel safe?)
- "Nour Brahimi. Who am I?

- كل مرة اكتشف بلد أحس أنني أتنفس (Every time I discover a new place, I feel like I'm truly breathing)
- Video deleted by Nour where she criticises people who tell her that travelling alone for a woman is haram.
- ALGERIAN STREET FOOD !!! أكل الشوارع في الجزائر
- The BEST ALGERIAN street food I الجزائر I أشهي مأكولات العالم
- Algeria: Tizi Ouzou (Kabylie) | مغامرتي في تيزي وزو (My adventure in Tizi Ouzou)
- Indonesia For 24 Hours
- Kuala Lumpur on a budget 2018
- The Beautiful Lebanon
- Italy: Happiest Family
- I Fell in Love with Germany
- Milan Vlog
- Petra Jordan: Everything to Know
- Tunisia With the European Union
- Latvia: Things to Do in Riga
- ALGERIA: Tlemcen | تلمسان كما لم تروها من قبل (ALGERIA: Tlemcen | Tlemcen like you have never seen it before)
- Algeria, Oran City Tour 2021
- NICE city tour - France | جزائرية في أجمل مدن فرنسا (Algerian woman in one of France's most beautiful cities).
- . تجربة قطار النوم من الجزائر لعنابة | Sleeper Train in ALGERIA From Algiers to Annaba
- ALGERIA | Girls traveling alone in Ramadan | رحلة بنات في الجزائر في رمضان
- Why I take off my Hijab | لماذا أنزع حجابي عند السفر

Phase Two: developing a coding framework, and collecting and coding data

The second phase of my visual content analysis comprised the following two stages: developing a coding framework, and collecting and coding data. Familiarising myself with the data I had chosen for analysis allowed me to capture the nature of themes discussed within my participants' social media content, which helped me then develop a coding framework on which I would later base my content analysis. Thus, the process of developing a coding framework was inductive, i.e. driven by the data I had sampled for my visual content analysis. This is a decision I took in order to ensure flexibility and adaptability towards emerging themes and ideas, which would allow for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of my participants' content. Furthermore, deriving codes directly from the data itself allowed me to capture the nuances, complexities, and elements specific to the Algerian context, from which my participants' social media content emerges. The set of codes I developed in order to capture the feminist languages and vocabularies specific to Algerian women YouTubers are as follows, organised by chapter. Not every single code made it to the final version of my analysis chapters, as some of these codes were fused with others because of their similarities; and I have deleted some of them did not prove as prevalent or significant in my participants' YouTube content, and so they did not yield sufficient data for analysis:

1) **Chapter 4: Algerian Women's Position in the Family, Infantilisation and Control:**

- Hierarchized relationship between a female and a male sibling in an Algerian family
- Algerian women's minor status within the family and society
- Expectations of submission and obedience
- Lack of decision-making power of women within the family
- Everyday forms of infantilisation and control of women
- Imbalanced power dynamics between male and female siblings

- Restricting Algerian women’s freedom of movement and mobility through male guardianship
- Gender power dynamics within the Algerian family
- Sibling dynamics and gender roles in the Algerian family
- Toxic masculinity and male privilege
- Women’s invisibility
- Instances of everyday infantilisation and control of Algerian women
- The traditional hierarchy that governs relationship dynamics amongst members of the Algerian family
- Male guardianship

2) Chapter 5: Sexual Harassment and Beauty Standards:

- Instances of catcalling and street harassment
- Objectification of women's bodies
- Pressure to conform to specific beauty standards
- Body shaming and unrealistic beauty expectations
- Link between sexual harassment and societal views on women's appearance
- Everyday experiences of sexual harassment
- Sexualised verbal abuse in the street
- Normative beauty standards unfolding within online spaces
- Victim blaming
- Unwanted sexual advances that women are subjected to in the streets of Algeria.
- Feminist resistance against misogynist sexual harassment
- Online misogyny
- Gender based violence
- Gendered sexual harassment

- Common experiences of sexual harassment of Algerian women
- Sexual harassment in the form of unwanted sexual comments or advances
- Catcalling women in the street
- Women’s objectification and sexualisation online
- Women’s body images and their relation to the parameters within which popular social media networks operate
- The male gaze and its impact on how women’s content on social media is perceived and consumed

3) **Chapter 6: Algerian Women’s Visibility, Freedom of Movement, and Occupation of Public Spaces:**

- Restriction of personal autonomy and freedom
- Constraints on women's physical mobility and access to public spaces
- Online activism and visibility through social media platforms
- Negotiating societal expectations and gender norms in public spaces
- Challenging stereotypes and breaking barriers in professional or public spheres
- Limited representation of Algerian women in media and public discourse
- Issues of mobility when travelling within Algeria or abroad
- Algerian women’s solo travelling
- Society’s views and reaction to women travelling alone causing issues of limited mobility for them
- Algerian women travelling abroad while being visibly Muslim
- Issues of safety while travelling
- Shifting traditional narratives on Algerian women’s mobility and occupation of public spaces

- Navigating hostility and violence faced by women in predominantly male-occupied public spaces
- Role-modelling emancipation and growth through travel vlogs
- Fostering women’s mobility through empowering Algerian women business owners and artisans
- Fostering women’s mobility by ensuring travel safety
- Assumptions about Algerian women’s religious identity and their impact on their freedom of movement

The next stage after developing the coding framework involved the systematic application of the framework to capture data that aligned with my research focus, encompassing key themes and elements that identify the feminist languages and vocabularies used by my participants when conveying messages related to feminism and women's rights in Algeria. To accomplish this, I meticulously examined each video in the sample, and I assigned segments of the videos to their corresponding codes within the coding framework. During this process, I engaged in a careful viewing of each video, paying close attention to the visual elements that conveyed feminist messages. These visual elements included symbols, gestures, clothing, and settings that provided insights into the different ways in which Algerian women YouTubers convey messages related to feminism and women’s rights in Algeria. I took detailed notes to document these visual elements and their connections to the assigned codes. Additionally, I transcribed vocal components, capturing dialogues, speeches, or narrations that conveyed feminist ideas. Any relevant textual components, such as captions or on-screen text, were also recorded. Assigning segments of the videos to the appropriate codes within the coding framework ensured a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the data. This method allowed for a focused examination of the specific moments and elements in the videos that reflected the feminist languages and vocabularies present within my participants’ social media content.

Phase Three: analysing patterns and themes, interpreting the findings, and drawing conclusions

The third and final phase of my visual content analysis consisted of three key stages: analysing patterns and themes, interpreting the findings, and drawing conclusions. Once the coded data was organized, I began the process of data analysis to identify patterns, connections, and recurring themes. This involved carefully reviewing the coded segments, examining similarities and differences, and exploring the relationships between the codes using qualitative thematic analysis. Through this process, I was able to group similar codes together and generate three distinct themes, enabling a deeper understanding of the content. The resulting themes were as follows:

- Algerian women's position in the family, infantilization, and control.
- Sexual harassment and beauty standards.
- Algerian women's visibility, mobility, and occupation of public spaces.

These themes represent significant findings in my research project, highlighting the various aspects of women's rights that Algerian women YouTubers actively address in their social media presence. Furthermore, these themes align with the historical demands of the Algerian feminist movement, confirming the relevance and validity of the movement's objectives among Algerian women today, as well as the potent links between the historical Algerian feminist movement and contemporary digital content creators like my participants.

The next stage involved interpreting and discussing the findings. Organizing the data into three chapters, each focusing on one of the identified themes, provided a clear structure for in-depth interpretation and discussion of the findings. This approach allowed for a focused and structured presentation of the results. During the interpretation stage, I critically examined the generated themes in relation to my research objectives, focus, and relevant theoretical frameworks. I sought to uncover the underlying meanings, cultural significance, and socio-political implications associated with the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by

my participants in their social media content. To achieve this, I drew upon established feminist literature, theories, concepts, and perspectives, both within an Algerian/North African/Arab context and a Western context. Utilizing this broad range of resources provided me with a deeper understanding of my participants' social media content and its broader implications.

The subsequent stage involved drawing meaningful conclusions grounded in the analysis and interpretation of the coded data in order to address my research questions. In this stage, my intention was to present the findings in a narrative form, rooted in the evidence derived from the data analysis and supported by relevant feminist theoretical and conceptual insights. During this phase of analysis, my focus was on summarizing the findings related to the prevalent feminist themes observed in the videos created by Algerian women YouTubers. Additionally, I aimed to explore the implications of these visual representations within the specific context of Algerian feminism. The analysis provided valuable insights into the experiences, discourses, and activism of Algerian women YouTubers, shedding light on Algerian women's roles within the family, encounters with gender-based violence, negotiation of beauty standards, visibility in public spaces, and my participants' efforts to challenge societal norms in their role as representatives of a new generation of Algerian feminists in the digital age. Moreover, I aimed to highlight the contribution of this study to a deeper understanding of feminist discourses within the Algerian context, as well as the significance of social media as a platform for women's empowerment and advocacy, showcasing the ways in which Algerian women YouTubers utilize this medium to express their voices and promote social change.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to provide a comprehensive account of my research process and the methodological decisions I have made for this project. I situated my project within the framework of feminist qualitative research, employing visual content analysis, semi-

structured interviews, and autoethnography as my main data collection methods. The initial section of the chapter delved into my journey into feminist research, elucidating the motivations behind my choice to investigate Algerian women YouTubers, and recounting my exploration and adoption of feminist research principles. The subsequent section of the chapter focused on reflexivity, power dynamics, and ethical considerations as crucial elements in conducting robust feminist research. I contextualised my own research within these aspects, emphasising their significance in shaping my study. In the following section, I elaborated on my implementation of autoethnography throughout my thesis, highlighting the advantages of employing this method within my research framework. Moving forward, I discussed the process of conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews, outlining the challenges I had encountered in recruiting an appropriate number of interviewees. Additionally, I explained how interviews had shifted from being the primary data collection method to serving as a means of contextualising and gaining a deeper understanding of the YouTube experiences of my participants. The final section of this chapter explored the utilisation of visual content analysis to examine the content produced by my participants, both on YouTube and Instagram.

Chapter 4: Algerian Women's Position in the Family, Infantilisation and Control

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on Algerian women YouTubers' feminist languages and vocabularies for discussing women's position in the Algerian family, specifically their everyday experiences of systemic infantilisation and control. This chapter is primarily informed by my participants' social media content (YouTube and Instagram videos, Instagram posts), as well as, where relevant, comment sections under these social media productions. Here, I also consider links between these visual data and: (1) interview discussions with my participants, and (2) my personal experiences and history as a Muslim woman growing up and negotiating different forms of infantilisation and control in Algeria. Accordingly, I explore my participants' notions of women's position in the family, infantilisation and control, and how they interpret different views and social/cultural expectations regarding women's position in the Algerian family through their social media content. To this end, I have observed that the forms of infantilisation and control that my participants have chosen to address in their social media posts and videos are characterised by the notion of the everyday, i.e. they show different ways in which women and girls are infantilised and controlled in their everyday lives, for example, we are going to see how Algerian woman YouTuber Miss Cha addresses infantilisation and control of Algerian women through showcasing gendered power dynamics between male and female siblings in Algerian families. She shows how this translates into brothers infantilising and controlling aspects of their sisters' lives such as when and where to go out, who to talk to and so on. We will also delve into Nour Brahimi's social media content in which she performs feminist values in resisting forms of infantilisation and control that restrict Algerian women's freedom of movement and mobility. We will also explore how YouTuber Mlle Maziw produces

social media content that interrogates the infantilisation and control of women through an educational format.

As previously discussed in my critical context, it is evident that the primary themes consistently emphasised by my participants in their social media content (which are presented in the three analysis chapters of this thesis) align closely with the core objectives of the Algerian feminist movement. Since its inception in the 1940s, its renewed momentum in the 1980s, notably in response to the enactment of the Family Code, and persisting to the present day, the Algerian feminist movement has been advocating for full citizenship rights for Algerian women. In this chapter, I will delve into how a group of Algerian women YouTubers address issues concerning the status of Algerian women within the family structure, including infantilisation and control, which directly align with the demands of the Algerian feminist movement to abolish male guardianship. Moreover, I will explore how these participants employ creative and strategic approaches to tackle these contemporary challenges faced by Algerian women in the digital realm, representing a novel form of Algerian feminist activism.

This part of the chapter endeavours to explore the concept of infantilisation and control and how Algerian women and girls experienced it in colonial and post-colonial times, and how they continue to experience it in modern Algerian society, including the present moment. What I mean by the infantilisation and control of Algerian women is what Knauss (1987) refers to as the ways in which Algerian women and girls are placed in a position of being ‘permanent minors’, which means that in the Algerian family, women are, regardless of age, social class, economic status, or educational level, relegated to a status where they are constantly guarded over, do not get to make choices about where they travel to, and do not get to occupy public spaces safely.

“Bargaining with Patriarchy” by Deniz Kandiyoti is an important source that I have been relying on in making sense of all the stories and experiences of Algerian women’s infantilisation and control I discuss and explore in this chapter. Kandiyoti strongly emphasises the need for a systematic and comparative analysis of the different tactics women resort to in

order to cope with and negotiate different aspects of their lives within a patriarchal society. She argues that by doing so we can achieve “a more culturally and temporally grounded understanding of patriarchal systems” (Kandiyoti, 1988; p. 274). The nature of my research falls into what Kandiyoti advocates for: by giving voice to the wide-ranging personal experiences of the Algerian women I have encountered in my life (women in my own family, friends, friends’ family, the women YouTubers I have interviewed, women I have never met but read or heard stories about) and interpreting those voices through a feminist lens, I am attempting to shed some light on several forms of patriarchal practices prevalent in different Algerian communities. This approach, in turn, attempts to avoid the stereotyping and homogenising of the lives and experiences of women from the MENA region that is often found in the literature. I also take into consideration the patriarchy I grew up navigating in my own family and community, which shaped me as a woman, significantly influenced my decision to conduct this research, and formed the way I perceive and analyse the different experiences and data entries I have managed to gather in this study. In “Bargaining with Patriarchy”, Kandiyoti identifies the type of patriarchy that exists in North Africa, the Muslim Middle East and South East Asia. She terms this ‘Classic Patriarchy’. This region has also been described as the ‘patriarchal belt’ by Caldwell (1978), which is home to the traditional agrarian extended families of North Africa and from which come the different forms of patriarchy that exist in contemporary Algeria. Furthermore, Kandiyoti introduces the term ‘Patriarchal Bargains’ and associates it with the different ways or ‘strategies’ women utilise to cope with the restraints they are forced to face within regionally specific patriarchal settings, as well as to “maximise security and optimise life options” (Kandiyoti, 1988; p. 274).

My personal experiences and history as an Algerian woman who growing up and living within Algerian society have provided me with insights into common everyday practices of infantilisation and control that Algerian women endure in their daily family lives. Many of these insights align with the perspectives of my research participants exhibited within their social media content, which I discuss extensively in this chapter. However, while I sought to support

these observations and perceptions, I noticed a significant gap in the academic literature addressing daily manifestations of Algerian women's infantilisation and control within family spheres in contemporary Algeria. Much of the existing research focuses on broader political and social issues at a macro level, with an emphasis on specific historical periods such as French colonialisation and the Algerian war of independence (Alloula, 1986; Khanna, 2008; Lalami, 2008; MacMaster, 2009; MacMaster, 2012), often neglecting the intricate dynamics within the private, personal, and family sphere, where Algerian girls and women struggle with issues of power and in/dependence.

On the other hand, literary works, particularly novels authored by writers like Assia Djebar, play a pivotal role in addressing these private and familial issues as spaces where Algerian women grapple with complex power dynamics and questions of independence. Assia Djebar's literary works, in particular, are renowned for their profound exploration of these themes, shedding light on the myriad challenges Algerian women face within familial and domestic contexts. For instance, Djebar's novel *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1992) (Women of Algiers in Their Apartment) is a remarkable collection of short stories where she skilfully addresses themes such as female identity, relationships, and the ardent struggle for independence. Another thought-provoking novel by Assia Djebar is *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985) (Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade), which examines the lives of women in a village during the Algerian War of Independence, portrays how these women cope with loss, the quest for independence, and the pull of traditional values. Additionally, Djebar's memoir, *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) (Nowhere in my Father's House), provides a poignant reflection on her own experiences growing up in Algeria, charting her journey toward independence and education. It offers a deeply personal perspective on the difficult challenges faced by Algerian girls and women.

An essential and timeless academic source that provides a profound examination and documentation of the relationship mechanisms within Algerian families and how these dynamics impact and limit the daily freedoms of Algerian girls and women is Frantz Fanon's *A*

Dying Colonialism (1965). In this book, specifically in the section titled "The Algerian Family," Fanon offers a detailed exploration of the traditional mechanisms that characterised familial relationships during French colonisation (1830-1962). He also elucidates the changes these mechanisms underwent during the national liberation struggle. Within the spectrum of these familial relationships, Fanon focuses on the Algerian daughter/father relationship and describes her position within the family in the following manner:

> In the Algerian family, the girl is always one notch behind the boy. As in all societies in which work on the land represents the main source of the means of subsistence, the male, who is the privileged producer, enjoys an almost lordly status. The birth of a boy in a family is greeted with greater enthusiasm than that of a girl. The father sees in him a future working partner, a successor to the family plot and after his death a guardian for the mother and the sisters (Fanon, 1965; p. 105).

Here, Fanon explains how the boy, who is considered a valuable worker in the family land, automatically inherits a superior position at birth than that of the girl. This position grants him, amongst other privileges, the guardianship over his women folk. As a woman who has been brought up in a conservative nuclear Muslim Algerian family, where the father is the only figure with absolute authority and control over all members of the household, growing up and living in Algerian society allowed me to recognise a pattern in regards to the reality of how women and girls in my community are systematically controlled both in private and in public. What I have found extremely interesting when paralleling these observations with Fanon's descriptions of relationship mechanisms within Algerian familial spheres during colonial times is the existence of an overwhelming amount of similarities between the two positions despite their significantly different time frames and socio-political and economic contexts, which testifies to a persistence and continuity of traditional patriarchal systems within Algerian society, as several scholars have asserted (Khodja, 1982; Rezig, 2017; Knauss, 1987).

The infantilisation and control of women is a direct result of the subordination of women which has been traced back to Algeria's pre-colonial history. Peter R. Knauss (1987), in his study titled *The Persistence Of Patriarchy: Class, Gender, And Ideology In Twentieth- Century Algeria*, explains that the subordination of women and their infantilisation is a core element of the patriarchy in Algeria throughout its history, as he defines patriarchy in Algeria as: "a hierarchy of authority that is controlled and dominated by males in which women are subordinated to the role of permanent minors" (Knauss, 1987, p. xii). Furthermore, Knauss refers to Judith Stacey's (1983) description of the origin of patriarchy in China, to explain its origin in Algeria due to their similarities, as Stacey explains that it originated in "a family and a social system in which male power over women and children derives from the social role of fatherhood, and is supported by a political economy in which the family unit retains a significant productive role" (Stacey, 1983; p. 12). In this description, Knauss refers to the extended family which represented the economic foundation of patriarchy in Algeria.

However, French colonialisation has transformed the Algerian patriarchal extended family into a nuclear one but patriarchy remained present in Algerian society. In this study, Knauss argues that the persistence of patriarchy in Algeria was due to the nature of the colonialism the country underwent. The French draconian assimilationist colonialism made it its ultimate goal to eradicate anything that most Algerian men regarded as paramount within their traditional identity. This also includes its "civilising mission" which specifically targeted Algerian women. Zahia Smail Salhi (2008) explains how the French colonists sought the "liberation" of Algerian women as a way to culturally dominate the entire Algerian population, quoting Fanon as follows: "To convert the woman, to win her to foreign values, to rescue her from her status, is both a means to have full control on the man and to have the practical and efficient means to demolish Algerian culture" (Fanon, 2001; p.20, Translated from French by Smail Salhi). As a natural reaction to this 'civilising mission' which centred around the unveiling of Algerian women as its main goal, Zahia Smail Salhi explains that Algerian men adopted stricter boundaries which affected Algerian women, such as the increased veiling, seclusion,

and unequal treatment of women, and fixated on these patriarchal practices as a symbol of national identity and authenticity.

Similarly, Knauss argues, a longing to affirm their authentically Algerian identity has arisen amongst politically oppressed Algerian men, and the ideology of the nationalist identity has found its place within calls for independence, promoted by several nationalist organisations, particularly the Association of the Ulama organised by Sheikh Ben Badis in the 1920's under the very famous-amongst-Algerians slogan: "Arabic is my language, Algeria is my country, Islam is my religion", and the National Liberation Front (FLN)[10]. To this end, a desire for a reaffirmation of patriarchy has been automatically instilled within the general reaffirmation of the Algerian identity, making Algerian women "double prisoners" as Knauss explains: "Algerian women became the double prisoners of this nationalist antithesis of everything French. They became both the revered objects of the collective act of national redemption and the role model for the new nationalist patriarchal family" (Knauss, 1987, p. xiii).

Inger Rezig (2017), in a study titled *Women's Roles in Contemporary Algeria: Tradition and Modernism*, similarly maintains that the impact of one hundred and thirty years of colonial rule has been irreversible on Algerian society in the way it destroyed the traditional agrarian economic system, individualised social relations which was once bound by community, and caused the spread of poverty and forced movements of the populations. All of these factors have in turn caused the disintegration of the patriarchal extended family. However, the position of the woman hardly changed. Rezig explains this phenomenon as follows:

> [T]he disquieting contact with a foreign culture results in a clinging to the traditional values, as regards the woman. Emancipation came to be closely identified with the politics of the colonial power, and the Algerian society reacted

[10] Established in 1954, the National Liberation Front, also known as the FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale), was the principal nationalist movement during the Algerian war of independence and carried on to be the only ruling political party in Algeria until the legalisation of other parties in 1989.

> against this modernism by keeping the woman more isolated than ever before, behind closed doors. She became the symbol of the Muslim way of life, of tradition, of all that had been, before the arrival of the foreigners. (Rezig, 2017; p. 195)

Frantz Fanon (1965) also talks about this very notion, specifically when it comes to perceptions of, and attitudes towards the veil within Algerian society before, during and after French colonisation. In the following quote, he explains that following French colonisation's relentless attempts to unveil Algerian women, a new conception of the veil was created in the collective mind of Algerians, one that is fuelled by the rejection of everything that represents the values of the occupier:

> What was an undifferentiated element in a homogeneous whole acquires a taboo character, and the attitude of a given Algerian woman with respect to the veil will be constantly related to her overall attitude with respect to the foreign occupation. The colonized, in the face of the emphasis given by the colonialist to this or that aspect of his traditions, reacts very violently. The attention devoted to modifying this aspect, the emotion the conqueror puts into his pedagogical work, his prayers, his threats, weave a whole universe of resistances around this particular element of the culture. Holding out against the occupier on this precise element means inflicting upon him a spectacular setback; it means more particularly maintaining "co-existence" as a form of conflict and latent warfare. It means keeping up the atmosphere of an armed truce. (Fanon, 1965; p. 47)

From the scholarly works mentioned above, we understand that the subordination of women was present throughout Algeria's history. At first, it was present as a result of the agrarian nature of the extended family, in which family members are perceived as workers and a higher position was given to the man who works outside the house in the fields. Then, this subordination of women was not only maintained, but perhaps intensified as a way of

resistance and rejections of French colonisation's attempts to unveil and "civilise" Algerian women. This position of subordination of Algerian women keeps being maintained to this day in Algeria and it translates into the various forms of infantilisation and control of women and their relegation to a status of "permanent minors".

In a study titled *Women Without Men: Gender and Marginality in an Algerian Town* (1987), Willy Jansen explores the different ways Algerian women who do not 'belong to men' in the traditional sense (i.e. women who are either orphaned, widowed or divorced) mitigate the stigma and challenges that come with being perceived as not fitting into the traditional Algerian family structure. Jansen explains that the strong patriarchal family represents the basis of social organisation in Algeria, in which the ideal position for a woman is when she belongs to her father's family before marriage, and then to her husband's after marriage, essentially defining her in relation to a man as his daughter, sister, wife, or mother. A man must theoretically protect and guide her as well as provide for her making her a subordinate and a 'permanent minor' at every and any age, and regardless of her social class or educational level. In addition to that, Jansen explains that what further puts Algerian women in a position of infantilisation and control is the theoretical responsibility, given by the 1984 Family Code, solely to the man, to provide for the woman and the family even though women's right for paid work was also upheld, essentially promoting a societal system where women's economic dependency on men prevails.

Algerian sociologist Souad Khodja (1991), gives another account of the political and social status of women within modern Algerian society after independence, and when new policies were introduced by the government in favour for the industrialisation and urbanisation of the country. Khodja discusses the different changes and mutations that the Algerian family structure witnessed due to different external variables in this period, such as the progressive changes introduced in the systems of production of wealth and remuneration of work by the establishment of modern forms of production and wage labour, the mobility of populations which led to urbanisation, and the production of new values through education and the mass

media inspired by western family structures and models. Khodja also argues that these transformations within the traditional Algerian family have created two conflicting movements: one that strives for the conservation of the traditional statuses and roles of members of the family, whilst the other one is made of a dynamic of adoption of modern models, and each of these movements uses different strategies in order to dominate the other (Khodja, 1991). Khodja argues that the conflicts that take place within the ever mutating Algerian family are of a violent nature because they put in opposition identity markers coming from two different normative systems. She further explains that this struggle is difficult and often ferocious because it brings face to face social actors, some educated according to traditional norms granting them, according to their sex, their age and their place in family relations, a status and a role that they want to keep, and others raised differently who want to therefore redefine the entire system to affirm their individuality and autonomy very early on (Khodja, 1991; p. 30).

Correspondingly, in her description of common attitudes towards girls in modern Iraq, Sana Al-Khayyat (1990) talks about the inferior position that is associated with girls within Iraqi society and the wider Arab world, which she argues is due to the fact that Arab society was and continues to be largely agricultural, especially in rural areas. She asserts that there is a need for males, who are considered more fit for working in the fields, which positions them as superior to their female counterparts. However, Al-Khayyat adds that even though in some areas of southern Iraq the women are the ones who do most of the work in the fields, as well as there being a decreasing need for labour in urban areas, the degrading and hateful attitudes towards girls continue to persist.

Similarly, although the Algerian society has undergone an overwhelming number of political and socioeconomic transformations which have shifted it from being an overwhelmingly agrarian society to a more industrialised one, I have come to notice that the traditional hierarchy of the Algerian family members, which positions sons above daughters, is still maintained, even though sons no longer represent the ‘privileged producers’ on their families’ lands as they did during colonial times (as Fanon explains). With this hierarchy also

come many aspects of control, confinement, and infantilisation of women within familial spheres. Fanon (1965) describes dynamics of control over women in Algerian society during the French colonisation as follows:

> The girl has no opportunity, all things considered, to develop her personality or to take any initiative. She takes her place in the vast network of domestic traditions of Algerian society. The woman's life in the home, made up of centuries-old customs, allows no innovation. From her mother she learns the higher value of the man. The woman in an underdeveloped society, and particularly in Algeria, is always a minor, and the man-brother, uncle or husband-represents first of all a guardian (Fanon, 1965; p. 105).

Similarly to the way Knauss (1987) described the position relegated to Algerian women as “permanent minors”, here too, Fanon is using the same vocabulary and I would like to emphasise on the significance of it to this chapter as I argue it is from this position of “minors” that come all of the practices of infantilisation and control that affect and restrict the everyday lives and freedoms of Algerian women.

Within my own community, I have come to notice that control over women in a great number of Algerian homes starts from a very young age. Sights of male siblings/fathers telling off their sisters/daughters and shouting at them to go back inside the house are very common in most Algerian neighbourhoods. I still vividly remember the times when I was shouted at, as a child, by my male relatives to go back inside the house without failing to remind me that it was because I was a girl (I needn’t mention my father shouting at me to go inside because when he was at home, I didn’t even get the option to go outside). Or the day when school ended earlier than planned and I decided to stay near the school for a while and play around the trees with my classmates. In the midst of this, my father was passing by and saw me climbing a tree. Climbing a tree is something that I have dreaded ever since all the shaming and emotional punishment I was subjected to by my father on that day. What I remember hurting the most is that my mother had always told me about her adventures of climbing fig

trees in her grandparents' garden and how much happiness that had brought her. Meanwhile, I was being told by my father that I should be ashamed of myself for doing the same thing my mother would do as a child and that what I did was only allowed for boys.

This short anecdote is a very small example compared to the distressing accounts I have heard and read about, of infantilisation and control that many Algerian girls are subjected to daily. It was just recently that I have discovered that one of my Algerian friends was subjected to deliberate rejection from her family from a very early age because of the fact that she was born female, exactly like the colonial times when "[t]he birth of a boy in a family [was] greeted with greater enthusiasm than that of a girl." (Fanon, 1965). My friend still recalls how her uncle used to leave the room whenever she came in, the harsh treatment her mother received because she had birthed a female, and how experiencing all of this still has had a negative impact on her mental health.

In her study about women's roles in contemporary Algeria, Inger Rezig (2017) discusses how the traditional Algerian family instils in daughters from a young age certain attributes and values that would prepare them to be women who are discreet, self-effacing, as well as submissive to those who are considered above them within the family hierarchy. Throughout their upbringing, young girls are taught to learn and accept that their sole appropriate domain is the home, where they are expected to fulfil two main roles: carrying out household labour, and giving birth, especially to sons. Furthermore, little girls are made to believe that the outside world is the exclusive domain of men (Achoui, 2006). In the following quote, Rezig explains how this process manifests in practice, which starts with the integration of the girl into what Fanon termed "the Algerian feminine society" (Fanon, 1965; p. 106). This integration compels her to get acquainted with, and eventually adopt, the behaviours and values reserved for her by the traditional Algerian family structure:

> From a very early age she is incorporated into the sphere of women, and she is entrusted with small jobs in the household. At the same time, she is getting accustomed to endure reprimands without answering back, and to accept the

> dominance of her brothers and male cousins. Revolt is severely punished. She is also taught renunciation, because throughout all her life, she will be forced to practise frugality. (Rezig, 2017; p. 193)

Rezig also writes about an aspect of control over girls in Algeria which I have personally partly experienced, and have witnessed effects of this on the lives of so many girls in my community. This includes having their education suspended because of being born females, for example. During my first years of schooling, I often heard my father telling my mother that I will be stopped from going to school the coming year, and I remember going to my mother and worryingly asking her if that was really going to happen. She would reassure me that he was just saying that because he has a traditional mindset and that he was influenced by the role models he has witnessed growing up within traditional communities. Eventually, my mother's reassurances proved right: my father's threats to suspend my education did not end up becoming a reality but they always haunted me as a little girl, as I witnessed many of my female peers get pulled out of school because their families have decided so. Rezig lists the common reasons behind Algerian girls not being sent to school, or for suddenly being pulled out of school in the following quote:

> When the girls are not sent to school as often and as long as the boys, it is because: their parents think that they do not need to learn to read and write as their future life should be centred on marriage and home; a young girl should not move in public places and should not be taught by a male teacher; finally the family may need her for the daily work at home. (Rezig, 2017; p. 202)

In Algeria, control over girls intensifies as they grow older and enter puberty and womanhood, and I find this extremely problematic when the same trajectory into womanhood is used to increase authority over them instead of using it to show them how worthy they are of more responsibility and inclusion within their own families and communities. Nafisa Zerdoumi discusses this idea and explains how Algerian society stands in the way of the little girl in her attempts to acquire a personality of her own, by not allowing her to discover her own

talents, nor develop qualities such as being able to take initiative, be responsible, or have a personal, innate (as opposed to dictated) sense of duty (Zerdoumi, 1970; p. 185). I still intensely remember the day I was allowed to go to the dentist on my own because my father was busy with some housework and how much responsibility, worth, and growth I felt that day. I was in my early twenties. I would like to also mention a story where I myself witnessed a dramatic change in the life of a close Algerian female friend of mine after leaving her family's house to pursue higher education in another country. My friend told me how she had grown up in a family where she had had no direct interactions with her father, as he was usually away from home for work, nor with her mother, who was unhappy in her marriage because of the control she was subjected to by members of her husband's extended family. Thus, the mother projected that anger and unhappiness onto her own children by being violent, extremely strict and emotionally distant. My friend told me how this situation affected her dangerously, to the point that she was always silent and kept everything she goes through to herself. Years passed by, and my friend received a scholarship to pursue her studies overseas. From the beginning of this new experience abroad, my friend, and even the people who knew her, started noticing the massive positive changes happening to her. Her financial and personal independence made her become more outgoing; she spoke her mind more often and even became closer to her family members, who started respecting and acknowledging her more. I think that this is an important example of what happens when women are treated like their own persons and not just subordinates to men.

In his description of the Algerian girl's daily struggles as an inferior, subordinated, and confined member of the Algerian family, Fanon (1965) discusses the phase of puberty in the Algerian girl's life, when she ceases to be seen as a girl by her family and starts being seen as a woman. Considered as a 'childwoman' in the Algerian family, entering the realm of womanhood through puberty for the girl does not expand the range of her responsibilities or freedoms; on the contrary, it creates a more rigid and restricting reality for her. Fanon explains that when the woman overcomes the girl in the time of puberty, 'an abnormal situation' takes

place within the Algerian family, in which the girl is hidden from her father in order to make sure he does not know of her newly-reached state of womanhood. It is a new situation for the girl that puts the family, and especially the father, in a dangerous state, which eventually leads the family to start contemplating the girl's marriage:

> Early marriage in Algeria is not motivated by the desire to reduce the number of mouths to feed, but quite literally by the wish not to acquire a new woman without status, a childwoman, in the house. The girl who comes to womanhood must marry and have children. To have a girl who has reached puberty in the house is an extremely difficult problem for a family. The girl at puberty is available for marriage, which explains the rigor with which she is kept in the home, protected, and watched over. This also explains the ease with which she is married off. (Fanon, 1965; p. 106)

Again, as an Algerian Muslim woman who is living in what is considered a modern Algeria, I cannot help but notice the same characteristics of the traditional Algerian family in Fanon's time being reproduced in today's Algeria, 60 years after its independence. This brings to my memory a story I was recently told by a friend of mine, during one of the many spontaneous discussions I had with my women peers and colleagues from Algeria about the different struggles facing us today. I refer to these discussions as informal interviews, because they were unplanned and happened spontaneously and organically during my PhD journey, but they were so relevant and poignant that I decided to include them in my thesis as part of my autoethnography and storytelling.

The story I would like to mention here is of a girl who was forced to get married after years of emotional and physical abuse by her brother and mother. It all started when this girl, who was considered very beautiful, according to the beauty standards of the region (mainly fair skin and straight hair) started showing interest in the way she looks and dresses both at home and in school. It is worth mentioning that in Algerian society, there is this general bad sentiment towards girls who give "too much" attention to their appearance. For example, my

own mother told me how she never looked at herself in the mirror in the presence of her mother in fear of her mother thinking that her daughter might be interested in looking beautiful or attractive. According to her family member who told me the story, the girl enjoyed dressing up nicely and putting on makeup, as well as making friendships with both males and females at school. Her brother (who automatically took the position of the guardian of his women folk because the father is usually away from home due to the nature of his job) made it his absolute mission to sabotage his sister's social life, because she represented a threat to the family's 'honour' with her outgoing behaviour. Consequently, the girl would frequently get beaten up by her brother, who even had the support of the mother, granting the abusive brother absolute authority. After several years of emotional and physical abuse, as well as being forced to stop her education, the young girl was forced to marry the first man who asked for her hand and from then started a lifetime of house labour and childbearing. The person who told this unfortunate story to me made a description of the girl's state that I found heart-breaking: they said they could recognise a very obvious difference in the girl's eyes after what she had been through. They said she used to have this "very beautiful energy" and that her eyes would always sparkle, however, that sparkle started to slowly fade away when life's burdens got heavier. This is a real-life example of how a woman is regarded and treated in patrilineal Algerian communities.

Further descriptions of the control and infantilisation of Algerian girls at the age of puberty come from Rezig (2017), where she explains that following the upbringing of the daughter to adopt a discreet and self-effacing conduct, her responsibility in having sexual and bodily integrity grows stronger at puberty. Suddenly the whole family's honour depends on her conduct and if she shows any behaviour that is deemed inappropriate, she risks bringing shame to her family, therefore her contact with men is kept to a minimum. At this stage too, girls entering puberty risk losing their education. Rezig explains how traditionally minded parents often take their pubescent girls out of school under the pretext of 'enough is enough', which is an attitude I have personally witnessed so many times within my community. I have

frequently heard the expression "بزاف عليك" which can be translated as "that's enough education for you", which has been told to me and several of my female cousins by parents and family elders. It is also frequently told to girls at the age of puberty to stop going to school because it is now dangerous for them to be outside the home, and that it is better for them to focus on preparing themselves for marriage (Rezig, 2017).

One concept that is highly relevant when discussing the subject of infantilisation and control over girls and women in Algeria, and which emerged from the data I have gathered, is the notion of 'Horma'. In the next section, where I analyse Miss Cha's YouTube content, I dive deeper into what exactly this concept means within the Algerian context as well as the way Miss Cha used it to highlight the kind of gendered control she portrayed in her video. But for now, let us look at some of the existing academic literature that deals with this concept. Most of the literature which investigates this phenomenon from an Algerian standpoint is predominantly in French, which I will be discussing in the coming paragraphs. However, there is one study in English, by Amer, Howarth and Sen (2015), in which I could identify meanings and understandings that I recognise from my own experiences and negotiations of "Horma"[11]. In this research, the authors refer to the virginity of women who have taken part in the study as part of their community's understanding of honour, and this is one common aspect that I could relate to the Algerian society's definition of honour: that it equates to female virginity. The research explores the way second-generation British Arab Muslim women (practicing and nonpracticing) negotiate representations of virginity. Findings show that both practicing and nonpracticing second-generation British Arab Muslim women felt bound to remain virgins, the former by religious decree and the latter by culture. Virginity is shown to be very important in the participants' understanding and identification as Arab women. The study interestingly

[11] "Horma" is an Arabic word that literally translates to "sanctity" or "sacredness" in English. It is widely used in countries from the MENA region in general and particularly in Algeria to refer to what represents a family's honour and reputation, which has traditionally been long established as the exclusive responsibility of the women of the family (Rezig, 2017). Sana Al-Khayyat, in her book about women in modern Iraq, explains that the most important connotation of the term "honour" in the Arab world is the sexual conduct of the women in the family (1990).

found that virginity meant way more to these women than merely a matter of honour: it also represented their cultural identity and sense of Arabness amongst the host British culture (Amer et al., 2015).

In addition to that, the researchers explain how migrant communities bring views and beliefs from their home countries and pass them onto their children. One example is the importance placed on female premarital virginity in Arab communities (Amer et al, 2015). It all starts with imposing specific gender roles on women, thus making them aware of what is expected from them as females. One important thing that is asked of them is to protect their family's reputation by following a specific set of gendered behaviours (Aswad, 1997). In Arab societies, women are often seen as the embodiment of their families' honour and that is under the condition of remaining "pure" by being virgins (Ajrouch, 1999; Al-Khayyat, 1990). Nawal El-Saadawi (1991) describes the hymen as "the very fine membrane called 'honour'" (p.25) in a way of showing how greatly important female virginity is for keeping the family's honour within Arab societies.

While discussing themes that emerged from interviews with British Arab Muslim women negotiating meanings of honour, virginity and reputation, Amer et al. refer to personal stories mentioned by their interviewees to which I could relate on a personal level, even though the settings of my experiences and those of the participants are different. One of the interviewees recalls what her mother once said about a 35-year-old woman who was unmarried: "when she was younger she mucked about with a couple of guys and word got round and now she's viewed as used goods". Another interviewee stated that women of all ages need to mind their behaviour around the opposite sex because this could immensely affect the way their community sees them and therefore their marriage prospects (Amer et al., 2015). Another British Arab Muslim woman interviewed by Amer et al. states that "It's always in the back of my head like even if I go out with guy friends I'm almost paranoid that one of my parents' friends will see me and assume I'm dating them when I'm not".

Concerning the subject of punishments women go through when they are deemed to be immodest or inappropriate by their families, interviewees of the same research said that insulting and excluding these women out of their community is considered to be 'the only valid action to be taken by the family to restore the family's reputation within the community'(Amer et al., 2015). After reading all of these testimonies, I couldn't help but recall my own experiences dealing with similar issues, such as feeling guilt over having male friends and trying to balance between the desire to be considered normal and friendly and fitting in with my peers, and the fact that my father has literally been warning me since I was a child about interacting with the opposite sex.

Zine-Eddine Zemmour (2002), in his article: "Jeune fille, famille et virginité, Approche anthropologique de la tradition" (Young Girl, Family and Virginity: An Anthropological Approach to Tradition) argues that exploring the topic of virginity in the Mediterranean and North African contexts in general, and specifically in Algeria, requires the researcher to take into consideration the topic of family, because women and girls are only recognised as responsible beings in and through the family. Thus they are "ignored" as individuals. Consequently, in a traditional Algerian family, the virginity of a girl is not considered to be her own property or personal choice but something that the whole family should be involved with and claim ownership and protection over (Zemmour, 2002). For this study, Zemmour interviewed several Algerian men about Algerian women's virginity; several of the participants had university degrees, they had lived in both rural and urban areas of Algeria or even abroad, and yet their opinions on the issue tended to promote the largely prevalent belief in Algeria that women's virginity underpinned their families' honour. Zemmour also notes that the question of women's virginity and familial honour is not exclusive to the Berber and Arab ethnic communities or Muslim religious communities, but it is well prevalent in the Mediterranean more widely. This point has already been discussed by French ethnologist Germaine Tillion, who argues that the oppression of women and her inferior position is part of the pagan prehistory legacy in the

region, which has left its mark on Christian and Muslim societies of the Mediterranean (Tillion, 1983).

In an argument that I found particularly important and very prevalent to this day in Algeria, Zemmour argues that the sociological use of honour in the mainstream/dominant Algerian understanding ultimately serves to strengthen the power and control of men over women. Even male children learn early on the importance of the power that protecting virginity gives them over their sisters (Zemmour, 2002). This makes me recall the numerous times I saw male children exerting power over their female siblings for simply going out or doing whatever their male peers do on a daily basis.

In the upcoming part of this chapter, I will delve into the feminist languages and vocabularies used by Algerian women YouTubers to discuss women's position in Algerian families, particularly their everyday experiences of systemic infantilisation and imposed control. This section draws its insights primarily from my participants' social media content, which includes YouTube and Instagram videos, as well as, when applicable, comments on these social media posts.

Miss Cha: sibling dynamics, power and control

Miss Cha was my first research participant whose content I analysed at the start of this project and discovered deals with themes related to Algerian women's position in the family, infantilisation and control. She is a twenty-six-year old (in 2022) Algerian woman YouTuber with 119.000 subscribers on her YouTube channel, to which she has uploaded a total of 51 videos, and 163.000 followers on her Instagram profile which features a total of 223 posts (as of April, 2022). After watching all of her YouTube videos, I found out that the types of videos she has uploaded repeatedly (three times or more) are: travel vlogs, song covers and comedy videos (these latter two accord with Miss Cha's identification as a singer and a comedian, which she mentioned during our interview), with further, less frequently uploaded subsections

on room makeovers, morning routine, 'draw my life'[12], guitar tutorials, and singing about the 2019 political uprisings in Algeria known as 'Hirak'[13].

As I mentioned in my methodology chapter, the sampling of my participants' YouTube videos changed from primarily focusing on the popularity of the video, reflected in the substantial amount of views it garnered, to including videos with not as many views because these, too, have the potential of carrying socially and culturally challenging ideas and vocabularies that Algerian women YouTubers express concerning themes of women's rights, position, and issues within Algerian society.

In one of Miss Cha's videos, which dates back to 2016, titled in French: "J'ai pas 15 ans"[14] (I'm not 15 years old), with more than seven hundred thousand views (as of February 2020), Miss Cha answers questions frequently asked by her viewers in the comment section on her channel. She responds comically, either with jokes or by playing a character that she created who makes their first appearance in this video, but then reappears in several of her other videos and social media content under the name of 'Chaimous'. This character, who is in fact Miss Cha wearing men's clothing and fake facial hair, represents a typical Algerian older brother who is extremely protective over his female relatives and very often angry. Amongst the questions addressed to Miss Cha in this video were ones from male commentators asking her to say that she loves them, to which she responds by blushing and chuckling but right after that, the video cuts to the older brother angrily and intensely staring her down. Right after that,

[12] This is a type of video that is very popular amongst YouTubers where they tell their communities of subscribers about the most important stages of their live while making fun and entertaining drawings that represent these experiences and the aim of these videos is for these YouTubers' audiences to know them better.

[13] 'Hirak' is a word in Arabic that translates to 'movement' and it is commonly used to refer to the peaceful uprisings that took place in Algeria in February 2019 to protest the then-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's candidacy for a fifth presidential term.

[14] Miss Cha. (2016, July 20). *[Q&A] J'ai pas 15 ans.. !! (I am not 15 years old.. !!)* [Online video]. Retrieved July 11, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC33OMsqWjQ

she tells them to stop saying that and that she does not like it. Within the same video, Miss Cha also gets asked about her love life. The angry older brother character once again dramatically appears in the video, staring at her angrily. I argue that this type of content embodies Miss Cha's unique feminist language. In this case, this short performance represents her first time accounting for gendered power dynamics within the Algerian family through her YouTube content. The dramatic change in Miss Cha's reaction to what the male commentators said to her, from appearing accepting and in favour of those comments, to rejecting them after being stared at angrily by her older brother, shows her perception and satirical representation of gendered power and male/female sibling relationship dynamics within the strongly hierarchised Algerian family. Miss Cha's performance satirises a hierarchised relationship between two siblings in an Algerian family and shows her viewers how in this context the male sibling holds power and control over his female sibling and that this control is especially prevalent when it comes to females having contact with the opposite sex, because in traditionally-minded Algerian families, that is when the daughter risks jeopardising her family's honour, and that is why contact with the opposite sex must be avoided (Rezig, 2017).

Zooming in on this moment, Miss Cha's performance can also be interpreted as shedding light on a form of victim-blaming. She finds herself caught between two distinct but equally oppressive forces: the commentators and her angry brother. During this segment of the video, she responds to comments from her male viewers, in which they ask her to express affection towards them, thereby subjecting her to demeaning and unwarranted advances, which testifies to the rampant sexual harassment that pervades online spaces. Miss Cha's response involves giggling in a charming and flirtatious manner, which may initially seem perplexing. Yet, this action serves as a shield, a calculated act of self-preservation. By engaging in this performative flirtation, Miss Cha attempts to sidestep direct confrontation with her harassers, avoiding the potential escalation of their harassment. Not only that, but Miss Cha's particular coping mechanism is also noteworthy for its broader implications, as it is a

testament to the power dynamics at play. Within the context of Algerian societal norms, this performance takes on additional layers of meaning. Essentially, Miss Cha protecting herself by performing an infantile form of femininity could be seen as her way of alluding to the kind of infantilisation that is often attributed to women in Algeria. Her performance embodies a calculated representation of infantilisation – a defence mechanism employed by many Algerian women to navigate a restrictive environment. In essence, Miss Cha's performance illuminates the ways in which women negotiate societal pressures and patriarchal norms, as well as navigate a landscape rife with gendered power dynamics.

Right after that, Miss Cha portrays Chaimous, the angry older brother, who directs his anger not towards the individuals who harassed his sister, but towards her. Consequently, rather than serving as her protector, he becomes another violator. This portrayal exemplifies the predicament of Algerian women, caught between conflicting expectations, where refusal to comply with harassers could lead to further aggression, yet acquiescence draws anger from familial guardians. Regardless of her response, she faces reproach from her brother, attributing blame to her for the unwanted attention she receives. This scenario underscores Miss Cha's commentary on the pervasive issue of victim-blaming, a phenomenon not limited to Algeria but observed globally.

An interesting aspect of this part of the video is how Miss Cha is portraying all of this through comedy and in a very non-confrontational way. Here, Miss Cha uses comedy in order to avoid getting into conflict with her harassers and to still be able to get her message forward. Through her videos, Miss Cha shows the value in using comedy and satire as a way of creating a space to convey radical messages about women.

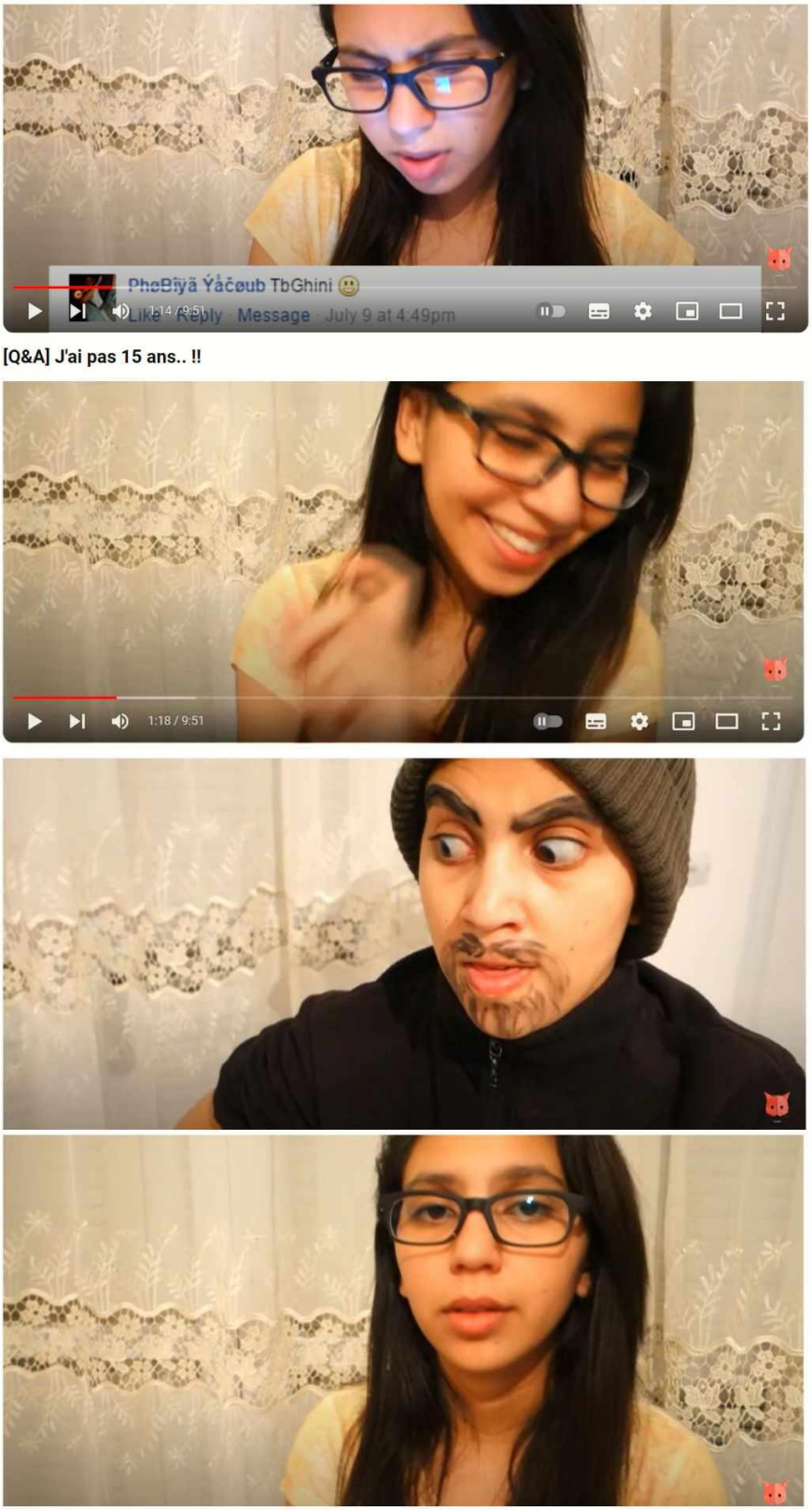

Figure 1: Screenshots from Miss Cha's YouTube video "I am not 15"

"Les Frères Algériens"[15] (Algerian Brothers) is the title of another video created and shared by Miss Cha in 2016, where themes around women's position in the family, their infantilisation and control are dealt with, with more than 400.000 views (February 2020). Chaimouss, the angry character that Miss Cha presents to be her interpretation of an Algerian brother (as she herself mentioned in our interview), makes many appearances in this video. The video starts with a clip of Miss Cha sitting down in what seems to be her bedroom and gives a small introduction to the video consisting of greetings and stating the title of the video. She then comments on it by saying how a subject like this one could take "a whole day" to talk about. In this video, Miss Cha uses comedy to tell her audience what she believes are characteristics of common experiences of an Algerian young woman's daily interactions with her brother. After the introduction, Miss Cha proceeds to tell her viewers that the video will consist of a list of behaviours people need to know about Algerian brothers. In the following paragraphs I list the characteristics that Miss Cha recognises as common amongst Algerian brothers when interacting with their female siblings with translations of the original expressions that Miss Cha mentioned in this video and that I deemed important in this analysis. Miss Cha's assertions concerning sibling dynamics and gender roles in the Algerian family as represented in this video come from her personal experiences, observations and information that she has accumulated during her life as a young Algerian woman. In addition to fictional dramatizations intended for comic and satirical effect, the videos also include personal and real-life events that happened with Miss Cha and her brother, as she herself confirmed during our interview.

"*Jamais tkoun la faute ta3 khouk*"[16] (It's never your brother's fault) is a section of the "Les Frères Algériens" video where Miss Cha says that the first thing one needs to know

[15] Miss Cha. (2016, April 25). *Les frères Algériens (Algerian Brothers)*. [Online video]. Retrieved September 9, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0MZloWi_S4&t=168s

[16] Miss Cha personally crafted the subtitles for her "Algerian Brothers" video, and despite their somewhat inaccurate transliteration of Algerian Darija (the Algerian dialect), I opted to retain them in their original form in order to preserve the video's originality while providing a translated version alongside.

about Algerian brothers is that they never admit to having done something wrong. She jokingly adds that when her own brother was a baby, the first words he learned to say were: “it’s not my fault”. In this section of the video, Miss Cha satirises the idea that Algerian brothers never admit when they are wrong and often get away with their mistakes. Here, I argue that Miss Cha’s portrayal of Algerian brothers, and therefore Algerian men, as never taking responsibility for their wrongdoings forms a creative and comical manifestation of a patriarchal practice of men and is a manifestation of the privilege they have from being held superior in traditional Algerian society. This is further illustrated by another idea that Miss Cha adds about how her brother’s excuse for when he does something wrong changed as he got older, from “ماشي انا” (it was not me who did the wrong thing) to “ماشي بلعاني” (I did not do it on purpose). This is another instance where Miss Cha’s feminist language concerning gendered control between siblings in the Algerian family manifests itself within her YouTube content. By satirising a situation where her male brother is allowed to make all kinds of mistakes without facing repercussions, Miss Cha highlights the traditional hierarchy that exists within the Algerian family. A hierarchy that has been documented as one that always favours sons over daughters, by giving sons ‘an almost lordly status’ (Fanon, 1965; p. 105). Furthermore, Miss Cha is interrogating cultural norms and behaviours that encourage men to exhibit traits such as dominance, and refusal to admit their mistakes. These cultural norms perpetuate privileges that men can experience simply due to their gender, which can include being shielded from consequences or avoiding responsibility for mistakes. This in turn, contribute to the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics and the reinforcement of harmful gender stereotypes.

As an Algerian young woman, Miss Cha’s performance in this part of the video resonates with me immensely due to all of the stories and experiences I have witnessed outside and inside my family, in which men and women do what are deemed in Algerian society the same mistakes, but never face the same consequences (i.e. women are always the ones facing what most of the time can be described as huge repercussions that can affect them negatively, either immediately or for the rest of their lives). A very widespread example that I

grew up hearing about and even seeing on Algerian TV, in talk shows and drama series, is when women get involved in romantic relationships outside of wedlock, or when they have love affairs while being married or even getting raped, and how they are completely shunned by their own families and society in general and can never live a normal life ever again. In extreme cases, women can even get killed by their family members. Meanwhile, men seldom get the same punishments when it comes to extramarital affairs or for being sexually active before marriage. While women who have been deemed to have been in romantic relationships in the past rarely get the chance to get married and start a family, men who have been in several past relationships almost always start afresh. This is because, in the traditional Algerian society, there are fundamental principles that are regarded as the responsibility of women and women only, amongst these principles is the notion of honour which is directly related to women's physical integrity (Rezig, 2017).

The second characteristic of the Algerian brother that Miss Cha mentioned in this video is **"*Nass may3rfouch belli hadek howa khouk*"**: (people do not know that you are related to your brother). Miss Cha starts explaining this point by saying that the people that hang out with an Algerian brother do not, and most importantly *should not*, know anything about any of his female siblings because he never talks about them outside of the home. Then, Miss Cha goes on to explain that in her case, her brother not mentioning her to his friends is not due to a matter of 'Horma'[17], but because her brother is embarrassed of the fact that she is related to him. In this section of the video, Miss Cha satirically and in the most subtle way presented a situation that commonly takes place within the traditional Algerian society: male members of the family making sure no stranger knows anything about their female relatives because traditionally, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the family are kept inside the home, and no one should see or interact with them. This is part of the strict segregation of the sexes that takes place within the traditional Algerian society in its attempt to guard women's moral and

[17] The transliteration system used in this thesis follows the guidelines provided by The Library of Congress (2012).

physical integrity and therefore protect the entire family's honour (Rezig, 2017). In fact, Miss Cha also referred to a situation of the same sort during our interview. When asked about her family's reaction to her decision to start a YouTube career, Miss Cha told me how her one-year-older (she herself emphasised on the fact that her brother is only one year older than her and that it's ironic how only one year of age gives him so much dominance and power over her life decisions) brother was extremely against her choice because, as she explained, he would be furious if he went outside the house and found out that the men in the neighbourhood were talking about his sister and the fact that she has a YouTube channel. In both the interview and her YouTube video, Miss Cha shows an awareness of her brother, and Algerian men's traditional beliefs about women, and how these beliefs translate into the infantilisation of Algerian women and the control and restriction of different aspects of their lives and freedoms.

Coming back to the Algerian Brothers video, it is worth noticing how Miss Cha chose to highlight the concept of 'Horma' (Honour) even though, as she explains in the video, it is not the reason why her brother does not want to be associated with her outside their home. Perhaps this falls into the strategies Algerian women YouTubers make use of when approaching subjects that are not easy to talk about and which generally have a feminist connotation, without generating a violent backlash. I talk about these strategies in detail in the upcoming sections and explore how Algerian woman YouTuber Nour Brahimi uses several of them within her social media content as well. Thus, Miss Cha cites the concept of 'Horma', showcasing her consciousness of it and its impact on the lives of women within Algerian society, as well as reminding her viewers and making them aware of it and possibly starting a well-needed conversation around it.

To continue with the discussion I started in the introduction about the concept of honour, I would like to give a brief introduction to the term 'Horma' and its interpretation within the Algerian context. 'Horma' is an Arabic word that literally translates to 'sanctity' or 'sacredness' in English. It is widely used in countries from the MENA region in general and particularly in Algeria to refer to what represents a family's honour and reputation, which has traditionally

been long established as the exclusive responsibility of the women of the family (Rezig, 2017). Sana Al-Khayyat, in her book about women in modern Iraq, explains that the most important connotation of the term “honour” in the Arab world is the sexual conduct of the women in the family (1990). In the Arabic dialect of some MENA countries such as Egypt and Syria the word ‘Horma’ directly refers to: a woman.

Growing up as an Algerian woman, I was exposed to many terms and expressions that are commonly used to refer to a woman’s behaviour and her physical integrity. Some of these terms are closely linked to women’s sexual conduct than others. An example of that would be the word ‘’Ird’ (عرض). The words ‘’Ayb’ (عيب), ‘Hashma’ (حشمة), or ‘ H’shūma’ are more linked to a woman’s general attitudes or behaviours, for instance when talking in public, interacting with males or with the way she chooses to dress. However, I find that the words ‘Horma’ (حرمة) and ‘Sharaf’[18] (شرف) are mostly used to encompass the meanings of the aforementioned terms with, of course, women’s behaviours being the central focus of this lexicon. In short, in the Algerian context, the word “Horma” is directly associated with women and with this comes the traditional belief that if a woman does something that is deemed immodest or inappropriate, this will tarnish her family’s reputation and she will be punished by her family members in order to restore that reputation. Miss Cha highlighting the concept of ‘Horma’ in her YouTube content showcases her performance of feminist values, especially in the way it popularises as well as satirises ideas around societal forms of control over women and girls in Algeria.

To recapitulate, in this section of the video, Miss Cha subtly addresses and interrogates the cultural norms that dominate and control the lives of Algerian women in traditional Algerian society. She employs the term 'Horma' with subtlety, alluding to the various ways this concept is utilised to restrict women's freedom, independence, and autonomy. Miss Cha's personal anecdote, shared during our interview, serves as a poignant illustration of this phenomenon. She recounted how her pursuit of a career on YouTube was hindered by her brother's

[18] ‘Horma’ is generally used more in Algeria than the word ‘Sharaf’, which is used more in the Middle East.

apprehension about her becoming known in their neighbourhood. This incident is just one of numerous instances in Algerian society where family honour takes precedence over women's choices, resulting in the restriction of their personal and professional development.

"*Ki tetla9a m3a khouk berra*" (when you come across your brother outside) is another compelling section from the Algerian Brothers video which showcases Miss Cha's creative feminist vocabularies depicting instances of everyday infantilisation and control of Algerian women. In this section of the video, we see Chaimous outside walking with a girl who seems to be his girlfriend. The video shows them making adoring facial expressions at each other and being shy and flirty. Then on the other side of the street we can see Miss Cha, playing the sister, walking while checking her phone without realising that her brother is walking on the opposite side of the street. After that, the video dramatically cuts to the instant when the two siblings spot each other in an awkward moment, and Miss Cha notices that her brother is with a girl. While the video switches back and forth showing us both Miss Cha and Chaimous surprised at seeing each other, the video then pauses on Chaimous again but this time we can see the girl that was accompanying him dressed up as a man with her hair up in a bun and a unibrow. At first glance, this choice may appear purely comical, inviting laughter from the audience. Yet, it carries a profound message: by disguising the girl as a man, Miss Cha creatively conveys the notion that Chaimous is attempting to conceal the fact that he is meeting up with a woman, thereby crossing the traditional boundaries of gender segregation.

Then Chaimous tries to take control of the situation by shouting at his sister and asking her in an intimidating way: "What are you doing outside?", "Go back inside!". This is another instance where Miss Cha's video speaks to several themes around the infantilisation and control that women are subjected to in Algeria. This subtle but powerful commentary sheds light on the double standards with which the traditional Algerian society treats women when it comes to the repercussions they face if and when they cross traditional boundaries of the segregation of the sexes, compared to their male counterparts. Since an Algerian woman's virginity, freedom, and individuality all belong to her family (Zemmour, 2002), she will face

tremendous consequences if she crosses those boundaries because she is putting the whole family's honour at risk (Rezig, 2017). Meanwhile, the men are free to roam around and cross those very same boundaries because they are the chosen protectors and guardians of familial honour (Fanon, 1965) and not the ones who embody it. Without explicitly explaining this phenomenon, Miss Cha has shown how these oppressive traditional understandings translate into different forms of gendered control that dominate women's everyday lives. The scene where the girl who represents Chaimous' girlfriend transforms into a man and Chaimous acts as if he was walking alongside one of his friends, subtly represents the way Algerian society turns a blind eye when men cross boundaries of the traditional segregation of the sexes. Additionally, Miss Cha shows how according to the hierarchy that exists within the traditional Algerian family, the brother not only crosses many traditional boundaries, but he also acts as the guardian of his female relatives' morality and physical integrity and prevents them from leaving the domestic sphere and crossing those same boundaries. This is showcased through the way Chaimous intimidates his sister for being outside and shouts at her to go back inside the house. This creative use of humour and satire underscores Miss Cha's perceptive commentary on the restrictions and expectations imposed upon Algerian women, showcasing her ability to address complex societal issues in an engaging and thought-provoking manner. Her short and skilful performance interrogates the societal pressure and expectations placed on Algerian women to uphold traditional values.

Miss Cha's video, "Les Freres Algériens" (Algerian brothers), is one of its kind, because it is one of the few videos on the Algerian YouTube scene that satirises and at the same time criticises an Algerian male figure, the brother, from a woman's perspective. While many Algerian male YouTubers have made so many videos talking about and critiquing Algerian women or even women in general (from makeup and appearance to romantic relationships etc), Miss Cha takes the lead in challenging the Algerian man from a woman's viewpoint. Through her social media content, and especially the two YouTube videos titled "Je n'ai pas 15 ans" (I am not 15) and "Les freres Algériens" (Algerian Brothers), Miss Cha has skilfully

and creatively painted a picture around the traditional hierarchy that governs relationship dynamics amongst members of the Algerian family. This picture is often hard to depict, especially by women content creators, because it puts forward realities of the oppression, infantilisation, and control that women and girls deal with in their familial daily lives, and it receives a violent backlash from the people who do not want these oppressive norms to be disturbed. Miss Cha has mentioned during our interview that she had to deactivate comment sections under many of her videos because of the backlash she received, however, she confirmed that she will never change the type of messages she wants to put forward in her social media content, and that she will maintain her feminist view in approaching topics concerning Algerian women. Moreover, the light-heartedness of Miss Cha's comedic and satirical videos cannot be taken for granted in the way it allows her to relatively get away with criticising Algerian men and the patriarchy more broadly in public, without losing followers or at least not losing her influence and relevance in the Algerian YouTube scene despite being so explicitly feminist.

Nour Brahimi: a Muslim woman's right to free movement

Another one of my participants whose social media content features feminist languages and vocabularies related to the infantilisation and control of women in Algeria, is Nour Brahimi. Nour is a 29-year-old (in 2022) Algerian woman YouTuber who self identifies as a travel content creator, with a YouTube channel containing108 videos with 252.000 subscribers. Additionally, her Instagram account, with 221,000 followers, contains 655 posts (as of April 2022).

"REALTALK # 1 | كيف أقنع أهلي ليتركوني أسافر " (REALTALK #1 How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel)[19] is one example of Nour's content in which her feminist vocabularies

[19] Nour Brahimi. (2019, May 02). *REALTALK # 1 | كيف أقنع أهلي ليتركوني أسافر (REALTALK #1 | How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel)*. [Online video]. Retrieved September 25, 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLKNKUsmTXA

regarding themes of infantilisation and control of Algerian women are exhibited. The initial aspect that drew my attention to this video is its title which is quite direct and straightforward about the topic of the video. Given the sensitivity of this subject in Algerian society, I was actually surprised that the title of this video is quite blunt and direct: “How do I convince my parents (or my folks) to allow me to travel”. Simultaneously, in what I see as Nour’s way of balancing the bluntness of the video’s title as well as the sensitivity of the subject it deals with, she has included a warning (in bright red) right at the start of it that says: “Warning, this video is directed towards the girls who asked me about this subject, if you have an opinion that disagrees with the title of this video, then you are advised to not watch it, thank you”.

The video then moves on to show Nour sitting down in what she describes as her “messy bedroom”. She explains that this is her way of being real with her viewers, not only with the topic of the video (which is unscripted as she herself has confirmed) but also with the way she presents herself in it (with no makeup, wearing pyjamas and in a messy room with clothes scattered all over the floor). Nour then tells her viewers that the question she often gets asked by her female followers on all social media platforms is about how she managed to convince her parents to allow her to travel and how can they do the same with their parents. After presenting this issue, Nour then lists all the reasons she believes prevent Algerian families from granting their daughters the freedom to travel and explore the world. The first reason Nour mentions is how Algerian parents believe that the world is a scary place because of all the news they watch on TV. She argues against that by saying that travelling abroad for women is often the same, if not safer, as travelling to other Algerian cities for university studies for example. Many Algerian women pursue higher education nowadays, though it is still stigmatised, especially studying in another city. However, an increasing number of women are doing this, so it has become somewhat normalised. This is why we see Nour referring to this practice and using it as an example to normalise women travelling abroad.

Using Douglas’s concept of classification (1966), which is the systematic gendered ordering of societies and cultures chiefly based on the biological differences between men and

women, Jansen (1987) explains how in Algerian culture, gender classification takes a high level of importance, as notions of gender and sexuality are seen as defining principles in the organisation of social life and activity in Algeria. Jansen further explains how there often is social condemnation from society when individuals contradict their presumed gender classifications. This reaction can be of severe gravity when the trespassing of gender classification occurs in a domain perceived as essential in defining a certain gender (Jansen, 1987). In the context of Algeria, it has been well documented that women have been confined to the domestic private sphere in Algeria for as early as its pre-colonial history, throughout its colonisation[20] by France, and extending to its post-colonial/contemporary history (Fanon, 1965; Benatia, 1980; Khodja, 1982; Rezig, 2017; Knauss, 1987). Fanon described Algerian girls and women's lives in the home as being bound by centuries-old customs and traditions that have allowed them no opportunity, personality, initiative or innovation. In the cloistered life of the home, Algerian women are expected to take care of all the domestic labour, which has been established as the defining quality of Algerian women's femininity (Jansen, 1987). Therefore, a woman who occupies public spaces, by working, studying in another city, or travelling abroad, is stigmatised against because she is crossing the boundaries of femininity and disturbing the traditional social order.

The second reason Nour mentions that endorses Algerian parents' control over their daughters' freedom of movement is the way Algerian society perceives women who travel alone. In this section of the video, Nour tells her viewers that one of the biggest reasons she makes travel content on YouTube is to destigmatise women who travel alone in Algerian society. She further clarifies this by saying that the goal behind her YouTube content is to represent Algerian Muslim women: "I want to show that as an Algerian hijabi woman, or even if I was a non-hijabi, when I travel abroad I am the same person that I am inside my country".

[20] There is the exception of the period of the Algerian War of Independence, or the Algerian Revolution, which lasted 7 years. During this time, the Algerian woman gained a new position within the Algerian family and society in general by assuming important roles in the revolution. This granted her more freedom and integration within the community, but it was temporary.

Nour goes on to explain that when she travels abroad it does not mean that she will do as she pleases. She expresses this idea by using the phrase "نـدير رايي", an expression in Algerian dialect whose literal meaning in English is: "I do my own opinion", and it is understood in Algeria as: I do whatever my mind tells me to do, or I do as I please. This expression is used in different contexts within Algerian society, but it is especially reserved to describe women who cross the boundaries of femininity that the traditional society has reserved for them (Jansen, 1987). In Algeria, there is a widely perpetuated misconception that Algerian women radically change when they travel abroad, and that they take off their hijab and modest clothing, and start drinking alcohol and smoking. This deeply-rooted stereotypical image is not only generalised over the entirety of Algerian women who travel abroad, but it is also seldom applied to men. In this section of the video, we can see how Nour has creatively utilised a colloquial expression that is familiar to her Algerian audience, and therefore evokes all the meanings that are commonly associated with women's freedom of movement in Algeria in order to explain how this distorted image is problematic and is used to infantilise women and control their freedom of movement. In her study about women who do not belong to the traditional family structure in Algeria (orphaned, divorced, widowed), Jansen (1987) explores the ways in which these women are classified and labelled as 'women without men' and as a result, are culturally, socially, and economically marginalised by society, because they contradict qualities that are considered feminine:

> [T]hey do not sit at home, they do not produce children, they do not avoid contact with male strangers, nor remain silent. They cannot do these feminine things, even if they want to, because they are forced to provide a living for themselves and their children. (Jansen, 1987; p. 9)

Similar to the point made by Nour in her video, where she utilised one of the colloquial expressions used in Algeria to describe women who travel, Jansen notes that the classification of 'women without men' is not only used to refer to the women who do not *belong* to men, but also extends to describe groups of women who cross traditionally established gender

boundaries. The colloquial expression used by Nour in her video also evokes the idea of the infantilisation and control of Algerian women through denying them their agency over their personal religious and moral standing. In her study on Algerian women's position in contemporary Algeria, Rezig (2017) explains how Algerian women are generally discouraged to find ways to assert themselves, especially through employment outside the home, because of men's suspicion and questioning of women's morality outside the domestic sphere. Rezig adds that these attitudes are supported by older women who Benatia (1980) describes as "the guardians of tradition" (47).

Expressions such as the one used by Nour in this section of the video is one manifestation of how Algerian society strips away women's religious identity and moral agency. For the traditional Algerian society, women only exist through the structure of the traditional family and behave according to its established restrictive boundaries in order to avoid repercussions they might face if they cross those boundaries. Thus, some Algerians are often surprised when they see an Algerian woman who is outside of her community but still upholds her religious identity. I, for instance, have received many messages, during the time I was sharing travel content on my YouTube channel, from men who were surprised I kept wearing my hijab and modest way of dressing while living abroad. Some of them praised that while others advised me to take advantage of being away from home and "live my life". I find both views degrading, as both of them are manifestations of society's control and infantilisation of women.

Nour moves on to talk about another reason which she maintains is used as grounds for parents to resist their daughters' mobility: women's age. Essentially, what Nour argues, is that when women are young, their parents think that they are not capable of handling responsibility and taking care of themselves. Nour refers to her personal experience and explains that she is 26 years old (at the time when the video was posted), and that she started traveling two years before that, meaning that she started travelling at 24 years of age. So she addresses the women who would have messaged her about this subject at the time they were

around 18, 19, and 20 years old, and tells them that they still have plenty of time to work on themselves, get a part-time job, save up money, and gain their parents' trust the same way she did: "Don't rush, take your time and gather enough money and skill to start taking responsibility." We can observe here that Nour Brahimi is suggesting certain strategies, inspired by her own lived experiences, for Algerian women to navigate the social and economic boundaries that are put against them to control and infantilise them. For example, in this video she suggests that they should work for some time and during that time they should save up and show their families how reliable and responsible they can be, for instance by financially supporting their families when in need. She also suggests for women who aspire to travel abroad to start their journey by travelling within Algeria with different organised travel groups for those who are not used to travelling alone (Nour gives names of some reliable travel groups that exist in Algeria such as Caravane des Feuilles and N'boujiw).

An intriguing suggestion that Nour proposes for women who are new to travelling alone is not to travel solo from the start but instead to be accompanied by a 'younger brother', she explains: "so that they [your family members] rest assured about you". Someone who has not grown up in the Algerian society might find this advice counterproductive, and rightly so because how can a younger brother protect his older sister if put in a dangerous situation? It is highly probable that the opposite might take place, given how responsible girls and women in Algeria are (ironically) socialised to become, and how sons are commonly not given any responsibilities from a young age and are not taught to be self-sufficient but to rely on women, caregivers and girls to meet their basic needs. And so why is Nour suggesting for women to start their travelling journey in the company of their younger brothers given that it is unlikely that a brother would protect them in dangerous situations? Why is the presence of a brother necessary for a woman's family to allow her to travel alone? Because here Nour is speaking a language that the traditional Algerian society understands, a society that adopts centuries-old customs that centre around the complete segregation of the sexes. This process only affects girls and women and centres on keeping them concealed and confined to the

boundaries of the house and domestic work, as they are the ones who represent the honour of the family. Meanwhile, the men are regarded as the protectors of that honour, and thus they are positioned as the guardians and owners/rulers of women. This situation is perfectly described by Fanon in the following quote:

> The woman's life in the home, made up of centuries-old customs, allows no innovation. From her mother she learns the higher value of the man. The woman in an underdeveloped society, and particularly in Algeria, is always a minor, and the man-brother, uncle or husband-represents first of all a guardian (Fanon, 1965; p. 105).

As Nour uses a language that is familiar to her Algerian audience, this section of her video evokes the idea of how the infantilisation and control of women in Algeria translates into the system of male guardianship resulting into restrictions of women's mobility and freedom of movement. Additionally, the idea of Algerian women lacking their personal moral standing and integrity outside the family is also evoked in this section of the video. The traditional belief that women do not own a moral or religious standing or identity, and so they cannot be trusted alone without their families and must be accompanied by a male relative, regardless of his age or his level of piety. He just has to be a male for him to qualify as the ruler of his women folk's morality and by extension his family's honour. This is why we see in societies such as Algeria how younger male siblings can exert power, control, and domination over their older, more mature sisters.

I see Nour's advice here as one of her strategies in trying to get her ideas across regarding Algerian women's travel aspirations, while at the same time attempting to minimise the damage that can be caused as a result of this discussion. The damage here being of course hundreds of hateful and negative comments and messages being directed at her. And so here Nour is using a language that Algerian society can understand and potentially approve of. Nour understands that it is not easy to change Algerian women's situation overnight by using abrupt measures or a blunt uncompromising language of "girl power". She indeed says

this in this video as, she tells her women viewers that what she wants them to understand is that suddenly facing your family and telling them that you have decided to leave the house and travel the world might not be the best solution to the restriction of your freedom of movement, but instead you have to win their trust. A trust that seems like it has been stripped away from us by default for the mere fact of being born females. Nevertheless, Nour is encouraging women to work with what they already have, using a language that Algerian society understands, as this is what will help the process of normalising Algerian women traveling inside of Algeria and abroad. It is in messages like these that the feminist languages and vocabularies of Algerian women YouTubers such as Nour Brahimi reside. It is a language that shows an awareness of the different restrictions put up against Algerian women; it is also a language that uses different strategies inspired by lived experiences, to negotiate with oppressive social and cultural structures in order to normalise and eventually attain more freedoms that have been stripped away from Algerian women.

So essentially what Nour wanted to convey to her female viewers is that, according to her personal lived experiences, for women to be able to travel freely inside and outside the country with their families' support, they will have to go through a somehow long process of talking to their parents about this subject and normalising it, all the while working on themselves, saving money and showing how responsible they can be. But Nour does not stop here: she also takes into consideration women from an older age group, of around 29 and 30 years of age. These would be women who might have passed the stage of talking their families through the idea of travelling and want to start travelling at a more mature stage of their life (post-motherhood, for example, or while married). To those women, Nour says:

> Fight for it, you only have one life, I am not telling you to be aggressive about it and all of a sudden leave your home, of course we should not disobey our parents, but there is a certain way of convincing them to allow you to travel, and this goes for any dreams or goals you want to achieve in your life and you did not receive support from your family for it. Are you willing to give up on the

better version of yourself that you want to become? I think that you should not and that you should fight for it.

Nour ends this video by apologising to her viewers for “talking for too long” as well as for the possibility of having offended anyone with what she said and stating that this was not her intention behind making this video. Nour reiterates that her one and only goal in addressing this topic is to answer the hundreds of questions and messages sent to her from Algerian women wanting to start travelling. Once more, I see these final comments from Nour as part of her diplomatic strategies in her attempt to stretch the boundaries put on Algerian women’s freedom of movement through her videos with a minimal amount of negative feedback. This technique of tempering the explicit directness and confrontational tone of feminist messages is one I observed across all my participants’ content. I would argue that this a technique that enables the survival of feminist languages of change in a socio-political and cultural environment that is inherently hostile to them.

I find the comment section under this video very interesting, and one thing that surprised me about it is the fact that with a quick scroll through it, I could notice that harsh and violent comments challenging the ideas expressed by Nour in this video were almost non-existent. This is not the case in some other videos of Nour’s, one of which I will be discussing next, where almost all the comments were criticising and sometimes even attacking Nour for spreading the idea that it is okay for a Muslim woman to travel alone. According to my observations, I argue that the degree of straightforwardness in conveying a message of such sensitivity in the Algerian context is an important factor that defines the amount of backlash an idea or a “feminist language” receives. As I have already mentioned above, we can notice several measures that Nour has resorted to before approaching the subject she discusses in “How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel?”, such as the warning at the very beginning of the video, the use of a colloquial language that is widespread and familiar in Algerian society, and the apology at the end of the video.

Comments under this video are predominantly written by women (this is initially apparent from the names and profile pictures of these users, in addition to the fact that they identify themselves as women in these comments). Some of the comments are from women who share similar experiences as Nour, and some of them even have started connecting with each other and thinking of organising group trips together. However, a big number of these comments are from women who express their sadness and despair in not being able to travel due to the gendered restrictions imposed by their families'. One example of this is the following comment from a user who identifies as a woman:

> Believe me, what you have said about those people who never leave their hometown for their entire life and how they are missing out on so much made me very sad because of how true it is, and I am one of those people. I am tired of the reality that travelling for a woman is forbidden in my family. Whenever it is summer season and I see and hear about people travelling to the beach and having fun I get so depressed because I do not get to experience that. And whenever I ask my mother about it she tells me: wait until you get married and your husband will take you. This is the mentality of fathers and old people. I am so tired of this, sister Nour, and the fact that no one understands me makes me go through so much depression. I feel so sad that I haven't even explored my own country. I travelled once to Constantine to print my dissertation, after so much begging to my father and even with that he was still mad at me. And now I feel trapped in my home with no job and no chance to go out or meet new people. The only thing that I enjoy is opening the net and watching your videos. I like you so much, please keep doing what you do and may God make it easier for you. I wrote you these words because nobody will understand my situation as you do. (My translation from Algerian dialect)

This comment demonstrates how Nour's feminist languages of space and mobility provide a form of freedom and a certain degree of access to public spaces for Algerian women.

It also shows the degree to which Algerian women are still trapped and confined by age-old customs and traditions adopted by a society that refuses to see women and their femininity as anything other than the private sphere and its domestic labour. In her research about women's work as viewed in contemporary Algeria, Souad Khodja (1982) explains how Algerian women's longing for work outside home is not only for economic reasons, but it is, in Khodja's words, a means of:

> developing their personalities, escaping from the cloistered life of the home with its boring and repetitive household tasks, performing jobs in return for a commensurate wage, helping to build a socialist society, achieving social integration and becoming full citizens in their own rights. (Khodja, 1982; p. 483)

Similarly, here we can see how this female commentator is expressing her frustration and disappointment of the social status that has been reserved for women in Algeria, and how it affects her physical mobility and movement, as well as her mental emancipation and growth. This comment also evokes the idea discussed above about male guardianship and company. We can see how in the case of the commentator, this idea has been directly translated into her infantilisation and the total control over her freedom of movement, by not letting her travel alone and telling her that she will not be able to do it unless she gets married.

Some of the comments were written in English, in which women were telling Nour how much of an inspiration she is in their lives. For example a user said: "You inspire us really you do please don't stop, I like how you talk about this common problem. Wishing the day when our parents become supportive for 100% without a needing for explanation to each opportunity we're getting". Another user shows how Nour's inspiring content is extending to women from neighbouring countries, such as Morocco:

> That's the type of content I adore. I get to know your channel and really like it cuz I have a passion for travelling and also ur story is kinda similar to mine..I'm

> 21 right now.. so u've encouraged me a lot darling to start working for my goal <3 ur follower from Morocco.

"لماذا أسافر وحدي" (why do I travel alone)[21] is another one of Nour's YouTube videos where, I argue, her feminist vocabulary of women's infantilisation and control through ideas of space and mobility, is strongly present. Although this short video is similar to the one discussed above, in that it promotes an image of an Algerian woman's ability and independent capability to travel alone. This fully contrasts and challenges the traditional image of the Algerian woman as passive, controlled, and often infantilised. The noticeable difference here is that in this short video Nour uses a more assertive and unapologetic language and attitude. This could be one reason why most of the comments underneath it are negative. The reason why Nour's language was straightforward might have been because she had already tackled this subject before, in the video I discussed above (REALTALK # 1 | كيف أقنع أهلي ليتركوني أسافر (REALTALK #1 How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel). It might be also because of the nature of this video as it is a YouTube Short, a shortened version of videos introduced by YouTube, similar to Instagram's reels and TikTok's short video format, and so it is supposed to be short and cannot include other elements such as disclaimers or apologies. In this video Nour says the following:

> Why do I travel alone? I travel alone because in the different cities of the world, I can stay outside at night, without fearing for my safety, in safe cities. So that I can spend the night in a hotel like this for 5 dollars (inserts a short clip showing a very beautiful hotel with a big swimming pool). One day I try street food and airplane food. Another day I eat pizza made by an Italian family. Sometimes I sleep in a youth hostel with communal rooms and bathrooms. And other times I stay in beautiful hotel rooms with bathrooms that are nicer than my own

[21] Nour Brahimi. (2022, February 06 *لماذا أسافر وحدي.) (why do I travel alone)*. [Online video]. Retrieved April 10, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/shorts/zZyV2S6yq2U

> bedroom at home. I wake up in nature. One day I cook with my friend in the youth hostel, and another day a Chef cooks for me. There are some cities that are not very safe and so I avoid going out after 5pm, and others that are very safe where I can stay out even after midnight. I travel alone so that the whole world becomes my home. I do not believe in imaginary borders or stories that tell me the world is a scary place. But rather I dare to explore the world and prove the contrary. (My translation from Arabic)

Nour's assertive and unapologetic language in this video about her various travel experiences as an Algerian and visibly Muslim woman is challenging and disturbing societal norms, not only in Algeria but in other Arab Muslim countries. This is apparent from the dialect in which some of the commentators have written their upset comments, which shows that many of them are from the Gulf region. Although Nour has only shared her personal experiences with travelling alone, many comments she received under this video were blaming her for swaying Algerian girls and women and corrupting them. An interesting debate that is present in this comment section is about the term "youth hostel" which Nour pronounced in Arabic in this video. Youth hostel in Arabic is "دار الشباب" (Dar shabab), 'Dar' meaning house or hostel, and 'Shabab' meaning young people or youth, both female and male. However, in some dialects in many Arab countries the word 'Shabab' is exclusively used to describe a group of young men, and for this, many commentators assumed that Nour, as a Muslim and Hijabi woman, spent her nights at male or mixed-gender hostels, and were judging her for that and calling her a bad Muslim woman. To these comments, many users – who probably watched previous videos of Nour where she explicitly shows how she chooses to only stay at female only hostels for various reasons – replied to the hate comments saying that the expression 'Dar Shabab' in fact means youth hostel in general, it can be for males as it can be for females, and Nour saying that she stayed at a youth hostel does not mean that she slept in a room filled with men. Nour did not reply to any of this video's comments, both positive and negative but she liked the ones explaining the real meaning of the term 'Dar Shabab'.

Using a blend of well-calculated strategies, from straightforward and blunt messages to more subtle and diplomatic ones, Nour Brahimi's YouTube videos address and challenge the infantilisation of Algerian women that is translated into the total control over their personal mobility and freedom of movement, maintained through traditional norms and structures, such as the male guardianship system.

Mlle Maziw: resisting Algerian women's infantilisation and control through educational videos.

Mlle Maziw is another one of my participants whose social media content exhibits her feminist languages and vocabularies related to the theme of women's infantilisation and control within Algerian society. She has a YouTube channel with 70 videos and 109.000 subscribers, and an Instagram account with 76 posts and 64.300 followers (as of April 2022). In our interview, Maziw described the content she creates and shares on YouTube as entertaining with an educational and cultural emphasis. For example, she makes videos where she reviews international movies or TV series that are popular amongst Algerian youth, and she often animates those videos with funny skits in which she and her friends perform. Even though the overall tone of Mlle Maziw's content is culturally educational and is not exclusively feminist, she does not hold back from dedicating entire episodes from the different educational YouTube series she makes to talk about purely feminist and radical subjects. Some examples include her video titled "Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman)"[22] (Mawazine Show – The suffering of everyday life (Girls/girls/woman)), where she talks about the issue of catcalling and sexual harassment which Algerian women are subjected to on a daily basis; or

[22] Mlle Maziw. (2017, December 21). *Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman) (Mawazine Show – The suffering of everyday life (Girls/girls/woman))*. [Online video]. Retrieved July 21, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgM5ajSx5uE

her video دورك علابالك dork 3labalek - MADE IN WOMEN"[23] (Now you know – MADE IN WOMEN), where she educates her Algerian audiences about a list of important inventions made by women throughout history, which came as a surprise to many of her viewers who commented that they never knew about inventions made by women before watching her video.

In the video titled H.S - Commentaires (Haters vs Lovers)[24] (H.S – Comments (Haters vs Lovers) Maziw showcases the different types of comments she receives in the videos she posts on YouTube and replies to them comically through a character represented by herself, called 'Mawazin', who plays the role of Mlle Maziw's sister. In this video, Mlle Maziw tells her viewers that she receives a massive number of comments under her videos, both positive and negative, and that she finds both types of comments very interesting, so she decided to make a video where she reacts to some of them. She says that due to the fact that there is a big number of comments under her videos, and that it is impossible to respond to every single one of them, she decided to respond to the ones she has specifically selected because she finds them intriguing.

The first comment Mlle Maziw has chosen to react to was left by a user under her video titled "dork 3labalek-MADE IN WOMEN" (Now you know- MADE IN WOMEN): "OOOH MRA TE93AD MRA, EMCHI TIYBI". This is Algerian dialect that literally translates to : "a woman stays a woman, go cook". Mlle Maziw sarcastically comments on it by saying: "that's great! It makes me so happy to see that you think like this!". Then she reads a comment left by the same user on another one of her videos titled "Le Sport et L'homme"[25] (The Man and Sports)

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[23] Mlle Maziw. (2016, December 4). *دورك علابالك dork 3labalek - MADE IN WOMEN (Now you know – MADE IN WOMEN)* [Online video]. Retrieved July 21, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TDBfeq4aRQ

[24] Mlle Maziw. (2016, December 31). H.S - *Commentaires (Haters vs Lovers) (H.S – Comments (Haters vs Lovers)* [Online video]. Retrieved July 21, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTtFMGfWOGM

[25] Mlle Maziw. (2016, April 14). *(1+1=10) #o2 LE Sport et L'homme - (1+1)) (10= الرياضة) #o2 The Man and Sports – (Sports))* [Online video]. Retrieved July 21, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWM8DcSlE-g

in which he says: “hhhhhhhhh more 1h te3 match Chefou belli memra machi 3liha l’ballon zedmo yeba3tohom lel cousina”, which translates from Algerian dialect as: “After one hour of playing, people found out that women are not supposed to play football and so they sent them to the kitchen”. After reading this comment, Mlle Maziw looks straight into the camera and says in Algerian dialect: “a man stays a man”. Another commentator left the following comment which they wrote in standard Arabic: النساء اخترعو الويز و فقط. Translated into English, the comment means: “women have only invented Always”, referring to the famous brand of menstrual hygiene products Always. Maziw addresses this commentator by telling them in Algerian dialect: “I know it must be annoying to you but this is life, women have invented some things just as men did”. Another comment Mlle Maziw chose to react to reads as follows: “tfla dir les potcast” which translates to: “a girl who makes podcasts”. Mlle Maziw replies to this commentator by correcting their spelling of the word podcast, which they wrote with a (t) instead of a (d). Then she adds that it is totally normal for girls and women to make podcasts and wondered why people found it so strange. One more comment Mlle Maziw reacted to in this video said: “وعلا ش نتي ماشي شابة ”, which translates to: “why aren’t you beautiful” and Mlle Maziw replied to this by saying what translates from Algerian dialect to English as: “for you, all Algerian women are ugly”.

Here we can observe Mlle Maziw’s feminist languages of Algerian women’s infantilisation and control being showcased via her deliberate and conscious decision to select, highlight, and address a number of comments that represent direct and straightforward manifestations of the infantilisation and control of women in Algeria. The mere fact that Mlle Maziw chose to highlight these types of reactions to her videos can be read as a performance of her feminist values. Comments of the sort of: “a woman stays a woman, go cook”, “[…] women are not supposed to play football […] sen[d] them to the kitchen”, or “women have only invented Always”, are real-life examples of how ideas and practices of infantilisation and control of women in Algeria extend to, and are perpetuated throughout online public spaces such as YouTube. We can see that Mlle Maziw’s videos which I mentioned earlier have

garnered mixed reactions from commentators because of the feminist themes and values they highlight using a feminist language unique to Mlle Maziw. Videos where an Algerian woman YouTuber such as Mlle Maziw confidently and creatively informs her audience about women in sports, or inventions made by women, stretch the boundaries set by the traditional Algerian society which infantilise and control women, and does not accept it if they break out from the position of “permanent minors” and explore their capacities outside the private domestic sphere.

Mlle Maziw’s interest in themes and subjects regarding Algerian women has also been shared by her during our interview. Contrary to Miss Cha who had difficulties convincing her family of her decision to start a YouTube career, Mlle Maziw received support from her parents since day one. However, this did not protect her from the unsupportive, negative, and often hateful comments she would receive from the people who watched her on YouTube. During our interview, Mlle Maziw talked about how she is continuously made to feel like she does not belong to the YouTube space by many people who watch her videos. She explained this idea during our interview in the following quote:

> When you are a woman and you are posting videos on YouTube, you are made to feel as if you are doing something unnatural. It is considered a very weird thing for people, because they have stereotypes about women… everyone thinks women are this women are that … (My translation from French and Algerian dialect)

Mlle Maziw further explained to me what she thinks is the reason why she and other women YouTubers receive negative feedback. She explained that Algerian women YouTubers are expected to make content that is most liked by their audiences, which is beauty content, thus, when a woman YouTuber makes content that is different than what is expected from her, she will receive continuous hate and negativity for straying away from what Algerian women conventionally share (and are expected to share) on social media and YouTube. This can be read as an online manifestation of the repercussions women would face if and when they

attempt to break free from the traditional roles and femininity markers that have been assigned to them by society as part of their infantilisation and control. Traditional roles such as being "self-effacing", covered up, only interested in doing housework and ready for marriage, and traditional femininity markers such as self-presenting according to the accepted beauty standards, and only being interested in subjects that are traditionally considered feminine such as marriage, cooking, beauty, childbearing etc. This is how the infantilisation of women and control over their freedom get reaffirmed and maintained in both online and real-life spaces. Online spaces are already a hostile apace for Algerian women, whether or not they stick to the conventional subjects they are expected to share, because the internet is perceived by the traditional society as a public space that Algerian women are supposed to leave for the men and stay concealed in their domestic sphere. Mlle Maziw discussed her experience with this issue during our interview as follows: "If I show you my YouTube channel now you would be surprised of the amount of hate I receive on a daily basis because of the fact that I am a woman doing YouTube" (My translation from French and Algerian dialect). Even though Mlle Maziw is constantly being excluded from the YouTube space, she continues resisting this rejection by presenting herself publicly on social media platforms in the ways she chooses to present herself with. In addition, Algerian women YouTubers who are breaking free from the traditional mould, such as my participants, are not only highlighting, questioning, and resisting these norms, but they are also role modelling this resistance for other women to follow their lead and practice this resistance themselves, which is the case for Mlle Maziw in this video. She is role modelling this resistance by the mere fact that she took time to highlight and to respond to comments exerting infantilisation and control over women, showing her audiences that those negative comments about women are not okay and that they should always be addressed and not taken for granted as it is commonly done in wider Algerian society.

In a video titled (1+1= 10) (مارس 8 اليوم العالمي للمرأة)[26] (8th of March, International Women's Day) Mlle Maziw talks about the history behind having an international women's day on the 8th of March each year. She gives her viewers a short overview of its history and while doing so, she emphasises the fact that women have suffered and continue to suffer to this day from gender-based violence. Then she reminds her viewers that women do not want gifts and parties on international women's day, but they want their rights and freedoms to be restored, and for that she shows a banner that says the following in French: "Journée internationale de lutte pour les droits des femmes. Nous ne voulons pas de fleurs, pas de mise en beauté, pas de fringues, pas de maquillage, pas de cadeaux. Nous voulons des droits garantis et protégés: nous voulons l'égalité" (international day for Women's rights. We don't want flowers, no makeovers, no clothes, no makeup, no gifts. We want guaranteed and protected rights: we want equality).

In this video, Maziw also refers to Islam as a religion that protects women's rights and that cultural practices have strayed away from its true teachings regarding women. She also referred to notable female figures in history such as communist activist and advocate for women's rights Clara Zetkin, and Sameera Moussa, the first female Egyptian nuclear physicist. She ends the video by saying the following:

> I just wanted to make this video to tell you that the 8th of march is not international women's day for them to party or receive gifts, it is the day when women ask for their rights, the 8th of march is not a commercial celebration, it is a celebration of activism. We do not need your gifts, the real gift that you could give us is our rights. If you want to let other people know about what international women's day really means, share this video and leave a comment

[26] Mlle Maziw. (2018, March 18). *(1+1= 10 مارس 8 اليوم العالمي للمرأة)(8th of March, International Women's Day).* [Online video]. Retrieved September 21, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZg-tYvbcyo

about what you think of this day, thank you for watching. (My translation from Algerian dialect)

Apart from the radical feminist messages and values showcased in this video, which alone represents a significantly courageous move from Mlle Maziw's part, it is equally important to look at the discussions this video has sparked in the comment section. Comments under this video were generally positive, however, some of these positive comments from male content creators were faced with hostility from other male commentators, such as a comment left by a user and content creator which Mlle Maziw pinned as the first comment you find when you watch this video: "3id l'mra koul youm mashi andha ha9 fi nhar wahed w magroura f 364 jours" (we should celebrate women every day and not give her rights in one day and oppress her for the rest of the year). A couple of male-identifying users replied to this comment by saying the following: "Sahit chekam. الاسلام هو من اعطى للمرأة حقها الأصلي ". The first part of this comment is written in Algerian dialect and uses the word 'Chekam', which is usually used in Algerian dialect as an offensive term to mean that someone is "kissing someone else's ass" or a "butt kisser". So here the user is calling the commentator a butt kisser for agreeing with the message of Mlle Maziw's video. The second part of the reply is in standard Arabic and it means: "Islam is the one who gave the woman her original right". As for the second reply, it says: "حلاب" which is yet another word in the Algerian dialect that can be used in a more generalised and derogatory way by some individuals to criticise or mock men who show genuine respect, kindness, or support towards women. In this context, it is clear that this term is being used to reinforce traditional gender roles and to demean men for treating women with consideration.

This video of Mlle Maziw can be read as part of her resistance against the infantilisation and control that Algerian women are subjected to on a daily basis. By maintaining that the international day for women's right should not be about gifts, beauty makeovers, and parties, she is rejecting Algerian society's traditional approach to celebrate women, which is in reality, just another way to define women through the roles and femininity markers that have been

traditionally assigned to them, therefore, keeping them infantilised and controlled. Mlle Maziw asserts that international women's day should be all about resistance and activism, quoting feminist banners, and referring to women's rights figures. Mlle Maziw's feminist resistance also takes place in the comment section where intriguing discussions about women's rights are sparked. The comment section in this video exhibits forms of maintaining the infantilisation and control of women. Commentators who have shown solidarity with Mlle Maziw's messages, especially male-identifying ones, were faced with hate from those who found the ideas expressed in this video inappropriate or offensive. It is also important to highlight the way in which Mlle Maziw conveys her radical messages about women in her videos. We have seen earlier how Miss Cha employs comedy and satire as a strategic tactic to neutralise the negative feedback she would receive as a response for her performance of feminist values within her content. Mlle Maziw, on the other hand, makes use of the straightforwardness that is usually found in educational videos in order to spread knowledge about purely feminist themes such as international day for women's rights, women's sports, or women's inventions.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter was to explore and discuss the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by my participants in their social media content, specifically to highlight and address women's position within Algerian families, especially their daily experiences of systematic infantilisation and imposed control. Through creative and thought-provoking digital performances, it becomes evident that Algerian women YouTubers are actively engaging in a novel form of Algerian feminist activism within the digital sphere. This form of activism creatively and strategically confronts the contemporary challenges faced by Algerian women, effectively working towards advancing the Algerian feminist movement's objectives to dismantle the male guardianship system. Remarkably, this innovative feminist digital activism is reaching a substantial audience across various online platforms, ensuring its impact on a significant portion of society. The influence of these social media productions is visible through

the reactions and comments of viewers, as well as the engaging discussions about women in Algeria that are sparked in the comment sections.

In the first section, I delved into how Miss Cha's YouTube videos skilfully capture gendered power dynamics within Algerian families. Her creative visual presentations provide insight into her perspective and satirical representation of gendered power dynamics and the relationships between male and female siblings within the hierarchy of the Algerian family. In her videos, Miss Cha demonstrates her awareness of traditional Algerian societal beliefs concerning women, illustrating how these beliefs translate into the infantilisation and control of Algerian women across various facets of their lives and freedoms. Through videos like "I am not 15" and "Algerian Brothers," Miss Cha introduces the character 'Chaimous,' symbolising her older brother. Through brief, light-hearted, and satirical performances involving Miss Cha, Chaimous, male commentators, and other characters, she effectively conveys radical messages while shedding light on various attitudes that perpetuate the infantilisation of women and the control tactics and mechanisms they experience. These attitudes encompass the dominance of brothers over their sisters, the victim-blaming of Algerian women, the imposed infantilisation and the resulting role Algerian women often reluctantly adopt to avoid further conflict with their oppressors, the privileges men enjoy that allow them to transgress boundaries set by traditional society, the traditional norms confining Algerian women to obscurity within the private sphere, the concept of 'Horma' and its role in hindering women's freedom, independence, and autonomy, the double standards applied to Algerian women compared to their male counterparts when crossing traditional gender boundaries, and the guardianship system that enables Algerian men to restrict the freedoms of their female relatives under the guise of protecting their moral and physical integrity, thereby safeguarding the family's honour.

Miss Cha's creative use of humour and satire underlines her perceptive commentary on the restrictions and expectations placed upon Algerian women, showcasing her ability to address complex societal issues in an engaging, entertaining, and thought-provoking manner. Her concise yet skilful performances critically examine societal pressures and expectations

thrust upon Algerian women to uphold traditional values while sparking discussions and providing a platform to convey radical messages about the daily practices of the infantilization and control of women.

In the second section of this chapter, I examined Nour Brahimi's feminist languages and vocabularies regarding women's infantilisation and control through the lens of space and mobility. Employing a combination of well-calculated strategies, ranging from direct and assertive messages to subtler and more diplomatic ones, Nour Brahimi's YouTube videos tackle the issue of Algerian women's infantilisation, which translates into the control over their personal mobility and independence, often upheld by traditional norms, particularly the male guardianship system. Through videos like "How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel?" and "Why do I travel alone?," Nour Brahimi demonstrates an understanding of the various constraints imposed on Algerian women's freedom of movement and skilfully utilises this awareness to negotiate with traditional social and cultural structures. She seeks to normalise women's freedom of movement, effectively shedding light on the stigma associated with it in Algerian society. Furthermore, I explored the strategies Nour employs to convey her radical messages, such as her adept use of colloquial language and expressions to establish familiarity with her Algerian audience. Nour also offers practical advice to women aspiring to attaining their freedom of movement through solo travel, drawing inspiration from her personal experiences.

The third and final section of this chapter delved into Mlle Maziw's feminist languages and vocabularies concerning infantilisation and control, focusing on her educational content addressing purely feminist topics, such as International Women's Day, women's inventions and discoveries, and women's sports, among others. In her video "H.S – Comments (Haters vs. Lovers)," we observed Mlle Maziw's resistance to the infantilisation and control of Algerian women through her deliberate selection and addressing of oppressive comments, such as "a woman stays a woman, go cook," "[…] women are not supposed to play football […] sen[d] them to the kitchen," or "women have only invented Always." Just as Miss Cha employs comedy and satire as strategic tools to convey her radical feminist messages and counteract

negative feedback, Mlle Maziw uses the straightforwardness commonly present in educational videos to disseminate knowledge on purely feminist themes, as demonstrated in her video "8th of March, International Women's Day." Additionally, we observed how this video by Mlle Maziw showcases her resistance to the infantilisation and control that Algerian women encounter daily, notably through her rejection of the traditional approach to celebrating International Women's Day in Algeria—a practice that reinforces traditional gender roles and femininity markers, ultimately constraining Algerian women. The comment sections under Mlle Maziw's videos provided valuable insights into the impact of her content on her audience, revealing diverse perspectives and showcasing instances where some individuals resist the discussion of themes related to Algerian women's rights, along with instances where men expressing solidarity with women face mockery.

The objective of this chapter was to delve into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers, shedding light on the systematic infantilization and imposed control experienced by Algerian women in their families. The innovative digital activism displayed in their creative performances contributes significantly to challenging and dismantling the male guardianship system. As we transition into the next chapter, Sexual Harassment and Beauty Standards, the exploration continues, examining how these brave YouTubers confront additional layers of oppression, specifically addressing issues related to sexual harassment and the imposition of normative beauty standards.

Chapter 5: Sexual Harassment and Beauty Standards

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore Algerian women YouTubers' feminist vocabularies and languages, as they bravely tackle and resist the various forms of women's oppression prevalent in Algeria, particularly cantering on the themes of sexual harassment and exclusionary beauty standards. This endeavour aligns with the continuing goals of the Algerian feminist movement, a cause that has persistently pursued gender equality in Algeria, especially since the inception of the Family Code in 1984. The issues that these YouTubers are addressing represent a continuation of the struggles the Algerian feminist movement has keenly supported for decades.

Similar to the previous one, this chapter primarily draws upon data from my participants' social media content on both YouTube and Instagram. Moreover, this chapter takes into consideration, where relevant, links between these social media productions and interview discussions with my participants, as well as my autoethnographical insights as a Muslim girl/woman negotiating different forms of sexual harassment and normative and exclusionary beauty standards while growing up and living in Algeria. In this discussion, I am interested in the forms of sexual harassment and normative beauty standards that my participants have chosen to highlight within their social media content. Examples of these forms of oppression are everyday experiences of sexual harassment, such as sexualised verbal abuse in the street, which Miss Cha, Nour Brahimi, and Mlle Maziw all highlight in their videos. As for the theme of beauty standards, I will be looking at the different ways my participants chose to highlight and resist the existing normative beauty ideals that are pushed forward and upheld by society, and which are commonly used in order to denigrate and objectify women in Algeria, and I will specifically look at how this unfolds within online spaces.

What is notably distinctive in the work of these YouTubers is that it represents a novel and dynamic form of feminist activism, one that transcends geographical boundaries and resonates within the vast expanse of the digital world. The impact of their creative social media productions extends far beyond, echoing powerfully within this new generation, deeply entrenched in the digital age. This digital activism is not confined to a specific gender; it touches the hearts and minds of Algerian youth, both male and female. It serves as an efficacious mechanism for challenging deeply ingrained taboos and transforming long-held mentalities.

Informative to the themes dealt with in this chapter, is a study done by Algerian researcher Amina Babou (2019), where she investigates the relationship between violence against women – including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, and psychological violence – and issues of gender identities, specifically the way masculinities are constructed in the Algerian society. Babou explains that in the Algerian society, women are defined as subordinate and inferior to men, and that power and sometimes even aggression are usually important components of a dominant, socially constructed masculinity. Accordingly, Babou argues that violence against women has a close relationship with the process of negotiating masculinities within Algerian society. In this research, Babou promotes the use of the community of practice framework (CofP for short), as she argues is effective in reflecting upon individuals' gender identities and adequately analysing the relationship between language, identity, and practice. She also makes use of critical discourse analysis in order to trace the way language use may be a factor in enacting, reproducing, and resisting social power, abuse, and dominance in society (Godeo, 2003). In doing so, Babou (2019) combines Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (2001; 2003) in which he defines discourse as: "language as social practice determined by social structures" (2001; p. 14), with Gramsci's notion of hegemony (1971) which emphasises the link between hegemonic struggle and discourse on the premise that social structures and discursive practices are what constitute society's norms, conventions, identities and institutions (Faiclough, 2003).

Moreover, Babou employs the theory of social learning in order to clarify the ways in which gender roles and masculinities are constructed within Algerian society. The theory maintains that humans learn social behaviour through observing the behaviours of others, then by collecting and adopting the behaviours that conform with society's established social norms and gender roles (O'Leary, 1988). This theory views aggression as a learned and constructed social behaviour, that could continue if endorsed by the majority of social agents (Lore & Schultz, 1993). In the same vein, Babou reflects upon Tannen's ideas regarding the way men and women are brought up to belong to two differing camps or "subcultures", within their respective subcultures, males are encouraged to adopt aggressive behaviour against women as part of constructing their masculinities and negotiating power:

> Tannen (1990) underpins the idea that women and men belong to two different subcultures. Whilst boys are instructed to cooperate with teammates for the sake of winning, girls learn to cooperate with teammates in order to build and maintain relationships. Lest future social deviation, parents try to transmit the norms to their children and offer them different instructions divulging them what is inimical to their masculinity or to their femininity. Being masculine demands that a man should be intrepid and seeks risky-undertaking adventures even accepting violence if necessary. Male sex role requires that the man should occasionally become a hostile bulwark. Aligning with this idea, calling a man "aggressive" is usually, in some societies, revered as a compliment (Babou, 2019; p. 162).

In the same study, Babou connects these understandings of the social construction of masculinities and femininities, as well as violence against women as a socially constructed behaviour, to the Algerian context, and argues that the notion of gender as a fixed binary opposition denies the agency of both Algerian women and men, and is ought to be challenged in the process of resisting gender-based violence. To this end, Babou brings attention to the concept of the community of practice, defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet as: "an

aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour" (1992; p. 464). Babou maintains that the community of practice framework provides a thorough examination of the prominent aspects of gender violence, meanings/constructions of gender identities, and most importantly, the relation between male's construction of masculinity and the need to display power against females. In addition to the fact that Babou's study provides this chapter with the theoretical understanding of the ways in which violence against women, including sexual harassment, is constructed within Algerian society, it also – through its use of the community of practice framework – opened my eyes on my participants' social media practice's potential in initiating change in the way gender identities are perceived and discussed within Algerian online spaces, and this is through, as we will see in the upcoming paragraphs, creating online spaces where themes and issues related to gendered identities and violence against women unfold and can be observed, examined, challenged, and resisted.

In her study on North African women's activism during the Arab Spring, Loubna Hanna Skalli (2014) discusses the great potential social media has in expanding the repertoire of action regarding women's rights issues within countries in the MENA region. When it comes to the issue of sexual harassment, she argues that the context of the Arab Spring has created a new visualisation in which the intensity and brutality of this phenomenon have been revealed. She aptly describes the situation of sexual harassment within North African societies as follows:

> This new visualisation, I argue, has contributed to demystifying sexual harassment within societies where the topic has long been shrouded in a cloak of silence. Blaming the victim of sexual harassment, which is pervasive in North African societies as in all patriarchal societies, has condemned women to silence and, in the process, condoned violence, normalised it and trivialised it. In societies where women's bodies and mobility are controlled through strictly prescribed codes of 'purity' and honour, any violation of women's body is taken as a dishonour of the entire family or community for which women, and not their aggressor(s), are held responsible. (Skalli, 2014; p. 245)

This quote from Skalli describes the setting within which my participants' social media content emerges, an environment where issues such as sexual harassment against women is seldom discussed because of the 'dishonour' connotations it holds, and the way it is disregarded and trivialised through victim-blaming to the point that it has now reached a normalised status. This is where the value of what some Algerian women YouTubers are doing regarding this issue comes into play. My participants' social media content is working into de-normalising issues such as sexual harassment, they are explaining to their viewers that it is time to reject these practices even if society has trivialised them and made them look as if they are a normal part of women's everyday lived experiences and therefore, should be overlooked.

Within the context of the Arab Spring, Skalli (2014) explains how highlighting and discussing social issues such as sexual harassment is no longer the exclusive job of official feminist initiatives or human rights activists: a young generation of activists from different socio-economic, educational, ethnic and religious backgrounds, who possess a generational awareness of the different challenges facing them, have taken it upon themselves to demystify sexual violence and spread awareness about it using the different tools available to them. Furthermore, Skalli explains that the Arab Spring has revealed how young women from the MENA region have been involved in human rights struggles through their active use of digital technologies with their different tools, by sharing their personal experiences and stories of sexual harassment, for example, and mobilising themselves and initiating action against all forms of gender-based violence.

Although my participants do not self-identify as women's rights activists or advocates for human rights such as the young women whom Skalli (2014) discusses in her study, they do raise awareness about issues that are relevant to women including sexual harassment. In fact, the way Algerian women YouTubers' feminist values and messages are imbedded within a content that is entertaining, satirical, or informative, for example, is what makes it effective in sparking discussions, spreading new ideas about gender-based issues and eventually,

hopefully, shifting traditional narratives about different women related issues, and this is what I will further explore throughout this chapter.

Feminist YouTube resistance against sexual harassment

"The art of saying no, كي يقلك مديلي نيميرو" (when he asks for your number, the art of saying no)[27] is one of Miss Cha's videos that seems light-hearted and playful on the surface, but subtly sneaks in an important feminist message against unwanted sexual advances that women are subjected to in the streets of Algeria on a daily basis. This video is essentially about saying no to strange men asking women for their phone numbers. In the video, we see Miss Cha in random places in her home: up and down the stairs, between the plant pots and behind the tree in her garden, on the floor, waving her index finger sideways the same way people do when saying no, with an Algerian song in the background where Algerian international singer Cheb Mami repeatedly sings "La la la la la la". This can also be understood as Cheb Mami saying "no" repeatedly, because "La" sounds like "No" in Arabic and in Algerian vernacular. This is where Miss Cha is creatively drawing attention to the invisibilities and silent "no" that is hiding in plain sight all over popular culture and daily life. By making use of this catchy and popular Algerian song, which provides familiarity to her viewers, she is recontextualising the song lyrics and thereby imbuing them with meaning, making it easier to convey her approach on how to respond as a woman to strange men asking for her phone number, or even to just put this idea out there to bring attention to it as a topic that is of interest to herself and other Algerian women and start a much-needed conversation. Similarly to what other Algerian women YouTubers such as Nour Brahimi have done, which I discussed in the previous chapter, here too, I argue that Miss Cha's use of this familiar song is part of her

[27] @mettacha. (2019, January 14). *And you? What are the things you say no to?* [Online video]. Retrieved May 22, 2020 from https://www.instagram.com/p/Bsn3VXcHPVZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

creative strategies in curating and employing a feminist language within her content on different social media platforms.

The way Miss Cha captioned this video also makes me read it as another one of her strategies in curating and utilising her own online feminist language. This resides in the way this caption lessens the intensity of the video when Miss Cha says: “And you? What are the things you say no to?”. She does not ask her viewers about the way they react to men who incessantly ask for their numbers, i.e. she does not make the caption directly centre around the main topic of the video (feminist resistance against misogynist sexual harassment), but instead she diverts it towards her viewers and asks about the different things they say no to, things that could fall into the same theme she refers to in her video, or not. This can also be seen as her way of inviting her audiences to join this important discussion, to become active feminist resisters themselves, which has, in fact, succeeded as a strategy as we will discover in the following paragraphs. This subtle and indirect invitation to join the discussion about the sexual harassment that Algerian women experience daily can also be read as Miss Cha’s attempt to contain, manage, or even decrease the negative feedback that she often receives online. The invitation for viewers to join the resistance and say “no” to misogynist abuse becomes one of Miss Cha’s strategies of curating a feminist language that slowly but surely plants seeds of change in her viewers’ minds.

The negative feedback that Miss Cha and other Algerian women YouTubers are regularly faced with on different online platforms, often takes the form of comments where misogyny against Algerian women YouTubers runs rife. Misogyny takes multiple shapes and forms, such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment and objectification, belittling of women and threats of violence against them (Srivastava et al., 2017). Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) coined the term “online popular misogyny”, which helped me make sense of what constructs the online misogyny, especially sexual harassment, that Algerian women YouTubers experience, and make content about on different social media platforms and how it devolves online. When defining popular misogyny, Banet-Weiser refers back to what

misogyny is conventionally known as: “a hatred of women”. She further contextualises this definition within today’s heavily mediated and capitalised environment of social media networks and adds: “[misogyny] is the instrumentalization of women as objects, where women are a means to an end: a systematic devaluing and dehumanising of women” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 2).

Banet-Weiser explains that the increased presence of popular misogyny is due to its competition for the visibility and outreach that popular feminism has achieved on a vast array of social media sites. Furthermore, she argues that popular misogyny is one of the possible outcomes of the constant visibility of marginalised groups on a surface level rather than a structural one, as she explains using critical race theorist Grace Hong’s (2006) words: “Visibility is not inclusion but surveillance” (Hong, 2006, p. xxviii). As I explore these understandings further at a later stage of this thesis, here Banet-Weiser is referring to social media content creators whose content falls into the neoliberal markets of social media, or what is known as the economies of visibility. This type of content indeed promotes the visibility of marginalised groups (such as women in Algeria), but by doing so according to the terms and conditions of the economies of visibility, it does not engender structural changes in favour of these marginalised groups. In this case, the outcome of their visibility will only be more surveillance targeted towards them without actual advancements of their rights and freedoms.

This could also be true in the context of Algeria. As I identify at a later stage of this thesis, there is a type of social media content creators whose content falls into the economies of visibility. This is in contrast to the Algerian women YouTubers whose content I discuss in my research. However, what I argue differentiates the Algerian context, is that Algerian women’s occupation of online spaces, regardless of its nature, often triggers negative reactions in the form of misogyny. This is because the internet is still widely perceived as a public space from which women are expected to retreat for men.

Coming back to Miss Cha’s video, which draws attention to the sexual harassment of women in Algeria, and the relevance of its comment section: with a whopping 170.000 views,

this short video has garnered 783 comments. A trawl through them revealed that most of the comments were on the positive side, ranging from messages from people agreeing with Miss Cha, to those sharing their own stories of saying ‘No’ to harassment, and to those who just found the video funny and entertaining and left positive feedback about it or tagged their friends to watch it as well. However, as per usual, not all the comments were supportive or positive, and one common negative theme was the criticism of Miss Cha’s looks, using that to deny the experience she shared in this video. These comments essentially say that a woman who looks like her does not get asked by men for her number, completely ignoring the main issue Miss Cha’s video is trying to address which is sexual harassment, as well as emphasising an exclusionary norm of beauty and femininity that women should have for them to be wanted and desired. Examples of these are: “3lah nti ygouloulek a3tini numéro? 😂” which is Algerian dialect that roughly translates to, “do you even get asked for your number? [Laughing emoji]”, “Nti tkhlsini ou manmedlkch numero 🤣🤣🤣” which translates to “I would not ask you for your phone number even if you paid me [three laughing emojis], “Chkoun Y9olek. Medili numero be he’d lfigoura 😂” which means “who would ask for your number when you have a face like that [laughing emoji]”. These comments represent very pertinent instances of the online misogyny that exists in the comment section of Algerian women YouTubers’ content and it shows the hindrances Algerian women YouTubers have to consider when creating and posting online content that challenges established practices and beliefs that are oppressive to women. It also could be the reason why Algerian women are often careful when they are challenging those structures and so they do not go all the way in their critique, but find ways with which they negotiate their denunciation of oppressive structures. Moreover, we can observe that in the case of this video, misogyny took the form of the normative and exclusionary beauty standards that exist in Algeria and which are used to belittle women and deny their lived experiences of misogyny and sexual harassment. During our interview, Mlle Maziw expressed her thoughts concerning the negative feedback she

receives, notably the one where people criticise the way she and other Algerian women YouTubers look and said the following:

> Us Algerian women YouTubers will always receive hateful responses, especially when you are a woman who does not wear makeup on YouTube, it is a very big deal, because when I and Miss Cha for example do not put on makeup, we get criticised for our looks on top of the criticism we get for being women who do YouTube in the sense of "you are a woman, what are you doing here? You do not belong here". That is why usually women YouTubers in Algeria make content that is most liked by their audiences (meaning beauty), but I think women should express themselves the way they like to and not how society expects them to (My translation from French and Algerian dialect).

In addition to highlighting an important aspect and common manifestation of gendered sexual harassment within the Algerian context, Miss Cha's video also has the potential to start conversations about themes that are related to this issue. This can actually be seen in the comment section of this video's. For example, several female users compared Miss Cha's experience with instances when they were asked by men to send them their photos online. One user commented: "كي يقللك ابعثيلي تصاورك مبعد نسيبريميهم 😂😂😂" which translates to "when he tells you to send him your photos and tells you he will delete them later [three laughing emojis]". This user is connecting Miss Cha's experience to her own when she was asked by a man to send him her pictures which he said he will later delete. This is significant for women in the Algerian context because it breaks the public silence on topics that affect their lives but are not often discussed openly due to them being associated with shame and judgement towards women, and women only. These topics are also linked to women's safety: for example, tackling and openly talking about these issues (sexual harassment in the form of unwanted sexual comments or advances) could help women learn and share strategies on how to protect themselves from preying men who might at first show them good intentions but end up taking advantage of them. This is critical in Algerian society where people, more often than not, do

not stand up for women in situations like these, and are quick to make horrible judgements about them and deny them their morality or religious standing. Lahmari (2021) in *Sexual Violence in Algeria: A Daily Struggle or an Imaginary Threat?* explains this issue in the following:

> In Algeria, sexual harassment and sexual violence are normalized in favour of the patriarchy and masculine societal norms. In other words, incidents of sexual violence, of which the victims are mostly women, tend to end in victim blaming instead of holding the harasser accountable. (Lahmari, 2021; p. 2)

One user tagged another one and said: “mdrrr ntiya lyuum 😂😂” which translates to: this is you today [two laughing emojis], to which the other user replied: “ 😂😂😂😂😂 9aly ftarty tachnaf” which translates to “[Five laughing emojis] he told me you had grumpiness for lunch”. In these comments, a woman is referencing Miss Cha’s video to tell her friend about how she was asked by a man for her phone number, and when she said no, she was faced by the age-old sexist and misogynist request to be cheerful and *smile more*. When Algerian men ask women for their phone numbers according to my own observations and experiences of growing up in Algeria, it is usually an unpleasant, even threatening experience. In addition to it coming from strange men, which already makes it an abusive experience that violates a woman’s personal space, some men can get verbally or even physically abusive and defensive while asking for a woman’s phone number. Some men get extremely offended and aggressive when women do not respond positively to their requests. I will never forget the shock I felt when I witnessed a similar situation during my first year at university in Algeria, even though it did not happen to me personally. I was hanging out with a group of friends while waiting for the professor to come and start the lecture, when I heard a young man, who was standing next to us, asking one of my friends, who apparently already knew him, for the phone number of one of the girls in the group, referring to it as “son matricule” (her licence plate). When I heard this expression, I got startled and confused. It took me a short while to process this strange sentence, and when I finally understood that by “her licence plate” the person

meant her phone number, I felt utter disgust and various questions and thoughts came rushing to my mind: How could someone compare a human being to an inanimate object such as a car? Is this an instance of women's objectification by men? Is this all that women are worth in the minds of some men?

In the same vein, Lahmari explains that sexual harassment with its various forms such as catcalling women in the street, is extremely normalised in Algeria to the extent that men now feel entitled for a response from the women being catcalled and they scream and shout when rejected. In the following quote, Lahmari reports the opposite views of his research respondents from both sides of the sexual harassment experience, the male respondent's view I find quite disturbing:

> On the one hand, Nour struggles daily with catcalling, even when she goes for a short walk to the supermarket. She says, "I feel disgusted when a man catcalls me. They would expect a reaction from me so that when they aggressively shout at me, it will be justified." On the other hand, Mohammad considers it a game of "the survival of the fittest," in which he catcalls and approaches women for the sake of satisfying his playful "animal instincts." As a result, this game of the "survival of the fittest" exceeded fulfilling men's desires to justify the voluntary killing of women just like in the case of Shaima. (Lahmari, 2021; p. 3)

By satirising social and gender issues like she did with the issue of sexual harassment in this video, Miss Cha is openly questioning these oppressive practices and urging her viewers to do the same. She doesn't necessarily say "I am a feminist, let me give you a lecture on how to be one", but she performs feminist values and she creates these dramatic scenes where people can actually observe and witness how gender-based inequalities in the form of violence and what that looks like in "real life". She creates a space where her videos validate women's experiences of oppression and gender inequality, and her comment section shows how radical her videos are by sparking open and public conversations about sexual

harassment while keeping her female users apparently safe enough to speak out openly and garner support and solidarity from other women.

Nour Brahimi's YouTube video titled مع الأسف و شكرا (Unfortunately and thank you)[28] is another significant example of social media content created by an Algerian woman YouTuber within which she unveils, challenges, and resists forms of sexual harassment that Algerian women are subjected to in their everyday lives. The following paragraph is the script of what Nour says in this YouTube Short (a shortened version of videos on the YouTube platform):

> I travel and go out at night and I feel safe, as opposed to when I'm in my city where I cry even during the day, and where my presence in the street is considered a crime that gives harassers every right to harass me. Near the beach I walk, I breathe, and I breathe and then I go back to the hotel at night without fear. I travel because when I do so, the smile never leaves my face and because it means I am happy and not that I am not respectful. I travel because wearing a hat in my city is considered provocative, and because sitting on a bench in the street is considered Haram and is only allowed for men. Here I am, back in Algeria, I went outside at 6 pm in broad light only to find men giving me strange looks and judging me. Very strange indeed (My translation from Arabic).

Nour's language in this video is quite straightforward and unapologetic, and this is probably why she deactivated its comment section, as I have observed within my research data and through my own experience, that the more Algerian women YouTubers are direct in highlighting women-related issues or share content that is intrinsically feminist, the harsher the feedback they get. An example of this is indeed another YouTube Short from Nour titled

[28] Nour Brahimi. (2022, May 28). *مع الأسف و شكرا (Unfortunately and thank you)* [Online video]. Retrieved August 22, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/shorts/CP-7aiNGrgM

Why Do I Travel alone[29], which I talk about in detail in the previous chapter, and whose comment section is rife with commentators' judgements and harsh accusations claiming that Nour lacks modesty and piousness for travelling alone without a male guardian , and for having a bad influence on Algerian women. As for the visual aspect of this video, Nour has collected short clips of her multiple travels around the world, where we can see her smiling and laughing while strolling down various European streets at night, walking through airports, using public transport in foreign cities, and taking a boat ride while wearing modest summery clothes and a sun hat. In addition to that, Nour has also included short clips where we can see her crying and in a state of fear and distress.

Before examining both the language and the visuals employed by Nour as part of her feminist language in this video, I would like to give some context about the clips in the video where we can see Nour in fear and distress. One of these short clips is a video she took while she was being followed by a group of men who were sexually harassing her verbally. Nour had previously shared this specific video of her being harassed in the street on her Instagram stories[30], giving details of what exactly had happened to her and explaining that she had felt extremely unsafe after being followed and sexually harassed by those men. She reports having asked for help from the passers-by and that she could have been physically assaulted had the street been totally empty. Nour also shared some of the responses she received after sharing her sexual harassment experience, many of which blamed her for walking alone in the street, for reacting violently to the aggressors and accused her of aggravating the situation. Within the same Instagram stories, Nour shared her willingness to involve the police in the case, as she was able to get the plate number of her harassers' car in a video she took of them, but she got many messages telling her that it would be a waste of her time and that the

[29] Nour Brahimi. (2022, February 06).لماذا أسافر وحدي *(why do I travel alone)*. [Online video]. Retrieved April 10, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/shorts/zZyV2S6yq2U

[30] As an avid follower of Nour's content on her various social media platforms , I have seen her Instagram stories about the sexual harassment she was subjected to in the streets of her hometown Blida the day she shared them, and because Instagram stories last for 24 hours only, I took screenshots of them and I refer to them here. These stories were posted by Nour in the 16th of February 2022.

police would not help. Nour expressed her awareness of how inefficient the police system is with these kinds of aggressions but she maintained that she would follow through with her case in order to provide information for other women who wish to follow the same procedures.

More than two months after Nour's sexual harassment incident, she shared the video I am discussing here (Unfortunately and thank you) and chose to include clips of the assaulters following her in their car, as well as expressed her contempt for the victim-blaming she received for speaking up on issues of sexual harassment in the streets of Algeria. By doing so, Nour creates a space for other Algerian women to relate their experiences of sexual harassment and the culture of victim-blaming. She expresses this in the video when she says: "… where my presence in the street is considered a crime that gives harassers every right to harass me". Nour's video also challenges and raises the attention to the issue of the cultural perception of women's presence in public spaces as immodest, along with other simple and innocuous practices mentioned by Nour that are demonised by society if and when done by women such as smiling or laughing, wearing a hat, and sitting on a bench in the street. I believe that the strength and pertinence of Nour's message lies in the fact that it is intrinsically feminist i.e. its feminist language and vocabularies are imbedded within Nour's personal experiences and her content that is labelled as travel content. Thus, even if it receives backlash for dealing with issues that are intrinsically feminist, it relatively avoids being instantly dismissed and labelled as western or foreign like other content that is straightforwardly feminist does.

Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman) (Mawazine Show - The suffering of daily life (Girls/girls/woman))[31] is a video made by Algerian woman YouTuber Mlle Maziw in which she puts forward different issues related to women in Algerian society, including sexual harassment and normative/exclusionary beauty standards. In the first part of the video, Maziw

[31] Mlle Maziw. (2017, December 21). *Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman) (Mawazine Show - The suffering of daily life (Girls/girls/woman))* [Online video]. Retrieved July 11, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgM5ajSx5uE

eases her viewers into the topic by acting out a short skit: two characters, both played by her, have a short discussion wherein one of them asks: “why do men think we are complicated?” Then Mlle Maziw moves on to introducing the topic of this video prefacing the theme by saying that the topic of woman is very deep and it is something that most people in Algeria do not like to discuss or they are scared of talking about. Maziw continues: “being a woman or a girl is not easy at all, it is a problem that exists in the whole world but it is more common in the southern part of the world, which means us, and you know exactly what I mean by that, and which countries I am talking about, because I don’t want to say the word”. She then says the word “Arabs” quickly, and then adds “I say this and I say nothing, it’s not me, it’s the script”. She says this in a comical and light-hearted way and this can be read as one of her strategies to subtly yet directly convey her views about a topic that is often regarded as sensitive in Algerian society: the cause of women.

Mlle Maziw adds: “The daily life, how do people perceive you, where is your femininity? If I start talking I will never stop, the list is too long, and what makes it even worse is that everything is (perceived to be) our fault, everything that happens in this world is our fault.” Mlle Maziw adds a comical clip of her male friends accusing women to be the cause of everything bad that happens to them, in the most satirical and unrealistic way, such as losing their chewing gum or when the electricity is cut off (the latter is a common occurrence in many Algerian cities). This fun and comedic approach sets the mood of the video as funny and light-hearted before diving deep into the informative part, where we will see how Mlle Maziw highlights the issue of the inferiority of women within Algerian society.

This video reminds me of my interview with Mlle Maziw, specifically when I asked her about the new perspectives she gained through her YouTube journey about Algerian society and culture. Mlle Maziw said that since the beginning of her involvement with YouTube as a content creator, she started noticing how women are often being dictated what to do and what not to do on this platform, and that she did not like it and became very sensitive about the subject of women in Algerian society. In the following quote, Mlle Maziw explained to me how

she is trying to make a change in the traditional narratives about Algerian women through her YouTube practice:

> […] I am actively trying to change these narratives since I have started my YouTube journey and it is not easy, it is actually very hard because I am a woman and I want to make a change […] it is a big challenge for me to be a woman and try to make a change in our society about traditional narratives on women (My translation from French and Algerian dialect).

In the next part of the video, Mlle Maziw goes on to ask some of her male friends about their perceptions of women. The video cuts to a group of men who start listing the characteristics they think women have: liars, "sociale"[32]. The video then cuts to a man who starts saying good things about women, but then the first guy comes to him and intimidates him for saying nice things and pressures him to stop. This can be read as Mlle Maziw's way of highlighting the peer pressure that many men experience when their views on women do not align with the traditional, normative misogyny and objectification/dehumanisation that society has labelled as part of how women should naturally be treated.

The video then cuts to a man asking: "oh Algerian women, why do you always follow the guy who has the better car?" Another one asks: "why so much makeup? What's the story behind makeup? 4kg of makeup? Are you a clown?" And another one says: "when I wake up in the morning, I put on my t-shirt, my cap and I'm ready to go out, why do you women have to prepare yourselves for 4 hours before you go out?" Mlle Maziw replies to these men by saying the following: "so according to you men, we are clowns, wasting our lives and we are materialists, and even if we check comments on Instagram, you all think the same things" and she includes screenshots of comments from her Instagram account, some of them saying: "women talk too much"; "they are the devil himself"; "they must do the housework, and they are fragile." She adds: "the problem is that when you say woman, Algerian men always think

[32] A derogatory term in the Algerian dialect often used to describe people as being from a low economic social class.

about this", and here she points at a picture of the American actress Alexandra Daddario (a conventionally attractive woman with Eurocentric facial features such as fair skin, bright blue eyes, and straight hair), "but in reality not all women have these beauty traits that you love." Then she inserts a picture of another woman who is not very conventionally attractive, and adds: "beauty is subjective and it is in the eye of the beholder." Here, we can observe how Mlle Maziw is highlighting and addressing a compilation of characteristics that have been stereotypically assigned to women in Algeria and which are systematically utilised to objectify and denigrate women online and in real life. Stereotypes such as wearing too much makeup, materialistic and 'gold-diggers'. Mlle Maziw is not just highlighting this phenomenon as oppressive and unnatural, but she is also addressing this issue by explaining to her viewers that the normative and hegemonic definitions of femininity that Algerian women are often compared to are offensive and unrealistic. She is giving her viewers alternative understandings of what beauty standards and femininity markers should be defined as.

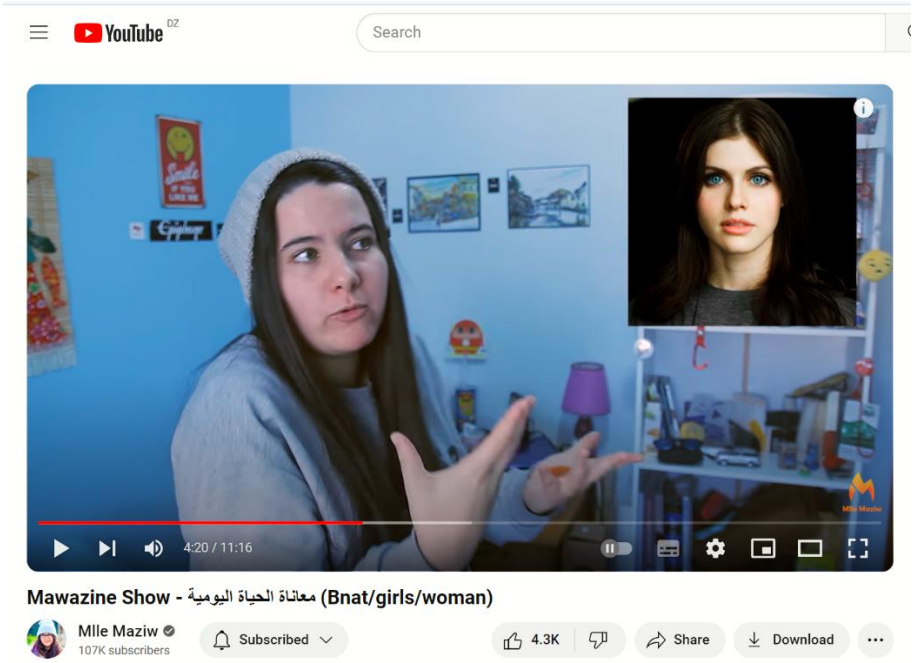

Figure 2: Screenshot from Mlle Maziw's YouTube video "Mawazine Show - The suffering of daily life (Girls/girls/woman)."

Then Mlle Maziw moves on to another subject in the video: the verbal harassment that Algerian women go through in their daily lives. She shows one of her male friends who flirts with all the women who pass him by, regardless of how conventionally attractive they are. Maziw explains: “this is one of the problems us women and girls suffer from every single day, and we have all gone through it without exception, I would really love to know what happens inside of the head of a man like that.” In a satirical and comedic way, Mlle Maziw starts describing the ways in which these men verbally harass women. The first one she describes is “the protractor’s head”, meaning that he can turn his head to the most extreme point while driving just so that he does not miss seeing the woman he wants to verbally harass. The second type is the one who constantly follows women in his car, even if that means causing traffic. The third type is “the monster”, who can literally crawl out of his car in order to get the attention of the woman he wants to verbally harass. To illustrate this, Mlle Maziw shows us a clip of a group of young men driving in a car when they suddenly see her and decide to try and get her attention by shouting and calling her and asking her to get in the car with them. Maziw then adds: “Be careful of this, this is a very bad disease and we need to find an immediate cure for it.”

Mlle Maziw yet again employs the convenience of the satirical/comedic genre of YouTube videos in order to convey radical messages about a serious issue that is the sexual harassment of women in the streets of Algeria. A video that comes across as funny and entertaining and which takes the form of what is known in Algeria as: Podcast. Unlike what it means in the rest of the world: a digital audio file available on the internet for people to listen, download, or subscribe to, a podcast in Algeria initially referred to a type of videos that was extremely popular among content creators when YouTube originally started emerging in Algeria. This type of videos was primarily created by Algerian men YouTubers, in which they would discuss a specific phenomenon within Algerian society through the use of comedy, satire, and music. Amongst my participants, Miss Cha and Mlle Maziw are the ones who make use of this genre of videos the most. And here we can see how Mlle Maziw has employed this

video genre in raising awareness about sexual harassment in Algeria. The video then takes a rather serious tone, with solemn music in the background and with a steady and collected voice, Mlle Maziw says the following:

> Femininity is not in makeup, just like masculinity is not in saying bad words and being rude and offensive outside. When a girl puts makeup on: she's ugly. When she doesn't she is ugly. When she puts on a lot of makeup she is a clown. When she puts on little makeup she is a zombie. You have a problem, you do not accept women as they are. Women have always been oppressed everywhere in the world. Women are oppressed to this day in our country, some of them accept this oppression but I don't. I do not like it when a human being oppresses another human being, and I just wanted to show you a glimpse, and the dark side of what you do not know about a woman's life. Because yes, we live this every single day, respect women, a bit respect makes a beautiful life, is it haram that we exist? Shame on you who wants to oppress us or call us names. And you know what? I will always get this type of comments whenever I make videos like this: "Important! An advice for you and Miss Cha, podcasts are for men, thug life", "you need to do some sports girl". Every day we receive comments like these, these people are everywhere, he could be sitting next to you, he could be your friend or you could be talking to someone like this every day. (My translation from French and Algerian dialect)

What Mlle Maziw has exuberantly articulated here is particularly pertinent, as it works into the demystification of traditional social constructions of femininities and masculinities in Algeria. By explaining that: "Femininity is not in makeup, just like masculinity is not in saying bad words and being rude and offensive outside" Mille Maziw straightforwardly challenges the traditional common beliefs that associate make up and domesticity, for example, with femininity, as well as violence and the need to display power against women, with masculinity. Therefore, a space has been created here for these traditional understandings to be re-

evaluated, challenged, resisted, and alternated. Then, Mlle Maziw proceeds to describe how Algerian women can never escape criticism no matter how they tried following Algerian society's standards and traditional constructions of femininity, she says "you do not accept women as they are", and then links this unacceptance with women's oppression in Algeria and everywhere in the world. Mlle Maziw says: "we live this every single day", therefore, referring to her personal experiences as an Algerian woman, and joining her lived realities of gendered oppression to those of other Algerian women. I would like to further emphasise the pertinence of this video of Mlle Maziw as a space whereby concepts of masculinities and femininities are associated with gender-based violence which represents a great start for challenging and shifting normative and exclusionary narratives.

In سمحيلي يا بلادي ... (Oh country forgive me)[33], Mlle Maziw prefaces the video by saying that the concept she will be dealing with here is new to her and that she would love to know if her viewers will like it so that she can make longer and more elaborate versions of this topic in the future. In this video, Mlle Maziw wonders about the motive behind the different irresponsible behaviours practiced by Algerians on a daily basis. She exemplifies these wrong behaviours with the help of several of her friends who enact them. The first 'wrong behaviour' presented, is littering. She says the following while picking up an empty plastic bag from the ground: "follow me with this, I really want to understand something: he is clean and his house is spotless but he throws garbage in the street, why do you do that?". She addresses three young men littering at the start of the video. These men reply: "we can't help it, it's Algeria!". Other behaviours that Mlle Maziw addresses in this video are: when young Algerians spend most of their times on the internet aimlessly without acquiring any new skills or knowledge, the lack of manners and good behaviours amongst youngsters, road rage and car accidents caused by people's negligence, and getting into fights and filming people fighting instead of trying to solve the problem. But the part of this video which relates the most to this chapter's

[33] Mlle Maziw. (2019, August 23). *سمحيلي يا بلادي ... (Oh country forgive me)* [Online video]. Retrieved January 16, 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64RnSnPmSpo

themes is when Mlle Maziw points out sexual harassment of women by men in the streets of Algeria as a negative behaviour that needs to be addressed. For this, Mlle Maziw shows two young men standing outside in the street looking at their phones, after that, a young woman passes by them and they suddenly all turn their heads towards her and start calling and harassing her. Maziw explains: “when they see a girl, they forget what is life, they don’t know that their own sisters are suffering from the same problem (sexual harassment in the street)” and ending the video by saying: “I am sorry Algeria, I am sorry Algeria …”.

This is another example where Mlle Maziw has creatively created a space where she is actively demystifying the issue of sexual harassment as part of the experience of being a woman. As I mention earlier in this chapter, sexual harassment of women in North African societies has been established as a normal and unescapable part of a woman’s reality through the practice of victim-blaming which forces women to stay silent about their experiences of sexual harassment. This in turn normalises and trivialises these gender-based incidents (Skalli, 2014). In this video, Mlle Maziw is openly presenting this phenomenon as a harmful practice that should be addressed and stopped. This video is also showing women that it is okay to stand up for themselves and share their experiences of sexual harassment as they are not the ones at fault, but it is their assaulters.

Beauty standards and Algerian women YouTubers’ feminist resistance

The first example I am going to examine in this section is a video by Miss Cha titled “حبيت ندير TikTok”[34] (habit ndir TikTok) (I want to start a TikTok account). In this video, we see

[34] @mettacha. (2020, January 25). *Maintenant je suis prête pour faire le buzz fe TIKTOK! #tiktokdz #tiktok [Now I am ready to make the buzz on TIKTOK! #tiktokdz #tiktok]*. [Online video]. Retrieved May 11, 2021 from https://www.instagram.com/p/B7wk2QcJ76r/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Miss Cha telling another character, who is also played by herself, that she intends to start a TikTok account: another very popular social media video platform. The other character then tells her that she cannot do that because… Rather than speaking at this point, the character starts gesturing with their hands in a vertical motion as if they are drawing a vertical line. Miss Cha looks perplexed by her friend's non-verbal responses and keeps asking for more explanations, but the friend keeps gesturing the same vertical line, until Miss Cha finally appears to have understood and replies: "Oh! So for me to have a TikTok account and be successful on it I'll have to …" and she starts gesturing with her hands in a wavy motion, with her friend nodding in approval.

Essentially, what Miss Cha subtly and sarcastically refers to – significantly in gestural, rather than verbal, language, thereby subtly referencing the silencing and unspeakability of feminist messages – is how women who are conventionally considered "sexy" – in this case women who have curves "in the right places" or the popular "hourglass figure" as Miss Cha gestured to us in this clip – get the most engagement through likes and subscription numbers, compared to those who look like her, or as her friend gestured in a vertical line, insinuating that small-chested women are also not usually given the same attention and engagement on social media. I argue that this video pokes fun at the status quo of normative beauty and desirability standards in Algeria and has the potential of sparking conversations around several themes that are related to women's online presence, such as: women's objectification and sexualisation online; women's body images and their relation to the parameters within which popular social media networks operate (Mahoney, 2020); online misogyny and sexual harassment; and what I argue is the root of it all – the male gaze and its impact on how women's content on social media is perceived and consumed (Oliver, 2017).

To contextualise and inform my readings of Algerian women YouTubers' feminist languages and vocabularies, I explore different feminist scholarly works that have theorised the themes which I identify as the feminist languages of Algerian women YouTubers, starting with the theme of the male gaze. In dialogue with Laura Mulvey's influential essay, Visual

Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975) and another two of her works that followed, Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1981) and Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image (2006), Kelly Oliver (2017) traces the connection between the creation and impact of the male gaze on traditional forms of visual media, and newer forms of media specifically social media networks. Inspired by Freud, Mulvey explains how traditional Hollywood’s narrative films were the pioneers in associating the qualities of activity and agency to the male protagonist, and passivity and objectification to the female actors, creating a dichotomy of ‘identity versus desire’. The first (identity) is associated with masculinity, while the second (desire) with femininity. Mulvey emphasises the immense potential film has in creating identity and desire through the juxtaposition of activity and passivity through moving images and camera angles. As Oliver further explains: “It is the movement that creates the sense of agency and activity associated with masculinity, and thereby also creates the male gaze, not only through the opposition of active to inactive but also through the movement of the camera” (Oliver, 2017; p. 452).

To this end, Oliver further explains that designing films through the male gaze generates a desire to possess women’s bodies, in the same way that the camera possesses every piece and fragment of the female actors’ bodies, feeding into “voyeuristic and fetishistic forms of scopophilia, pleasure in looking” (Oliver, 2017; p. 452). Mulvey also argues that, in order to expand the need and pleasure to possess objectified actresses outside of the moving images, still forms of images, such as posters, pinups and photo-stills were later introduced in Hollywood (Oliver, 2017). Here, Oliver discusses the impact this combination had on different cultural expressions:

> Indeed, as Mulvey’s analysis suggests, the fluidity between filmic poses and still poses from other forms of media and popular culture work together to create not only the star persona available for consumption but also the looks and poses that define what it means to be sexy for our cultural moment. The poses that eroticize women’s bodies and body parts are familiar from film and

> other forms of cultural production, including pornography, that make up the visual vocabulary of what it means to be sexy or desirable. (Oliver, 2017, p. 453)

More recently, Mulvey argued that the birth of new technologies of media and video reproduction, and eventually the Internet, have nourished and facilitated the consumption, control, and possession of women's bodies (Mulvey, 2006). Oliver (2017) elaborates on this idea and asserts the drastic impact the male gaze has had in shaping the Internet and social media as we currently know and interact with. Furthermore, Oliver explains how in addition to making images of celebrities along with those from pornography widely available, the Internet has also been a breeding ground for the production and fast and global dissemination of images produced by the combination of celebrity culture and pornography. In the following quote, Oliver exemplifies the way in which the male gaze manifests itself within mainstream culture:

> Women and girls post selfies on Facebook and other social media sites mimicking the poses we've come to associate with those desired by the male gaze, those poses that have been produced as the iconic look of sex kitten, pouty lips, eyes wide, leaning cleavage into the camera, and derriere prominently displayed. (Oliver, 2017, p. 453)

Additionally, Oliver (2017) asserts that social media is the outcome of what she calls "the culture of the male gaze" (454) which, by objectifying and humiliating women, feeds into what Mulvey has described as "the voyeuristic, fetishistic, and possessive fantasy of the male gaze" (Oliver, 2017; p. 453). Referring to the story of how Harvard graduate Mark Zuckerberg founded the social media network Facebook for himself and his peers to post and rate pictures of women in his college, or the fact that Snapchat inventor and Stanford graduate Evan Spiegel described women in his college as 'bitches' 'to be peed on', and wanted to have sex with them after getting them drunk, Oliver invites us to consider social media technologies as a drastic and violent manifestation of the male gaze:

> Given the continued use of social media to target, harass, and humiliate young women, even documenting party rape and the sexual assault of unconscious girls, it is telling that all of these technologies were born out of the male gaze and its concomitant symptomology. Facebook and Snapchat were explicitly designed to look at and denigrate women and feed the fantasy of male control of women's bodies. (Oliver, 2017, p. 454)

Eventhough Mulvey's and Oliver's works were written in, and largely for a western context, their ideas and analyses bear significance for studies of women's representation in other parts of the world, including Algeria. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where women and girls can share pictures of themselves, beautified by filters and sometimes sexualised, are widely popular in Algeria. With that being said, many Algerian women are way less comfortable using these platforms freely and must resort to strategies to protect themselves from being recognised and hurt. These strategies include using fake names, fake profile pictures, using the privacy options available (such as keeping their profiles on private mode, or using the Instagram "close friends" option which allows them to specify the audience they want to allow to see their Instagram stories).

Just as mass media has been evidenced to be a significant source for the cultivation and communication of unrealistic female beauty ideals (Thompson et al. 1999; Bandura, 2009; Morgan et al. 2009), social media and the Internet have also been identified as a strong actor in perpetuating images of beauty and attractiveness that are often unrealistic and dangerous to young women and girls, who are increasingly using social media platforms more than conventional mass media (Perloff, 2014). Current popular beauty standards, such as the 'hourglass figure' which Miss Cha gestures towards in her video, which women are expected to achieve by working out at the gym: maintaining a slim figure but having curves in 'the right places', or wearing make up every single day but also getting so much criticism for not wearing it 'the right way' or "wearing too much of it", are all unrealistic and oppressive beauty images that are widely circulated throughout the Internet and the multitude of social media platforms.

In her short Instagram video “I want to start a TikTok account”, Miss Cha challenges those beauty standards that are imposed on women and are traditionally linked to their in/access to social acceptance, desirability, and success inside and outside social media platforms (Mahoney, 2020). This short video is also an example of Miss Cha’s use of humour and satire to question and deconstruct the male gaze, which plays a big role in shaping the media in general, and is deeply enmeshed within the dynamics of social media that we currently know and interact with.

Another pertinent instance where Miss Cha challenges traditional perceptions of women within Algerian society is an Instagram post published on the 25th of July 2021[35]. It includes two pictures of her: in the first one we can see Miss Cha leaning over a desk with only her face and hands visible, while in the second one we can see the rest of her arms. Since she wears a short-sleeved t-shirt in these photos, we can see her arms with all their natural hair, unshaven, with the following caption: “It’s been exactly 2 years since the last time I shaved my arms. No damage was caused to humanity since then ☑ you’re all safe 😀”.

I argue this exact post from Miss Cha, and others similar to it[36] are one of her strongest ways of disrupting and challenging the status quo of what represents women’s beauty and femininity in Algeria and providing alternative meanings to this phenomenon. This is very apparent in the severity and harshness of the feedback in the comment sections under these posts from both men and women. In the case of the Instagram post I am referring to here, there was an immense amount of hate and negativity, to the point that I felt the need to message Miss Cha to remind her of what an amazing person she is for expressing herself so freely and authentically despite all the hate, and that there are many people who appreciate

[35] Mettacha. (2021, July 25). *It’s been exactly 2 years since the last time I shaved my arms. No damage was caused to humanity since then ✅ you’re all safe 😀* [Online Photo]. Retrieved September 26, 2021 from https://www.instagram.com/p/CRwMaDFp8Ro/?img_index=1

[36] Ones where she is a lot less forward about her interrogation of women’s beauty standards in Algeria but still manages to bring this subject to the surface, an example of that would be showing herself on her social media accounts often without any makeup and with her naturally curly hair and getting many messages and comments criticising that.

and love her and support her in what she does. The negative comments ranged from people telling her that it is unnatural and unacceptable for women to have hairy arms, to calling her dirty and undesirable to men. Miss Cha eventually deactivated the comment section under this post.

A study that informed my analysis of this Instagram post by Miss Cha was undertaken by Cat Mahoney (2020) where she explores the ways in which three Instagram influencers (Georgina Cox (@FullerFigureFullerBust), Megan Crabbe (@bodyposipanda), and Bec Chambers (@becchambersfit)) resist traditional practices of gendered looking as well as curate their feminist identities all the while navigating the neoliberal visual economy of Instagram. These women continue to resist Instagram's economy of visibility by posting radical feminist content for thousands of people to witness and interact with. In doing so, they disrupt the status quo of normative beauty ideals by describing images of their bodies – which do not fit into the common established beauty and attractiveness standards – as beautiful and worthy of acceptance, love, and respect. In the same way, Miss Cha's Instagram photos of her hairy arms address her audience's internalised traditional discourses on beauty, and critique established normative views on what represents women's beauty, attractiveness, and femininity in Algerian society. Through subversive captions, Miss Cha offers her own alternative reading of her photos in order to direct her viewers to also embrace those readings and understandings instead of comparing her images to unrealistic normative beauty standards (Mahoney, 2020).

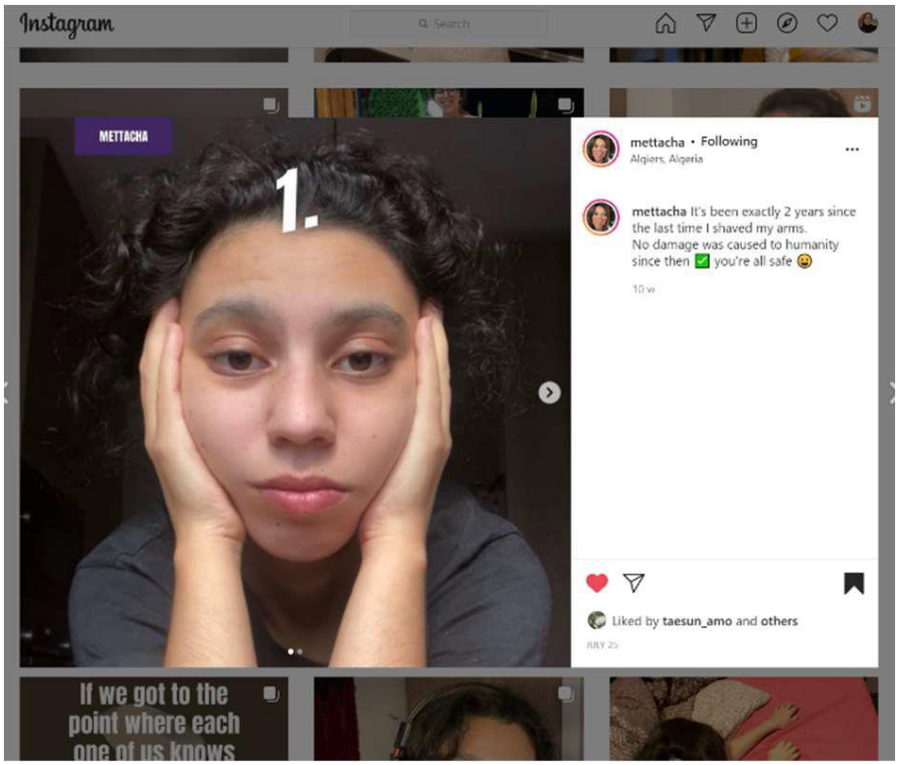

Figure 3: First slide of an Instagram post shared by Miss Cha on July 25th, 2022

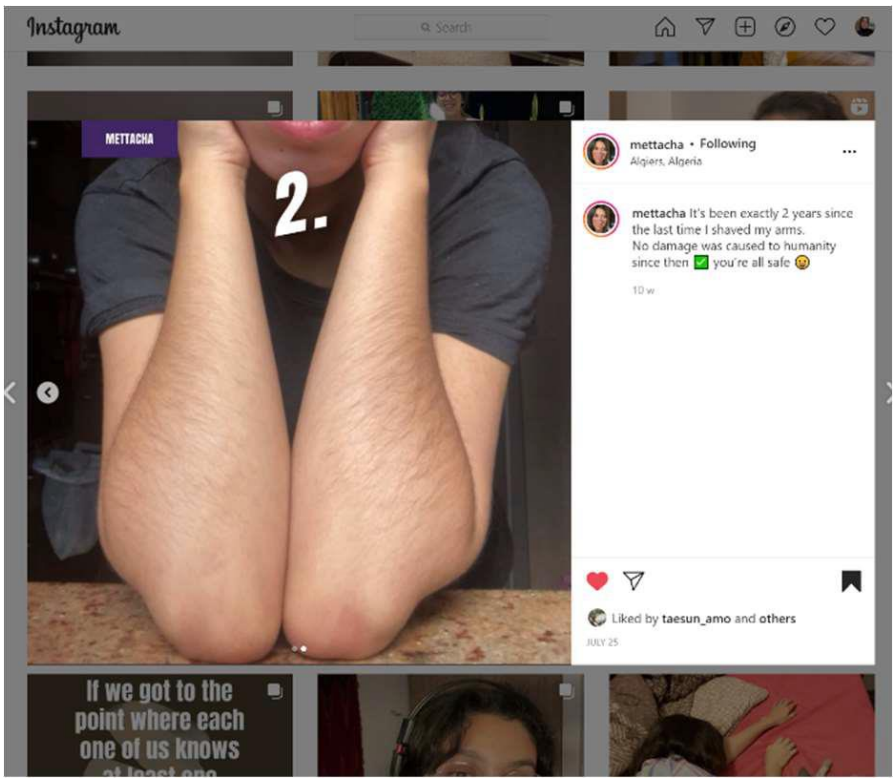

Figure 4: Second slide of Miss Cha's Instagram post shared on July 25, 2022

Also related to the theme of normative beauty standards in Algeria and the way they are used to belittle and attack Algerian women, and in this case, Algerian women YouTubers, during my interview with Miss Cha, she explained that she rarely receives any constructive feedback related to the content she makes on YouTube and instead, she receives hundreds of comments criticising the way she looks, accusing her of lacking modesty and it could even go as far as receiving insults and swearing which she often deletes. In a powerful statement, Miss Cha told me how she learned to love and respect her own person and identity which helped her immensely in ignoring hate comments that she continuously receives. Miss Cha also, in several occasions during our interview, referred to the stereotype attached to women who create content on YouTube and how it is usually maintained by the many Algerian women YouTubers who belong to what is referred to as the 'Beauty Community'. These women YouTubers typically make beauty-related content such as makeup tutorials and makeup products testing, and generally present themselves in a way that is perceived as pretty, cute, and feminine, adhering to the existing beauty standards. Miss Cha explained to me that she tries to normalise another facet to the Algerian woman YouTuber image, which does not always include looking put together, conventionally pretty, or making beauty-related content.

In a FAQ[37] video[38] where she answered questions she frequently receives from her viewers, Mlle Maziw addressed several of the questions that criticised and ridiculed her appearance and the way she chooses to present herself in her videos. One example of these questions is from a user who asked: "Are you a girl or a boy?" Mlle Maziw responded to this by saying what translates as: "you know exactly the answer to your question". And then adds a voice that shouts in English: "Shut up!". In this video, Mlle Maziw also mentioned comments that criticised her weight, for example, a user commented: "how much do you weight?" While

[37] FAQ is the abbreviation for Frequently Asked Questions which is a type of videos that is frequently made by YouTubers worldwide where they make videos where they answer questions they frequently receive in order for their online communities to know them better.

[38] Mlle Maziw. (2017, October 8). *H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast - أختي/- ENP – Series (H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast – My sister - ENP – Series)* [Online video]. Retrieved June 26, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l64ooGqRStk

another one commented: “why are you so thin?” Another one said: “why are you so fat?, you should follow a diet”, and another one said: “why don’t you try losing weight?” After showing screenshots of these comments on the screen, Mlle Maziw replied: “I am normal, normal.” Another controversial question Mlle Maziw frequently receives which she shared in this video is whether or not she identifies as a feminist. She responded to this question briefly by looking straight into the camera, slightly nodding her head in agreement and mouthing the word “yes”.

Once more, we can observe how Mlle Maziw has deliberately chosen to respond and address a number of comments that enforce certain normative beauty standards that are oppressive to women. In this video, she shows how frequently she receives these remarks that are objectifying her and subjecting her to a number of normative beauty standards that her commentators apparently believe she needs to adhere to. Furthermore, she responds to comments criticising her weight and the way she presents herself with in her unique way. A way that which can be perceived as non-confrontational, which lets her express her voice on such matters but also keeps her relatively safe from receiving further harassment. This is yet another example where Algerian women’s feminist languages and vocabularies manifest and create change in the way they continuously create a space where alternative meanings and understandings of social phenomena such as sexual harassment and normative beauty standards, can be put forward.

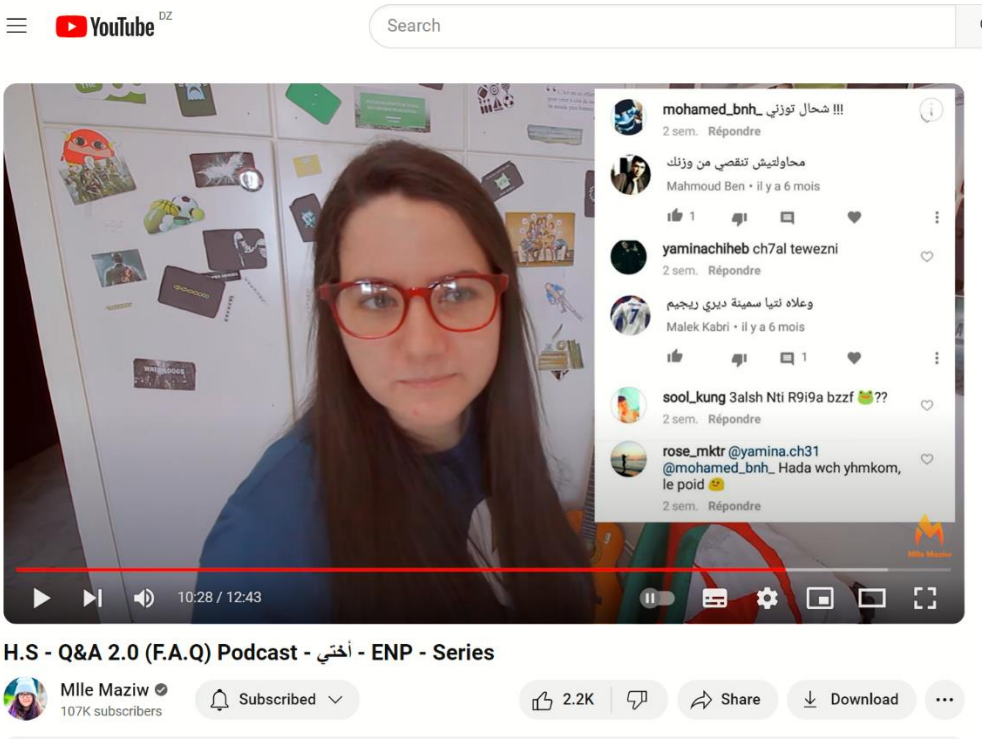

Figure 5: Screenshot from Mlle Maziw's YouTube video " H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast – My sister - ENP – Series" showing her reacting to comments criticising her weight.

Conclusion

This chapter delved into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers in their resistance against diverse forms of sexual harassment as well as women's oppression and exclusion through normative beauty standards within Algerian society. This resistance by my participants naturally aligns with the enduring mission of the Algerian feminist movement, which has persistently strived for gender equality in Algeria, particularly since the inception of the Family Code in 1984. Through a meticulous exploration of my participants' social media content, we have unravelled their creative strategies in curating and employing a feminist language within their social media content that creates a space where well-needed conversations, perspectives, and alternative narratives on issues related to gendered identities and gender-based violence take place.

The first section of this chapter examined my participants' feminist languages and vocabularies in resisting different forms of sexual harassment in Algerian society. In "The art

of saying no, كي يقلك مديلي نيميرو" (when he asks for your number, the art of saying no), I examined Miss Cha's strategic and creative use of a popular Algerian song in order to create a video that is both playful, but at the same time sneaks in an important feminist message against unwanted sexual advances that women are subjected to in the streets of Algeria on a daily basis. I also examined how Miss Cha's subtle and indirect invitation in the caption of this video, creats an open and safe space for Algerian women's personal experiences of sexual harassment to be shared and validated. Then, in مع الأسف و شكرا (Unfortunately and thank you), I explored how Nour Brahimi's travel content challenges and raises the attention to the issue of the cultural perception of women's presence in public spaces as immodest, and how this feeds into the culture of victim-blaming that is used to justify the sexual harassment of women in Algeria. The final example examined in this section is "Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman)" (The suffering of daily life (Girls/girls/woman)) and "سمحيلي يا بلادي" ... (Oh country forgive me), two videos created by Mlle Maziw whereby she creatively demystifies traditional social constructions of femininities and masculinities in Algerian society. I explored how in these videos, Mlle Maziw challenges the traditional common beliefs that associate make-up and domesticity, for example, with femininity, as well as violence and the need to display power against women with masculinity. Joining her lived realities of gendered oppression to those of other Algerian women, Mlle Maziw successfully creates a space whereby traditional understandings of masculinities and femininities are re-evaluated, challenged, and resisted.

In the second section of this chapter, I examined my participants' feminist languages and vocabularies for resisting normative beauty standards that are imposed on women and are traditionally linked to their in/access to social acceptance, desirability, and success inside and outside social media platforms (Mahoney, 2020). Miss Cha's video حبيت ندير "TikTok"' (I want to start a TikTok account) as well as her Instagram post captioned "It's been exactly 2 years since the last time I shaved my arms. No damage was caused to humanity since then ☑ you're all safe 😀", are both pertinent instances where an Algerian woman YouTuber publicly

challenges and rejects the status quo of normative beauty and desirability standards in Algeria. Through her use of subversive captions, as well as the humour and use of satire, Miss Cha addresses her audience's internalised normative discourses on beauty and presents alternative narratives on what represents women's beauty, attractiveness, and femininity. Furthermore, Miss Cha's content questions and deconstructs the male gaze, which is deeply embedded in the traditional practices of gendered looking propagated in today's social media. The final example I examined in this section is Mlle Maziw's video "H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast - أختي - ENP – Series" (H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast – My sister - ENP – Series), in which she curates her unique feminist resistance against normative beauty standards. Mlle Maziw's deliberate selection of comments criticising her looks and weight, and her unique way of responding to those objectifying and oppressive remarks, creates a space where traditional narratives on beauty standards can be shifted.

This chapter explored the feminist languages and vocabularies of Algerian women YouTubers, showcasing their resistance against sexual harassment, women's oppression, and exclusionary beauty standards. As we transition to the next chapter, Algerian Women's Visibility, Freedom of Movement, and Occupation of Public Spaces, the exploration continues into the unique strategies employed by these YouTubers, particularly Nour Brahimi, in addressing women's presence in both online and physical public spaces within Algeria. This chapter aims to unravel their feminist discourses surrounding space and mobility, continuing the legacy of the Algerian feminist movement by providing innovative tools for feminist activism.

Chapter 6: Algerian Women's Visibility, Freedom of Movement, and Occupation of Public Spaces

Introduction

> "[T]he site of the domicile and domesticity is not where female resistance and subversion are located." (Slyomovics, 2016; p. 236)

This chapter is dedicated to examining the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers as they address issues concerning women's presence and occupation of both online and physical public spaces within Algeria. Similar to my previous analysis chapters, this one draws its primary data from the content shared by my participants on social media platforms. In particular, I focus on Nour Brahimi, whose content centres on solo travelling as an Algerian woman, emphasising themes of women's independence, personal mobility, and freedom of movement. Additionally, I incorporate insights gained from my interview with Nour, as well as, when relevant, I draw from my own experiences in an autoethnographic manner. These personal experiences shed light on the challenges faced by Algerian women in navigating restrictions on mobility and personal freedom.

In this chapter, I aim to explore the distinctive strategies employed by Algerian YouTuber Nour Brahimi in cultivating her feminist languages and vocabularies for questioning and confronting the societal limitations imposed on women in Algeria regarding their freedom of movement, access to resources, and their presence in both virtual and physical public spaces. Moreover, I investigate how Algerian women YouTubers, like Nour Brahimi, employ unique feminist discourses regarding space and mobility in their social media content. These distinctive narratives serve as innovative tools for feminist activism, effectively carrying forward

the legacy of the Algerian feminist movement. This legacy has been rooted in advocating for the freedom of movement for Algerian women, particularly in response to the institution of the Family Code in 1984. I contend that these novel and alternative approaches to Algerian feminist activism possess significant potential. They can effectively challenge societal taboos and sow the seeds of change within Algerian mindsets. This transformative process is already evident in the discussions taking place in the comment sections under these thought-provoking videos.

The themes explored in this chapter emerged from analysing a variety of content shared by my participants both on YouTube and Instagram. These online productions deal with topics such as the issue of mobility when travelling within Algeria or abroad, Algerian women's solo travel, society's views and reaction to women travelling alone causing issues of limited mobility for them, travelling abroad for Algerian women while being visibly Muslim, and issues of safety while travelling. To this end, I argue that by creating content about their various travel experiences in their idiosyncratic feminist languages and sharing it on different social media platforms, Algerian women YouTubers are reclaiming and asserting not only theirs but all Algerian women's right to mobility and occupation of online as well as physical public spaces.

Susan Slyomovics (2016) traces back the rejection of the cultural ideal of staying at home by Algerian women to the period leading up to and during the Algerian war of independence, when women protested against colonialism as well as the subservient roles traditionally assigned to them by society. During this period, Algerian women have been separated from the traditional confinement to the domestic sphere to a great degree, by taking on a massive role in the Algerian war of independence. Algerian society's views as a whole shifted in relation to associating women with the domestic sphere, as the importance of achieving independence surpassed that of any traditional customs (Fanon, 1965). However, this sudden emancipation and social integration of Algerian women came to an end once independence was achieved, and all initiatives that the FLN introduced subsequently in the

name of women's emancipation, such as education and new social and economic opportunities, were considered very limited (Slyomovics, 2016).

On a similar note, Farouk Benatia (1980) discusses how traditional customs have re-emerged after independence, placing women once again in a subservient and alienated position within Algerian society. Within the context of a newly independent Algeria of a socialist complexion, Benattia proposed gainful employment as the only means through which Algerian women could assert themselves within society, as it helps them develop their personalities as well as liberates them on an economic, social, and psychological level. Benatia proposes that work could serve as a justification for women to venture outside in a society where men hold negative attitudes toward women, challenging traditional feminine norms, such as leaving the domestic sphere. However, he also points out that women's employment is still subject to negative perceptions, as he elaborates further in the following passage:

> Although things have changed somewhat in recent years, a woman's work, as a general rule, is discredited or even resisted by men. Clear sex discrimination exists, and this only delays and postpones the integration of women into Algerian society. In our country, two societies coexist with their own traditions, customs, language, rituals, practices and habits. These two societies, of men and of women, live side by side without managing to form a single whole. (Benatia, 1980; p. 466)

Fast-forward to a more contemporary Algeria, studies have found that women's employment in Algeria still faces stigma and is commonly viewed as unnecessary by Algerian society. This translates into different barriers restricting women's autonomy in making their own career decisions (Barry, Dandachli; 2020), which can be witnessed in the high levels of women's unemployment and low levels of female labour force participation characterising the Algerian labour market. In a study on women's employment in the MENA region, results have found that among participants from Algeria, 95% of employers and 97% of young women recognised the existence of barriers against women joining the workforce. These include

transportation/commute difficulties (56%), the need for flexible working hours to care for the family (54%), male-dominated working environments being intimidating to young women (40%), and employers' expectation that women will stop working when they start a family (40%) (Barry, 2015). Furthermore, in a later study conducted by the same researchers on barriers and opportunities to youth and women's employment in Algeria (Barry, Dandachli; 2020), similar results were found as participants identified similar restrictions put against women's right to acquire a job, such as societal and cultural beliefs regarding the appropriateness of certain jobs and industries for women, mobility and travel restrictions causing women to give up on many job opportunities just because they are not allowed to travel to another city, for example, family expectations, responsibilities and the need for their approval when deciding on a carrier path, low self-confidence.

In summary, results from these studies show that the debate of whether or not women can work at all, where, at what time, and in what job type, still exists in contemporary Algerian society, which confirms that the cultural ideal of women staying at home still exists and is disrupted by women who challenge it by leaving the domestic sphere and assert themselves in society through work. This is why I argue in this chapter that what some Algerian women YouTubers are showcasing in their social media content/messaging can be subversive to a patriarchal system that has been justified as normal and ideal. One of these YouTubers is Nour Brahimi, whose content I explore in further depth in this chapter: she not only promotes and normalises ideas of women working and owning small businesses (like she herself has with her YouTube channel, as do many of the professional women she showcases there) but as a travel content creator she is doing it in a job that is deemed both unconventional and inappropriate for a woman in Algeria.

I agree with Benatia (1980) in his argument about Algerian women's position within society and how it first and foremost needs psychological work more than a legislative one. I will explain how I think his explanation still applies in today's Algeria, and even more so within

a heavily mediated context marked by the proliferation of multiple social media networks. Benatia explains:

> The Algerian woman will still feel oppressed unless new relationships with men are established. This is an area where a complete revolution would still seem to be needed, less perhaps in legislation and in reality than psychologically or in people's attitudes. Women are in fact the equal of men, either through cunning, the weapon of the weak, the dominated and the unequal—or through their specific and practical role in procreation and daily domestic work. The difficulty is to get Algerian women to believe that they are the equal of men in society. Work broadens women's horizons and fields of activity, and they are thus growing increasingly self-aware. To give an example, a girl will contrive to refuse a suitor imposed without her consent—something which would have been quite unthinkable even scarcely twenty years ago. This had led to the overturning of many customs and has made it possible to change the law, and not only in Algeria. (Benatia, 1980; p. 465)

I have always reflected on the effectiveness Algerian women YouTubers' content holds in capturing people's minds, sparking conversations, and shifting narratives, because of how recurrent, accessible, simple, and relatable these everyday productions are. I read Benatia's discussion above as a confirmation of that, as he emphasises the importance and potency of a revolution on a psychological level and in people's minds and attitudes when it comes to establishing new relationships between men and women, arguing that it could be more transformational and freeing to Algerian women than a legislative revolution. In this chapter, I explain how this is unfolding in the case of women travel content creators such as Nour Brahimi, whose videos are not only implementing new ideas and ideals around women's mobility and occupation of public spaces, but they are also role modelling those alternative ideas.

Furthermore, when Benatia says: “The difficulty is to get Algerian women to believe that they are the equal of men in society. Work broadens women's horizons and fields of activity, and they are thus growing increasingly self-aware,” he is explaining how ideas about the subordination of women (including restrictions of their freedom of mobility) are deeply rooted within Algerian society to the point that they have permeated the psyches of Algerian women themselves. Unless they leave the confinement of the private sphere to educate themselves, grow their self-awareness, and work, they will not be able to see themselves as equal to men and deserving of all the rights and freedoms that have been taken away from them. Similarly, I argue that Algerian women YouTubers are showcasing as well as role-modelling examples of women who have grown self-aware and reclaimed a wide range of freedoms that have widely been stripped away from Algerian women. These social media creators are sharing their experiences doing that to enable the rest of society to learn and get inspired. Algerian women YouTubers are spreading awareness about what women can accomplish, achieve and acquire when they are given back their rights. which include but are not restricted to: education, work, and free movement.

In the process of identifying Algerian Women YouTubers’ feminist languages regarding women’s occupation of online as well as in public spaces, it is important to take into consideration the concept of visibility when it comes to women’s liberation both online and beyond the internet. Moreover, in these increasingly mediated times, scholars have stressed the importance of considering and identifying the difference between the politics of visibility and the economies of visibility (McRobbie, 2009; Gill, 2011; Rottenberg, 2014, Banet-Weiser, 2018; Kim, 2018). Banet-Weiser defines the politics of visibility as the process whose aim is to make visible a historically marginalised political category such as gender or race. In the following quote, Banet-Wiser explains what the process of the politics of visibility entails for it to eventually produce social justice and change practices that are oppressive in terms of race, gender, or sexuality, and not stop at visibility as its end goal:

> This process involves what is simultaneously a category (visibility) and a qualifier (politics) that can articulate a political identity. Representation, or visibility, takes on a political valence. Here, the goal is that the coupling of "visibility" and "politics" can be productive of something, such as social change, that exceeds the visibility. "Politics," then, is a descriptor of the practices of visibility. (Banet-Weiser, 2018; p. 22)

Banet-Weiser (2018) and Frank (2017) assert that the politics of visibility and representation remain important and necessary for the recognition of the marginalised in the dominant culture. Banet-Weiser further explains: "The insistence of marginalized and disenfranchised communities—women, racial minorities, nonheteronormative communities, the working class—to be seen has been crucial to an understanding and an expansion of right for these communities." Additionally, even if not all politics of visibility might result in definite social change, Banet-Weiser argues that what makes the politics of visibility efficacious on a structural level is the understanding that visibility is part of a political struggle, for example, to change the way identities matter and are valued socially, politically, and culturally.

The emergence of neoliberal capitalist markets within an increasingly mediated world, however, marked a shift in the structures and infrastructures of the political and cultural economy. This shift has encouraged the development of a new form of visibility overlapping with the concept of visibility politics (Banet-Weiser, 2018). It is what Robyn Wiegman (1995) terms "economies of visibility" and defines as: "the epistemology of the visual that underlies both race and gender: that process of corporeal inscription that defines each as a binary, wholly visible affair" (1995; p. 8). While Wiegman explained that this visual inscription of the body has been historically present in the pre– and post–Civil Rights eras in the US and has been maintained through the proliferation of cinema, television, and media, Banet-Weiser takes these understandings and applies them to a much more contemporary moment where the visualisation and commodification of bodies are not only taking place in traditional media, such as film and television, but also in ever-expanding social media networked platforms.

Banet-Weiser explains that although the politics of visibility remain important and effective, these new economies of visibility have managed to transform visibility to become the end of political action rather than a means to it (H. Gray 2013). In this way, the visibility of political categories such as race and gender becomes the centre of attention rather than the structural grounds on which they are constructed. When explaining how economies of visibility work in an era of advanced capitalism, brand culture, postfeminism, and multiple media platforms, and how they create and validate what is known as "popular feminism", Banet-Weiser gives an example that I consider very useful when it comes to identifying the nature of my participants' social media content and the type of visibility it contributes to. In the following quote, Banet-Weiser, using a picture of a model wearing a T-shirt on which it is written "Empower Women" for H&M retailers, describes how in these heavily mediated and capitalist times, announcing oneself as someone who looks like a feminist has come to be viewed as radical and sufficient political action:

> For example, wearing a T-shirt that says "This Is What a Feminist Looks Like" transmutes the political logic of what it means to be a feminist, as a political subjectivity invested in challenging gender inequities, into what a feminist looks like, her visual representation (even if the person wearing the T-shirt practices feminist politics). Visibility is thus restructured to stop functioning as a qualifier to politics. The T-shirt is the politics; the politics are contained within the visibility—visual representation becomes the beginning and the end of political action. (Banet-Weiser, 2018; p. 23)

Additionally, Banet-Weiser explains that within both mainstream news media and social media, the visibility of popular feminism has become synonymous with the concept of "trending", which is a process whereby one aims to make oneself "available for normalisation" and not to be seen to be granted basic rights. Or as Herman Gray argues: "the visibility that fuels trending is a demand to be recognized in an attention economy" (H. Gray, 2013; Gambetti, 2013). It is important to highlight that the normalisation Banet-Weiser is referring to here is not

the one I utilise in this thesis. My premise is rather that the more Algerian women are present and visible in online as well as physical public spaces, the more their association with being outside the domestic sphere becomes normal and accepted. The context in which Banet-Weiser uses the word 'normalisation' here is that of popular feminism, a type of feminism that works on the surface and is driven by profit in a neoliberal and capitalist framework, normalising the visibility of certain bodies and identities in order to ultimately use them in its profit and marketisation economy. Taking all of this into consideration, I think it is safe to argue that my participants' social media productions do not subscribe to the visibility economies, but indeed take part in feminist visibilities that are inherently political and whose aims are centred around political change when it comes to the gender-based oppression facing Algerian women in their everyday lives. In the following paragraphs, we will discover how this translates into social media productions that, in Banet-Weiser's words, "agitate" in order to be recognised and given rights. In this chapter, this pertains to the right to mobility, freedom of movement, and women's occupation of online and physical public spaces.

Algerian women YouTubers are doing a substantial job in claiming more spaces, both outside in the public sphere and online, by travelling around Algeria and abroad, documenting their travels and sharing them online for the Algerian public to witness. There is a great variety of content created by these women, where they defy all boundaries set by a society that vehemently believes that the natural place for a woman is the kitchen. A relatively recent incident that shook the Algerian public opinion has reminded us that Algerian women's right to freedom of mobility and occupation of spaces outside the domestic sphere is still restricted to a great extent. On the 4th of June 2018, Rym, a young Algerian woman based in the capital city of Algiers, went for her regular jog in park Sablette an hour before Iftar, which is the meal Muslims have at sunset in Ramadan after having fasted for the whole day. During her jog, Rym was stopped and beaten by a man who called her all sorts of degrading names and told her in Algerian dialect: "بلاصتك في الكوزينة ", which translates to "you belong in the kitchen". On the same day of the incident, Rym took to her social media accounts and posted a video of

herself telling her story while crying and asking Algerian people if what she did was wrong: “I want to know, is it haram (forbidden in Islam) for a woman to exercise before sunset in Ramadan?” (‘Algerian women are revolting electronically,’ 2018). After Rym’s video went viral on Algerian social media, reactions were split between people who sympathised with her, condemned what she had been through and launched supportive campaigns and hashtags such as #خليها_طرونكيل (in Algerian dialect “leave her alone”), and those who used the incident as an opportunity to further perpetuate their archaic misogynistic and sexist views on Algerian women, using the controversial viral hashtag #بلاصتك_في_الكوزينة (you belong in the kitchen). The women and men who supported Rym and all Algerian women’s right to freedom of movement, replied with an organised group run in the same park where Rym got attacked, waving signs that said: “بلاصتي وين نحب ماشي في الكوزينة” (I belong wherever I want, not in the kitchen) (‘Algerian women are revolting electronically,’ 2018).

Further controversy erupted online after this campaign, with many people describing what happened to Rym as an isolated incident or even a fabricated one, and claiming that all of the action raised to support her and other Algerian women is led by people who are “fascinated by Western ideas from beyond the sea” and want to “bite the conservative Algerian family to dismantle it under the pretext of civilization, openness and enlightenment” (Sedjal, 2018). Comments from both men and women under social media posts about this campaign got so aggressive, to the point that some commentators even suggested that women who are not dressed modestly outside should be attacked with acid (Sedjal, 2018). This relatively recent incident, with its massive mediation through different social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, gives a clear idea of how traditional misogynistic beliefs about women – such as the belief that women’s sole righteous place is in the kitchen and women’s worth is contingent solely on the private sphere of the house – are severely and dangerously rooted within Algerian society to this day. To this end, I argue in this chapter that Algerian women YouTubers’ activity on different social media platforms, where they are questioning and

resisting an established system of beliefs and thoughts that are oppressive to women should be read as subversive.

Algerian women YouTubers have brought into light a variety of physical spaces they have reclaimed through the lenses of their cameras, from the many Algerian cities to distant foreign lands around the world. Even within Algeria itself, Algerian women YouTubers have made sure to reclaim spaces that are not usually positively perceived when associated with women, because these spaces do not belong in the private sphere, which women are traditionally supposed to exclusively belong to. Examples of this can be found in Miss Cha's YouTube videos, such as the one where she shares with her viewers how she does a makeover to her bedroom at her university accommodation[39], or when Nour Brahimi shows how she uses inter-city public transportation and youth hostels[40] during her solo trips, which I will be discussing in more detail in the upcoming paragraphs. Algerian women YouTubers' reclaiming and asserting their right to occupy different public spaces and spheres in their daily lives, and sharing that with hundreds of thousands of viewers, can be read as subversive in a culture that forces women to stay inside their parental or marital homes, paints all women who do not abide by those rules as immoral, and denies them dignity and respect.

In addition to occupying online spaces through occupying physical ones, in the case of travel content creators, Algerian women YouTubers are increasingly normalising women's presence in the virtual world by sharing a variety of content. While these videos might not explicitly advocate for women's rights and liberation, they are indeed making political statements by highlighting different issues related to women's liberation and gender relations in Algeria, which I will be exploring further in this chapter. Moreover, Algerian women

[39] Miss Cha. (2017, November 11). *My [UNI] Room Makeover (غرفتي في الإقامة الجامعية) (My room in University dorms)* [Online video]. Retrieved July 22, 2019 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxDDBUMBFYw

[40] Nour Brahimi. (2017, December 17). *FEMALE IN A HOSTEL ! IS IT SAFE?? هل بيت الشباب آمن ؟ (Is the youth hostel safe?)* [Online video]. Retrieved September 23, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vDHboUTOWQ

YouTubers are gradually eliminating the negative connotations that are often associated with women's presence on the internet. This variety of content can range from the simple 'morning routine' or 'summer lookbook' videos to much more serious and politically potent videos that could potentially put their female creators in danger. For example, in a video titled "Yetnahaw Ga3"[41] (an expression in Algerian dialect that means: "they will be removed from their jobs", alluding to those in the government, Miss Cha expressed her political views against the 2019 Algerian government, led by president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, through a song she composed and sang in solidarity with the Algerian people in their 2019 peaceful demonstrations against government corruption. This was quite a bold move considering the multitude of freedom-of-speech violations the Algerian government has committed against thousands of Algerians who protested against it, such as the imprisonment of many Algerian journalists and activists. In the following paragraphs, I will explore further examples where the feminist languages of women's liberation and freedom of movement exhibited by Nour Brahimi unfolds through a variety of content shared on different social media platforms, mainly YouTube and Instagram.

Shifting narratives

> Hi! my name is Nour Brahimi, the first Algerian female travel YouTuber. Filmmaking for me is a passion, so I like to call myself a passionate storyteller. My favourite platform is Instagram because that's where I get a real connection with my audience. My journey with social media started two years ago because I wanted to shift the narrative. The only representative of women on YouTube was either makeup or food and unconsciously it was saying that is all we care about as women and so I decided to jump in the travel industry and youth and women empowerment. I travel around the world but I recently started travelling

[41] This video was later deleted by Miss Cha.

> in Algeria aiming to promote tourism in my own country, especially in rural areas, and so I try to promote poor cities that have a big tourism potential and where people really need that income. I have about two hundred and forty thousand followers across social media, but those are just numbers because at the end of the day the impact is not measured with numbers but with the amount of messages I get from people telling me they travelled for the first time, they started a business, or that I simply give them hope. (Brahimi, Who Am I?, 2020, February 17)[42]

These lines come from one of Nour Brahimi's videos titled: "Nour Brahimi. Who am I?" with the description box saying the following: "Algerian Traveller | أول يوتوبر سفر جزائرية," the Arabic translating as "The first Algerian female travel YouTuber". Nour Brahimi is a self-proclaimed Algerian female travel YouTuber who has been uploading videos on YouTube regularly since April 2017. She has uploaded a total of 91 videos as of October 2021. In addition to the primary content of her channel, which is travel videos sharing her travel experiences in different locations inside and outside Algeria, Nour Brahimi also uploads videos where she shares tips and advice on how to find affordable and accessible travel options. From advice on how to find cheap flights or even ones that are provided for free through volunteering opportunities, to finding cheap housing options such as youth hostels and affordable local Airbnb's, Nour has set her content apart from what is usually presented by other Algerian travel YouTubers and bloggers. What I argue is appealing about Nour's travel content is that she does not present travelling as being part of her lifestyle as many other Algerian YouTubers do, which often contradicts the common living standards within the Algerian society, where the average citizen can barely keep up with necessary living costs such as food and bills, especially after the global Covid-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2021). Instead, Nour acknowledges that travelling can be a luxury for many Algerians and presents

[42]Nour Brahimi. (2020, February 17). *Nour Brahimi | Who am I?* [Online video]. Retrieved January 22, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsE9vxcqLME

it as a life-changing experience that she has to continuously work hard to attain because, as she explains in her videos, she wants to change the way she sees the world and because of all the useful skills she knew she would gain from leaving her small city and travelling the world. Taking into consideration these information about Nour's YouTube content, as well as her attesting in the quote mentioned above how she aims to empower women through her travel content, we can already see Nour's feminist languages and vocabularies unfold.

In the above-mentioned quote, Nour uses language that is suggestive of her feminist practice through her social media content. Even her opening line is striking: "Hi! my name is Nour Brahimi, the first Algerian female travel YouTuber". The feminist significance of this statement lies in the way Nour confidently and proudly asserts herself as the first Algerian female travel YouTuber. This shows that Nour knows the importance of proclaiming herself, as a woman and a pioneer, in a domain that is often associated with male content creators. Further feminist significance in Nour's language also lies in the way the words "travel" and "female" are combined, because in the context of Algerian society, it is still unorthodox to pair these two words to convey a gendered phenomenon that could happen naturally and without criticism or judgement. Another intrinsically feminist expression in this quote is when Nour says:

> My journey with social media started two years ago because I wanted to shift the narrative. The only representative of women on YouTube was either makeup or food and unconsciously it was saying that is all we care about as women and so I decided to jump in the travel industry and youth and women empowerment.

Nour's language here is straightforward in that she clearly states that she aims to make a change when it comes to narratives associated with women's presence on social media and even outside of social media. Nour here explains how most Algerian women YouTubers make content that is related to beauty and cooking, two aspects that are heavily associated with the worth of a woman in Algerian society. This shows how, in one way or another, social media

productions often mirror real-life attitudes and practices, and in the case of Nour's video here, her statements are based on the criticism of the traditional belief that women only belong in the private sphere, where they must look pretty and know how to cook. Babou (2019) explains that even though the Algerian constitution affirms and protects all citizens' freedom of movement, Article 39 of the Family Code confines the duty of women as wives to the absolute servitude of, and submission to, the husband no matter the circumstances he might put her in. The result of that is a set of social traditions and norms that restrict women's freedom of mobility and movement, and punish those who complain or try to gain that freedom back. In Babou's study (2019), 25% of her respondents reported being physically abused by their husbands or family members for not having taken authorisation from them before leaving their homes. Nour's feminist language in this video not only criticises traditional oppressive behaviours which restrict Algerian women's mobility, but it also presents travelling as a means of women's empowerment by not centring their lives around the private sphere and its domestic chores.

As previously discussed, the feminism that is considered popular within the realms of social media works on a surface rather than a structural level, and uses visibility as part of a large neoliberal economy and not as means to achieve social and political change. It is driven by profit, which comes through what is known as "trending". To trend means to have a large number of likes, shares, retweets, subscriptions and so on (Banet-Weiser, 2018). In this part of the video, Nour disassociates her content and general social media practice from all of that, as she explains: "[T]he impact is not measured with numbers but with the amount of messages I get from people telling me they travelled for the first time, they started a business, or that I simply give them hope." This also becomes evident when you compare Nour's social media profiles, which rarely include any product placements, with those of many other Algerian women content creators, whose social media features incessant brand deals and advertisements. Nour also discussed this point in our interview:

> When my travel content started getting better and better, opportunities started pouring in, that's when I made the decision not to be one of those "influencers" who, when you check their Instagram profile, you find them every day on their stories trying to sell you a product.

Additionally, Nour's comment sections feature multiple comments (many of which I discuss in chapter four) from self-identifying Algerian women expressing to Nour how much of an inspiration she has been for them or how much they dream of being able to do what she does. This confirms the radicality and political potency of Nour's intrinsically feminist languages and vocabularies within her social media productions. Furthermore, and to return to the previously discussed point made by Benatia (1980), this shows the awareness that Algerian women YouTubers, such as Nour Brahimi, are spreading and sharing with their viewers when it comes to women's freedom of movement and mobility.

Another example showcasing Nour's feminist languages in shifting traditional narratives about Algerian women's freedom of movement, mobility, and occupation of public spaces is a Reel (a newly introduced format of short videos on Instagram) shared by Nour with a caption in Arabic and English that reads: "Every time I discover a new place, I feel like I'm truly breathing"[43]. In this Reel, we see Nour standing outside, visibly annoyed, as some words appear on the screen, representing what people used to say to her in the past (or possibly are still telling her): "Why did you leave university? Get a degree! Get married! Get a real job!." Then the video cuts to clips of Nour in different parts of the world, captioned by the names of these places: Airport, Czech Republic, Germany, Malaysia, Turkey, Egypt, France, Algeria, Latvia, Jordan. In addition to the significance of the texts used in this short video, which we will return to shortly, it is also worth reflecting on the importance of the background music Nour employs in this video. It is a short clip from a song called "Two Moons" by

[43]Nour Brahimi. (2021, October 14). *كل مرة اكتشف بلد أحس أنني أتنفس ❤️ Every time I discover a new place, I feel like I'm truly breathing* [Online video]. Retrieved March 24, 2022 from https://www.instagram.com/p/CVBcjGuo5ef/

BoyWithUke, which has gone viral, and has been used by millions of Internet users as part of a trend on different social media platforms, mainly TikTok and Instagram. Nour used this sound in a way that it says: “Yeah Fuck no, I go where I want to” just before the list of traditional societal expectations Nour mentions in the video disappears and is followed up by the list of places and countries Nour has travelled to. Thus, in a way, Nour’s video can be read as her saying “Fuck no” to the traditional expectations of women to be confined to the home and wait for marriage.

The significance of this short video in carrying a feminist language that is disruptive of the status quo regarding Algerian women’s mobility and occupation of public spaces lies in several points. The first one is the way Nour is clear and straightforward in showing her frustration towards what is traditionally expected from her as a woman in Algerian society. This can be seen in the text she uses, which clearly and boldly lists these expectations. She mentions pursuing a university degree and getting a conventional job because it is related to her personal experience. She explained to me during our interview that she has chosen to stop her university studies and start a small business to finance her travels, which might only be relevant to her and the women who are in a similar situation as her. However, Nour also mentions getting married as a traditional expectation, an experience shared with most, if not all Algerian women, and which is often a reason used by society to confine women in domesticity, household chores, child bearing and servitude to husbands. In this video, Nour expresses her rejection of these traditional expectations by showing her viewers that she has chosen to travel the world instead. The second point that showcases the significance of Nour’s feminist language in this video is the way she chose to make use of a popular internet sound track to convey her message. This is very important as it shows one of Nour’s strategies in ensuring her message is heard by many people. In this case, Nour is making use of a social media ‘trend’ to subvert not only gendered norms restricting the lives of Algerian women, but also to fly in the face of the neoliberal capitalist marketisation of online feminism. In this case Nour is “capitalising” on a trending sound not in order to sell or advertise products to her

viewers but rather in order to reach a wider audience of women who would feel seen, supported, and empowered by her message.

Another Reel[44] posted by Nour on Instagram also holds a similar message and has engendered a lot of controversy in the comment section. In this Reel, we see Nour sitting in her car and then a sentence appears within the video saying what translates from Arabic: “You travelling alone is Haram”. Right after that another word appears: “okay”, and this is then followed by a series of clips of Nour travelling to different places around the world, essentially doing the exact opposite of what she has been told: not to travel alone. Commentators accused Nour of publicly sinning and boasting about her sin since it is traditionally and culturally believed that in Islam, women are not allowed to travel for long distances by themselves and they need to be accompanied by a ‘mahram’ (e.g., either a husband, a father or a brother). I say traditionally and culturally because, in Algerian society, religious knowledge and teachings are often distorted by tradition, and these distortions are often used to restrict and deny people’s liberties in the name of religion. In Algerian society, women and girls are the ones most affected by this phenomenon, as not only are they denied their dignity and freedoms due to that, but they are also denied knowledge of true religious teachings, as Benatia explains in the following quote:

> Social constraints exist, but in addition, religious alienation based on false interpretations of the Koran imprisons a woman from her early youth in a network of prohibitions and taboos. […] This is particularly true as a Muslim girl receives little religious education within her family and then solely according to tradition which, as we have seen, has distorted orthodoxy. Her religious education consists almost entirely in the learning of ritual. (Benatia, 1980; p. 473)

[44] This video has recently been deleted by Nour.

Islam guarantees Muslim women's right to freedom of movement and solo travelling. In fact, Islam encourages Muslims, both men and women, to travel as it broadens their experience and knowledge of the world. Indeed in Islam, women are encouraged to seek company (many scholars say this can be a group of women and not only a man) while travelling but only as a measure of personal safety and security. Nonetheless they are free to travel alone if safety is guaranteed (Ratthinan, Selamat; 2018). Today, in fact, there is an increasingly growing market of what has been identified as Halal Travel, in which tourism and hospitality providers and operators are becoming increasingly aware of, and are providing travel services and products that can meet the needs and lifestyle of Muslim travellers. Coupled with safe and fast travel journeys, this is increasingly being documented and reported by female Muslim travel bloggers and content creators for all Muslim women to refer to in order to plan their next travel experience in the safest way possible (Oktadiana, Pearce, Li; 2020). Once again we can observe Nour's intrinsically feminist language unfold through her social media content, and in the case of this Instagram Reel, Nour is openly challenging the stigma associated with women's mobility and freedom of travel in Algerian society, which is drawn from distorted and misinterpreted religious teachings, and used to restrict women's freedom of mobility and occupation of public spaces.

L'Qahwa is for men only: hostility in street food restaurants and traditional coffeeshops

Throughout several of her videos, Nour shows the beauty of Algerian cities as well as traditional Algerian culture and local street foods. In fact, one of Nour's most viewed videos is titled: "Algerian Street Food!!!"[45], posted in May 2019, which has amassed over 1,300,000 views as of October 2021. In this video, Nour is visiting Algiers, the capital city of Algeria, and

[45] Nour Brahimi. (2019, May 13). *ALGERIAN STREET FOOD !!! أكل الشوارع في الجزائر* [Online video]. Retrieved January 19, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zn5Eg-hq8eU

taking her viewers to discover the most popular street food in the city. Using attractive camera shots of delicious-looking foods with vibrant colours and catchy music, Nour takes us on a short, but extremely rich, day trip around beautiful Algiers, and during this trip, we get to see her moving from one street food spot to another. At a first glance, I did not expect this five-minute YouTube video about popular street food in Algeria to include anything that I could relate to themes of women's mobility and occupation of public spaces. However, three minutes into the video, we see Nour heading towards her next location, in order to try a very popular Algerian street food known as 'Shwa': grilled chicken or lamb meat combined with other side dishes such as 'Frittes Omelette'[46]. Nour explains that she felt frustrated by the fact that it took her and her friend a long time to find a place that serves this type of food which was, as she described, "both a little bit clean and serves food for families." She also points out that all the ones she had found thus far had a majority male clientele. Here Nour is drawing attention to and criticising one phenomenon that is quite widespread in Algerian society: although nowadays Algerian women are increasingly occupying more and more spaces in the public sphere and there are many spaces that are supposed to be open for everyone, the vast majority of traditional coffee shops, or what is commonly known in Algerian dialect as 'القهوة' (L'Qahwa), and restaurants, particularly, are still predominantly patronised by men. Visiting these spaces as a woman or a girl is not always a very pleasant experience, as women and girls get stared at constantly or can even get denied service.

Another video where Nour experiences hostility in some street food restaurants while trying to film content for her YouTube channel is titled The Best Algerian Street Food[47]. In this video, we can see Nour in action, filming herself looking for, and eventually consuming, street food. We can also notice people in the background, mostly men staring at Nour. With all of this going on, Nour appears to be uncomfortable and nervous. In the final part of the video,

[46] Frites Omelette is a very popular dish in Algeria made from fried potatoes and eggs. It is commonly made in Algerian households and can also be found in street food restaurants.

[47] Nour Brahimi. (2017, April 17). *The BEST ALGERIAN street food I الجزائر I أشهي مأكولات العالم* [Online video]. Retrieved August 11, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=769f1cwKNRY

she talks about how she was not allowed to film inside the places she visited, despite telling them that she would only film the food and not the people eating or making it. She describes these people as being “Rude”.

In my analysis of these videos, I was quick to notice the hostility she was experiencing as I, too, have experienced exclusion and hostility in popular traditional coffee shops and restaurants. Growing up as a female in Algeria, and in a small city such as the one I come from, I remember how traditional coffee shops which are exclusively frequented by men caused me immense anxiety whenever I had to pass by them to get to school or other destinations. They usually have outdoor seating which often extends onto the pavement, and so if a woman is to walk on that pavement, she’ll have to pass by all the men sitting in these coffee shops, which are usually always full of men. As a woman passing by these places, one almost always gets stared at, and in extreme cases gets verbally harassed. I have some hazy memories of me as a child and my father, who used to take me with him to a similar coffee shop where we used to drink lemonade together. In these memories, I felt safe and nothing was out of the ordinary. As I grew older and became a woman, such places became a source of hostility, anxiety, and fear to me as I am no longer welcome there.

My other unpleasant experience with spaces predominantly occupied by men was in London, specifically in Finsbury Park, an area where many Algerian immigrants reside and own small coffee shops and restaurants. During my latest visit to London in July 2021, I met a good friend of mine who comes from the same home town and we decided to eat traditional Algerian food, since neither of us had been back to Algeria in two years and were missing home. While walking around Finsbury park, my friend recognised a place she had previously visited with another friend of hers, and so as per her recommendation, we entered the place. From the first moments of us entering the restaurant, everyone there, all males, kept staring at us and every movement we made. I, being the socially awkward and anxious person I have always been, was feeling extra uncomfortable the whole time we were there, even with my friend constantly reminding me that I should not feel intimidated by their stares and that we

had as much right to sit down and enjoy our food as those men had. During the whole time we stayed there, which was just a little bit over an hour, we were the only women sitting in and having a meal, with only one other woman who came in to pick up a takeaway and then left immediately. This experience reminded me of Rezig's words in her study about Algerian women's position in contemporary Algeria. Although Rezig was discussing Algerian women's work, her words can be extended to include women occupying public spaces in general: "In the eyes of the men, a woman working outside the home is an intruder in the male world, and she will have to suffer the vexations directed towards a person who has disobeyed the social norm" (Rezig, 2017; p. 204). Moreover, this experience left me unpleasantly surprised at the realisation that patriarchal norms can be maintained and reproduced in a manner that attempts to ensure the subordination of Algerian women even in foreign lands very far from Algeria.

Another relevant account on this issue is a story told to me by a fellow PhD student during her fieldwork in Oran, one of the biggest and busiest cities in West Algeria. My friend was conducting interviews with sub-Saharan migrants in Algeria and so she would arrange to meet with them in public places. And what's more public than bustling Algerian coffeeshops? One day, my friend arranged a meeting with a couple of sub-Saharan migrants in a well-known and very frequented coffee shop in the city centre. Upon entering the place and settling down with her interviewees, my friend describes how she was intensely stared at by everyone in the coffee shop who were, of course, all males, until the point when the owner of the place came to her and her interviewees and asked them to leave the premises immediately without providing them with any explanation and with a very threatening and disrespectful tone. Although my friend recognises the fact that sub-Saharan migrants are treated with so much racism in Algeria and part of the hostility she experienced at the coffeeshop might have been because she was accompanied by them, she also notes that being a woman would have had an immense impact on the way she was treated during that incident, given how commonly Algerian women experience such ostracism from public spaces.

The hostility women experience in such public spaces is demonstrated in Nour's video Algerian Street Food!!! through the way she expresses her frustration when all the places that provide 'Shwa' on her food tour were ones frequented by males only. The fact that she points at this issue and specifies to her viewers, to try and find restaurants that provide service to 'families', as she puts it, demonstrates Nour's intrinsically feminist language around themes of Algerian women's mobility and occupation of public spaces, as it not only creates a space for Algerian women to relate and validate their experiences of hostility and violence in public places, but it also sets a relatable example for them on the possibilities and different ways to navigate these restricting and hostile spheres.

The hostility that Algerian women face in public places can take many forms. One of them can be sexual violence and harassment. For example, in Lahmari's study on this issue, one of his participants, an Algerian woman named Nour, shares her experience with the hostility she experiences in public spaces in Algeria: "sexual violence has become part of women's experience in Algeria. I am reminded on a daily basis that the public sphere does not belong to me. It is a male property. My existence in it is temporary, and thus, I should fight it" (Lahmari, 2021; p. 2).

Role-modelling emancipation and growth through travel vlogs

Nour Brahimi has visited many Algerian provinces and made a substantial amount of YouTube content where she shares her adventures with her audiences. While watching her videos, I could not help but have this refreshing feeling from seeing a very relatable young woman such as Nour have varied and fulfilling experiences, many of which are socially and culturally perceived as inaccessible to (or inappropriate for) women. One great example of

that is the time when she went to Ghardaia[48], a city located in the Algerian Sahara Desert. It was extremely invigorating to see Nour plan a whole trip by herself to a city she had never visited before, where she had to take public transport for more than eight hours to get to her destination and link up with hospitable locals, who opened their homes to her, shared their delicious food with her, showed her the most beautiful places in the city, and told her amazing stories about the glorious history of the region. It was also very uplifting to see Nour enjoying every moment of the trip and learning and sharing what she learned with her viewers. This, I argue, is where the significance of this type of content lies as feminist vocabulary that promotes Algerian women's freedom of movement, mobility and occupation of public spaces, as it inspires and paves the way for Algerian young girls and women to travel, explore, and reclaim public spaces. This video also aligns with Nour's quote discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in which she states that her social media content aims to shift narratives about women's interests, and where she combines women's empowerment with travelling. By documenting the way she planned a whole trip by herself, showing the amount of knowledge and skills she gained from travelling, and the many friendships she made through that, Nour is showcasing an example of a woman who has been empowered by travelling and therefore she is role modelling her feminist ideals and values for other women and girls to witness and get inspired by.

In another video, Nour takes us to a beautiful region situated in north-central Algeria called Tizi Ouzou[49]. In many of her trips, especially within Algeria, Nour follows an itinerary preplanned by herself. However, this was not the case with this trip, as we see Nour having to

[48] Nour Brahimi. (2019, April 8). *Algeria: Ghardaia | سافرت عبر الزمن لغرداية (I travelled through time to Ghardaia).* [Online video]. Retrieved October 15, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFSWL31m2To

[49] Nour Brahimi. (2019, July 7). *Algeria: Tizi Ouzou (Kabylie) | مغامرتي في تيزي وزو (My adventure in Tizi Ouzou)*. [Online video]. Retrieved October 30, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U95rNK9k2Q0&list=PL8mXIF5Rq8MJOFWcFBLXDsJgVxwv_XEG&index=1

change her plans when some of her friends, who knew the way to a destination Nour wanted to visit, had to leave her for an urgent matter and she found herself alone with another friend, who did not know the way either. Unable to hike to their destination because of the very long distance, the two young women decide to hitchhike their way to their destination. In this part of the video, Nour tells her viewers with great excitement that this was the first hitchhiking experience of her life. Nour further explains how hitchhiking generally has a very bad reputation in Algeria and that people usually do not opt for it. However, she invites her viewers to trust their intuition and go for it if and when in dire need, and should they deem the person offering the lift trustworthy.

The video carries on with Nour and her female friend safely hitchhiking to their destination, visiting one more location in Tizi Ouzou, and finishing off their trip with an impromptu swim in cold water with other female friends. The comment section under this video is generally positive as of September 2022, showing self-identified Algerian women telling Nour how happy they felt seeing a woman exploring and showing their beautiful country. One user commented: “I just love your content and your personality, the way you show an Algeria beautiful with its good spots, waiting for more ♡”. Another user commented in both Tamazight – which is the native language spoken in the Kabylia region within which the city of Tizi Ouzou is situated – and French: "Azul fellam gher tmurt imazighen <3 j'adore vraiment tes vidéos. merci de mettre en valeur notre pays :) je suis surtout fière que tu sois une femme aussi :)” (I really love your videos. Thank you for highlighting our country :) I'm especially proud that you are a woman too). This is another moment where Nour Brahimi’s YouTube videos represent her feminist vocabulary, which lies in the fact that her content works towards normalising Algerian women’s – especially visibly Muslim women who wear the hijab – mobility outside the private sphere in which she is still confined. This can be seen in Nour’s videos when she is normalising and role-modelling women’s solo travels, women travelling with friends only, as opposed to traditionally only travelling with parents, male siblings, or husbands, and doing

other activities that are not traditionally associated with, and often deemed inappropriate for, women, such as camping, swimming, and hitchhiking.

Nour has created a series of engaging travel videos, including "Indonesia For 24 Hours," "Kuala Lumpur on a budget 2018," "The Beautiful Lebanon," "Italy: Happiest Family," "I Fell in Love with Germany," "Milan Vlog," "Petra Jordan: Everything to Know," "Tunisia With the European Union," and "Latvia: Things to Do in Riga." In these videos, she shares her remarkable experiences while traveling abroad as an Algerian Muslim woman. Her comment sections are often filled with praise and words of inspiration, primarily from women who identify with her journey. Many describe her as fun and spontaneous. For instance, one commentator expressed in French, "coucou! Ça fait plaisir de voir une jeune fille algérienne qui s'assume pleinement" (Hi! It's nice to see a young Algerian girl who fully embraces and trusts the choices she makes). This type of comment highlights how Algerian women find it refreshing and empowering to see someone they can relate to having experiences that aren't commonly associated with Muslim women, such as solo travel in foreign countries. Nour's role as a role model is particularly significant in this context. She serves as an inspiration for Algerian women, showing them that they can confidently pursue their dreams and break away from traditional expectations. Her travels embody the idea that women, including Muslim women, can be adventurous, independent, and culturally curious, challenging stereotypes and encouraging others to do the same.

Fostering women's economic mobility: empowering Algerian women business owners and artisans

In another fascinating video, Nour takes us to a city in the West of Algeria named Tlemcen. Unlike most Algerian travel bloggers and YouTubers who have visited this city, Nour did not go to its usual touristic spots but instead visited a nearby village where she met with a local craftswoman named Habiba. This is how Nour introduced her: “The woman we are about

to meet is even more interesting, not only does she have a beautiful guesthouse that you can rent, but like most women in the region, she is very talented". Habiba is an Algerian craftswoman from the city of Tlemcen, who opened her doors for Nour to show her guesthouse as well as the handmade pottery she makes out of clay she collects from local surrounding mountains. From the video, we learn that this region has been inhabited by women artisans for a very long time and that Habiba offers workshops in which she teaches people how to make traditional Algerian pottery. In addition to that, Nour tells her viewers that she found Tlemcen to be one of Algeria's safest cities, as she felt very safe and comfortable and had not been stared at all during her visit, which is quite uncommon in Algeria, especially for a female solo traveller.

At the end of the video, Nour urges her audience to look for and visit craftswomen whenever they are visiting new cities in Algeria and support these women by buying their products. In the same video, Nour promotes Algerian women artisans and an initiative called Res'Art[50], which aims "to support the network of craftswomen in the different regions of Algeria, promote and market Algerian crafts, strengthen the visibility of women's work in a process of fair trade, and social and solidarity economy". Nour continues:

> One thing I wanted to add is that there are a lot of women like this across Algeria, in Algiers, in Laghouat, in Ghardaia, these women are working night and day to feed their families, making carpets, jewellery or cooking food, and they come from different backgrounds, some are college graduates, others never been to school, and they are all reunited under one national network. Res'Art is a project financed by the European Union aiming to empower women

[50] Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation. (2017). "Res'Art": The women artisans network of Algerian art. https://www.euromedwomen.foundation/pg/en/sharedpractices/view/6608/resart-thewomenartisans-network-of-algerian-art

across the country. (Brahimi, ALGERIA: Tlemcen | 2020 ,تلمسان كما لم تروها من قبل , August 29)[51]

This is yet another example that illustrates how Nour incorporates her feminist values into her YouTube content. Nour's impact goes beyond simply normalising and reclaiming Algerian women's mobility and promoting their presence as travellers. She extends her efforts to support intersectional feminist activism, which embraces women from various economic backgrounds and social classes. This is evident in her choice to explore the rural areas of Tlemcen, instead of focusing solely on mainstream tourist destinations. During her journeys, Nour spotlights local craftswomen and female entrepreneurs, encouraging her viewers to do the same. This approach can be interpreted as Nour creating new spaces for women's empowerment and liberation, moving away from the city's central areas, which typically represent mainstream commerce and predominantly male-dominated public spaces that often remain unwelcoming to women. By highlighting these overlooked aspects of Algerian society, Nour's content underscores the importance of recognizing and promoting the diverse roles and contributions of women. It challenges traditional gender roles and contributes to the ongoing efforts of feminist activists in Algeria. Nour's YouTube channel becomes a platform not just for her personal experiences but also for a broader message of gender equality and empowerment.

[51] Nour Brahimi. (2020, August 29). *ALGERIA: Tlemcen | تلمسان كما لم تروها من قبل (ALGERIA: Tlemcen | Tlemcen like you have never seen it before)* [Online video]. Retrieved January 26, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4i-nrTYAJA8

Fostering women's mobility by ensuring travel safety

In a video titled "Algeria, Oran City Tour 2021"[52], Nour visits Oran, one of Algeria's biggest and most vibrant cities. The first thing I have noticed about this video is that it shows the way Nour confidently carries herself while talking to the camera and filming herself in public despite all the stares she continuously receives. In this video, Nour gives her viewers a detailed guide on how to visit Oran, including all the recommended public transportation and hotel options and fares, tourist locations, as well as places to try some local foods. Another notable aspect of this video is the way Nour's little niece appears in some parts of it, admiring Nour while she confidently speaks in English to the camera in public. This holds a very important feminist significance in the way Nour positions herself as a female role model inspiring a younger girl with her confidence in reclaming public spaces through her travels and online content, and showing that women can be independent, worldly, and occupy positions of affluence.

Figure 6: Screenshot from Nour Brahimi's YouTube video "Algeria, Oran City Tour 2021", showing Nour and her niece taking a taxi.

[52] Nour Brahimi. (2021, September 22). *Algeria | Oran City Tour 2021 اكتشف وهران مدينة جزائرية* . [Online video]. Retrieved March 28, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7Yqc6GtyRA

Figure 7: Screenshot from Nour Brahimi's YouTube video "Algeria, Oran City Tour 2021" showing Nour and her niece on top of the Fort of Santa Cruz.

Additionally, Nour mentions that she felt very safe travelling around the city, and "was not catcalled at all, not even once, neither at night nor during the day". During this trip, Nour was travelling with her older sister and her niece: all females. She explains:

> I posted about this on Instagram and many female followers confirmed that they also felt safe when visiting Oran alone or with a female friend. For me, this is a huge plus, as I have felt less safe in other Algerian cities.

This represents another instance of Nour's feminist vocabulary when it comes to promoting and facilitating Algerian women's mobility and occupation of public spaces within her YouTube videos: she not only provides a detailed account of all the services that would facilitate women's mobility when travelling to the city of Oran, such as the recommended means of transportation, but she also explicitly addresses women and girls and speaks to them about their safety when she mentions the issue of catcalling for example. In fact, this is a recurrent practice of Nour's, as she regularly raises the issue of women's safety while travelling in Algeria on her social media platforms, and does not shy away from sharing her stories of street harassment and catcalling whenever she experiences that. Further examples of this can be found in other YouTube videos, such as the one where she travels to the city of

Nice[53] in France and stays at a youth hostel, meets people from different countries, and confirms to her viewers how hostels are often a safe and affordable option for women's travels. Female in a Hostel! Is it Safe?[54] is another video where Nour shows how fun and comfortable staying at a hostel can be for women who travel on a budget as she does. Nour also shared her first experience staying at an Airbnb when she travelled to Germany[55], where she found a room that the female owner only rents out to other women and how that made her feel very comfortable and safe. Another video where Nour did not feel that safe in her travels and provided her female viewers with tips on how to avoid the unsafety she experienced is titled Sleeper Train in ALGERIA From Algiers to Annaba[56]. In this video, Nour heads to the train station in the capital city of Algiers to take the sleeper train with her female friend to arrive in the city of Annaba the next morning. Nour and her friend buy their train tickets and head to the shops in the station to buy some food, but they find those shops closed and that forces them to go outside the station to buy food, as Nour explains:

> The shops in the train station were closed, so we had to go out and buy water, it was 7 pm and downtown Algiers did not feel safe, we were running to head back quickly, not only are the streets empty but there was a lot of males, making bad comments, it does feel creepy. Please buy your things when it's still

[53] Nour Brahimi. (2019, September 22). *NICE city tour - France | جزائرية في أجمل مدن فرنسا (Algerian woman in one of France's most beautiful cities)*. [Online video]. Retrieved January 16, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bMNutWKmtM

[54] Nour Brahimi. (2017, December 17). *FEMALE IN A HOSTEL ! IS IT SAFE?? هل بيت الشباب آمن؟ (Is the youth hostel safe?)* [Online video]. Retrieved September 23, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vDHboUTOWQ

[55] Nour Brahimi. (2018, July 29*). I fell in love with GERMANY | وقعت في حب ألمانيا* [Online video]. Retrieved October 12, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2dopY5B1eI

[56] Nour Brahimi. (2022, April 2). *تجربة قطار النوم من الجزائر* لعنابة | *Sleeper Train in ALGERIA From Algiers to Annaba* [Online video]. Retrieved May 11, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mSHdpsevaQ

daytime. So the best thing to do would have been to buy water and everything we needed when it was still daytime.

Moreover, Nour posted a video on YouTube about a girls-only trip[57] she went on with a couple of friends during the month of Ramadan. Nour tells us that the motive behind this trip was to reconnect with her friends and break their fast together by the beach. In this video, we see Nour and her friends arriving at their rented bungalow and going grocery shopping for their Iftar meal at sunset. This whole experience in Nour's video showcases something quite unconventional and very refreshing: a young Hijabi Algerian woman who is financially independent and who plans her trips around the country without any male companionship. This is another example of Nour's feminist vocabulary normalising women's mobility and visibility both online and in public spaces. Furthermore, following this organized girls-only trip, Nour has expanded these trips to include a number of her female followers who showed interest in travelling with her, which can also be seen as part of her feminist activism in providing a safe and organised plan for women who may be travelling for the first time and do not want to travel alone. This shows how Nour does not only speak about ways to facilitate women's travel experiences but she actively initiates and practices that.

The importance of promoting the mobility of women who wear the hijab in the Algerian context

In a video titled: Why I take off my Hijab[58], Nour responds to some comments and questions that she says she continuously receives, about the fact that she wears the Hijab when she travels outside of Algeria. "I hear this a lot, it's either a suggestion or a question: Are

[57] Nour Brahimi. (2021, April 28). *ALGERIA | Girls traveling alone in Ramadan | رحلة بنات في الجزائر في رمضان* [Online video]. Retrieved March 22, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWS_i9n1odU

[58] Nour Brahimi. (2019, August 17). *Why I take off my Hijab | لماذا أنزع حجابي عند السفر*[Online video]. Retrieved October 25, 2021 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJjW3QF_KPs

you sure you don't take off your hijab when you travel? Why don't you try to blend in and take your scarf off?". Nour passionately explains to her audiences that she does not have to blend in within the countries she visits for her to have great experiences. She also asserts that wearing the Hijab is her personal choice and recalls a story when she met a woman who, as Nour explains, self-identified as a feminist and that this woman told her how sorry she feels about Nour being forced to wear the Hijab. Nour explained to the woman that she was never forced to wear it and that wearing it has always been her personal choice. Nour then encourages her viewers "not to put people into boxes" and to avoid making simple generalisations. She also shared that she was, on many occasions, stared at and made to feel very uncomfortable by people in foreign countries because of her Hijab, but she grew out of feeling unease in these situations and she does not care about that anymore.

The significance of this video lies in the way it carries intrinsically feminist vocabularies that address the theme of Algerian women's mobility and occupation of public spaces from different angles. The first and perhaps most obvious one is that Nour is highlighting issues that might potentially restrict the mobility of Algerian women who are visibly Muslim in foreign countries: namely Islamophobia. Nour clarifies this by sharing her experiences of being stared at and made to feel uncomfortable because of being visibly Muslim. In addition, Nour role models ways to overcome this stigmatisation and not allow it to restrict her mobility and freedom of movement. Additionally, Nour's online presence as a visibly Muslim traveller and content creator adds to the visibility and representation of all visibly Muslim women, which in turn adds to the normalisation and acceptance of Muslim women within different spheres and places around the world, which also promotes and facilitates their mobility.

The second idea that showcases the significance of Nour's feminist language in this video is that by both creating content that is intrinsically feminist, which openly deals with issues related to women's position in Algerian society, such as restrictions on women's mobility and their occupation of public spaces, and at the same time asserting her Muslim identity by for example showing how wearing the Hijab is important for her, Nour is minimising the

dismissal of Algerian women's voices and demands for their rights under different pretexts such as: "not representing *real* Algerian or Muslim women", or "being influenced by western ideals." I discuss this issue in Chapter 2 : how Algerians are quick to judge what a woman has to say as influenced by the west, mainly France due to its colonial legacy, or label it as "féministe", and how this is one big obstacle against the attempts to change Algerian society's attitudes and beliefs towards women's rights and freedoms. I have come to understand that this phenomenon is even intensified when a woman who is carrying a message against sexual harassment, for instance, does not look like what society has deemed a "proper" or "real" Algerian Muslim woman.

Lahmari (2021) refers to this issue in his study on sexual violence against women in Algeria when he references a video released by the Association Des Actrices Algeriennes (Association of Algerian Actresses) titled: "Algerian Actresses Against Femicides", in response to the tragic death of Shaima, a teenager from a suburban area in Algiers, who in October 2020 was kidnapped, beaten up, raped, and then set on fire by her ex-boyfriend, who was seeking revenge for being imprisoned for two years after raping her in 2016. In this video, multiple Algerian actresses highlight different statements commonly said to girls and women in Algeria such as: "your place is in the kitchen," "what are you doing outside at this hour?", "don't run, women are not supposed to run," in an attempt to show how Algerian society is oppressive to women. Lahmari reports how the majority of the comments under this video found it to be offensive to Algerian society, its religious beliefs, and traditional principles. In addition, Lahmari explains that multiple male commentators claimed: "these actresses do not represent the entirety of Algerian women." This includes one commentator who accused them of "going against religion and how a Muslim woman should be and behave." Lahmari further explains:

> Most comments focused on how the women were unveiled and accused them of "wanting to spread the Western agenda in a 'Muslim' country." They claimed that women already have their rights and that they did not understand what was

> lacking in women's rights, which is what Mohammad claims, too. For him, "Women already have rights," and he does not "understand why feminists exist in Algeria." He added, "what more rights do they want? Bouteflika [the former Algerian president] gave them all the rights." (Lahmari, 2021 ; p. 4)

Therefore, I argue that social media content such as Nour's has a great potential in shifting traditional narratives on women's position in Algerian society (in this case, Algerian women's freedom of movement, mobility, and occupation of public spaces). It can reach, and perhaps influence, a great number of Algerians, because it can counter the argument that it is coming from someone who does not represent an Algerian woman and who is only influenced by western ideals. Its significance lies in the fact that Nour is declaring that she is an Algerian woman, who wears the Hijab by choice, asserts her religious identity and chooses to practice her religion and identity wherever she is in the world, yet this does not negate her passion for and commitment to promoting the emancipation and freedom of Algerian women.

The third idea I would like to discuss when it comes to the significance Nour's intrinsically feminist language in this video holds is one I have already discussed in Chapter 4 but found out it could also be related to the theme of promoting Algerian women's freedom of movement and occupation of public spaces. It is the idea that when Algerian women such as Nour or myself receive comments criticising or praising our religious practices outside our communities. I read both cases as degrading for women because it stems from the assumption that we, as a group, are only religious in our communities because we are expected to by everyone around us, not because we have chosen to be. And so when we leave the community and we still practice our religion, it is a surprise for everyone. Videos of Nour where we see her presenting and carrying herself the same way everywhere she goes, as well as videos where she specifically talks about her religious identity, help normalise and promote Algerian women as smart and independent, who have full control and agency over their bodies, their religious identity and practices wherever they are in the world. These videos also help to detach them from the image of a subordinate woman whose life, experiences, religious identity,

and mobility must be decided for her, and protected by a male guardian. This in turn will eventually work into facilitating Algerian women's free movement, mobility, and occupation of public spaces.

Conclusion

This chapter delved into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers, particularly my participant, Nour Brahimi, for highlighting and addressing issues surrounding Algerian women's freedom of movement and their right to occupy public spaces, both online and in the physical world. The overarching goal of this chapter was to uncover the distinctive feminist languages crafted by Nour Brahimi through her social media content, which passionately advocates for Algerian women's solo travel and personal independence. Nour's travel content serves as a powerful vehicle for highlighting the challenges Algerian women encounter while navigating societal restrictions that limit their ability to move freely, access resources, and establish a presence in both virtual and physical public spaces. These distinctive narratives serve as innovative tools for feminist activism, effectively carrying forward the legacy of the Algerian feminist movement. This legacy has been rooted in advocating for the freedom of movement for Algerian women, particularly in response to the institution of the Family Code in 1984.

Throughout this chapter, I have unveiled the transformative impact of Nour Brahimi's videos in reshaping the traditional narratives surrounding women's travel in Algeria. Not only does Nour boldly declare herself as the pioneer of women's travel content creation in Algeria—a domain that has long been male-dominated—but her social media productions also work diligently to normalise and reclaim women's freedom of movement beyond the confines of the private sphere. Furthermore, the chapter delved into the diverse positions Nour adopts in addressing the themes of women's travel and freedom of movement. She does this by spotlighting the hostility women face in public spaces, especially in traditional food and coffee

shops. She serves as a role model for emancipation and personal growth through her travel vlogs. Nour further promotes and empowers Algerian women business owners and artisans. She also brings attention to safety concerns during her travels and provides valuable safety tips for her female viewers. In addition, she emphasises the importance of asserting her agency over her religious identity and her personal choice to wear the Hijab within the context of her travel content.

The analysis has revealed that Nour employs a skilful blend of creative strategies to convey her feminist messages pertaining to Algerian women's freedom of movement. These strategies include her straightforward language, utilisation of popular trends and sounds on social media to extend the reach of her feminist messages to a broader audience, and her incorporation of personal travel experiences that role model to other women how they could navigate the social restrictions placed on women's movement. Through this artistically curated feminist language, Nour addresses various themes related to Algerian women's freedom of movement. This includes critiquing society's conventional expectations for women, such as the pressure to follow traditional educational paths, secure conventional jobs, or marry at a predetermined age. Another crucial theme she addresses is the stigma associated with women's travel in Algerian society, often fuelled by misinterpretations of religious teachings.

In essence, Nour's social media content serves as a catalyst for promoting and facilitating Algerian women's freedom of movement and their rightful presence within public spaces. It inspires and paves the way for young Algerian girls and women to embark on journeys of self-discovery, reassert their right to occupy public domains, and embrace their personal independence. The impact of Nour's online presence as a visibly Muslim traveller and female content creator can be initially gauged through the lively discussions and debates that unfold in the comment sections beneath her thought-provoking videos. More significantly, it can be observed in the overwhelming number of comments and messages left by Algerian women who express their deep admiration and gratitude for Nour Brahimi's travel content. Her

content instils hope and fuels aspirations in these women, motivating them to strive for personal independence and freedom of movement in their own lives.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

Over the past decade, Algerian youth have increasingly embraced YouTube as a platform for content creation. While most of these content creators are men, a significant number of women YouTubers have emerged, challenging societal norms in Algeria through their visibility and outspokenness. This research aims to contribute to the growing body of work on gendered practices on social media and YouTube, a topic explored in previous studies (Chau, 2010; Wotanis & McMillan, 2014). However, much of the existing literature on women and social media primarily focuses on the Western context, addressing topics such as platform usage, empowerment, influence, participation, and interaction (Pedersen & Macafee, 2007; Citron, 2014; Chen, 2012). In contrast, there has been limited research on women in social media within the MENA region, and the existing work often centres on the politics and activism of the Arab Spring. This study diverges from this trend, delving into the world of Algerian women YouTubers who create "everyday" social media content, asserting that these playful productions, seemingly intended chiefly for entertainment, serve as a modern form of feminist activism among Algerian women.

This study expands our understanding of how women from North Africa, particularly Algeria, utilise the internet and social media networks to advocate for and reclaim their rights and freedoms. While some academic studies have recognised the potential of new media technologies in transforming women's lives in the MENA region (Shteiwi, 2003; Weaver, 2004; Skalli, 2006), this area of research remains underexplored. To bridge this gap, my research investigates the presence of Algerian women as content creators on social media, with a particular focus on YouTube and Instagram.

Initially, this study sought to explore the experiences of Algerian women YouTubers on the platform through the perspective of gender, prompted by observations of their underrepresentation and the negative feedback they consistently receive compared to their

male counterparts. After conducting interviews with three prominent Algerian women YouTubers, it became evident that their social media presence embodies novel forms of feminist resistance. However, this resistance often remains concealed due to the specific historical and socio-cultural context of Algeria. These women face hostility when they openly promote women's rights, even without explicitly labelling themselves as feminists. Consequently, they employ various creative strategies on social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram to promote alternative ideas about womanhood, gender relations, and women's roles in Algerian society.

To this end, I decided to dedicate this research to the deeper understanding of these new forms of feminist resistance. Informing my research are a plethora of feminist theories, encompassing various dimensions such as patriarchy—specifically 'Classic Patriarchy' prevalent in North Africa, the Muslim Middle East, and South East Asia (Kandiyoti, 1988)—along with the private/public sphere division, the concept of familial honour within patriarchal societies, gender classification (Douglas, 1966), social constructions of femininities and masculinities, online popular misogyny, the male gaze, gendered looking practices, the politics and the economy of visibility. Through the lens of these feminist theories, I conducted a comprehensive analysis of the social media content produced by Algerian women YouTubers. Furthermore, I integrated these feminist analyses with insights garnered from interviews with the participants and relevant personal narratives from both myself and other Algerian women, as part of my autoethnographic practice in this research.

This exploration revealed that an increasing number of Algerian women YouTubers create and share content that highlights the struggles faced by Algerian women today, drawing inspiration from their own lived experiences. Their social media productions and online presence can be seen as a novel form of feminist resistance. These women use their uniquely curated feminist languages and vocabularies to address issues central to the demands of the Algerian feminist movement, spanning from its origins in the 1940s and gaining renewed momentum in the 1980s, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the Family Code.

Within this thesis, three primary themes emerged in my participants' social media content, all aligning with the core aspirations of the Algerian feminist movement catalysed by the effects of the Family Code in 1984:

- The role of Algerian women within the family, their infantilisation, and imposed control, which corresponds with the Algerian feminist movement's calls to abolish the male guardianship system.
- The pervasive issues of sexual harassment and conformity to normative beauty standards, both intricately linked to the Algerian feminist movement's pursuit of gender equality.
- The visibility, mobility, and active presence of Algerian women in the public sphere, directly connected to the fundamental demand for women's freedom of movement within the Algerian feminist movement.

Research findings

Feminist YouTube resistance against the infantilisation and control of Algerian women

In Chapter Four, the research delved into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by my participants in their social media content for highlighting women's position within Algerian families, particularly their daily experiences of systematic infantilisation and imposed control. I uncovered how Miss Cha's YouTube videos skilfully capture gendered power dynamics within Algerian families. Her creative visual performances provide insight into her perspective and satirical representation of gendered power dynamics and the relationships between male and female siblings within the hierarchy of the Algerian family. In her videos, Miss Cha demonstrates her awareness of traditional Algerian societal beliefs concerning women, illustrating how these beliefs translate into the infantilisation and control of Algerian women across various facets of their lives and freedoms.

Through videos like "I am not 15" and "Algerian Brothers," Miss Cha introduces the character 'Chaimous,' symbolising her older brother. Through brief, light-hearted, and satirical performances involving Miss Cha, Chaimous, male commentators, and other characters, she effectively conveys radical messages while shedding light on various attitudes that perpetuate the infantilisation of women and the cultural control mechanisms they experience. These attitudes encompass the dominance of brothers over their sisters, victim-blaming of Algerian women, the imposed infantilisation and the resulting role Algerian women often reluctantly adopt to avoid further conflict with their oppressors, the privileges men enjoy that allow them to transgress boundaries set by traditional society, the traditional norms confining Algerian women to obscurity within the private sphere, the concept of 'Horma' and its role in hindering women's freedom, independence, and autonomy in the name of protecting familial honour, the double standards applied to Algerian women compared to their male counterparts when crossing traditional gender boundaries, and the guardianship system that enables Algerian men to restrict the freedoms of their female relatives under the guise of protecting their moral and physical integrity, thereby safeguarding the family's honour.

Miss Cha's creative use of humour and satire underlines her perceptive commentary on the restrictions and expectations placed upon Algerian women, showcasing her ability to address complex societal issues in an engaging and thought-provoking manner. Her concise yet skilful performances critically examine societal pressures and expectations thrust upon Algerian women to uphold traditional values while sparking discussions and providing a platform to convey radical messages about the daily practices of infantilization and control of women.

Furthermore, I examined Nour Brahimi's feminist languages and vocabularies regarding women's infantilisation and control through the lens of space and mobility. Employing a blend of well-calculated strategies, ranging from direct and assertive messages to subtler and more diplomatic ones, Nour Brahimi's YouTube videos tackle the issue of Algerian women's infantilisation, which translates into the control over their personal mobility

and independence, often upheld by traditional norms, particularly the male guardianship system. Through videos like "How do I convince my parents to allow me to travel?" and "Why do I travel alone?," Nour Brahimi demonstrates an understanding of the various constraints imposed on Algerian women's freedom of movement and skilfully utilises this awareness to negotiate with traditional social and cultural structures. She seeks to normalise women's freedom of movement, effectively shedding light on the stigma associated with it in Algerian society. Furthermore, I explored the strategies Nour employs to convey her radical messages, such as her adept use of colloquial language and expressions to establish familiarity with her Algerian audience. Nour also offers practical advice to women aspiring to attain their freedom of movement through solo travel, drawing inspiration from her personal experiences.

Within the same chapter, I uncovered Mlle Maziw's feminist languages and vocabularies concerning infantilisation and control, focusing on her educational content addressing purely feminist topics, such as International Women's Day, women's inventions and discoveries, and women's sports, among others. In her video "H.S – Comments (Haters vs. Lovers)," we observed Mlle Maziw's resistance to the infantilisation and control of Algerian women through her deliberate selection and addressing of oppressive comments, such as "a woman stays a woman, go cook," "[…] women are not supposed to play football […] sen[d] them to the kitchen," or "women have only invented Always." Just as Miss Cha employs comedy and satire as strategic tools to convey her radical feminist messages and counteract negative feedback, Mlle Maziw uses the straightforwardness commonly present in educational videos to disseminate knowledge on purely feminist themes, as demonstrated in her video "8th of March, International Women's Day." Additionally, we observed how this video by Mlle Maziw showcases her resistance to the infantilisation and control that Algerian women encounter daily, notably through her rejection of the traditional approach to celebrating International Women's Day in Algeria—a practice that reinforces traditional gender roles and femininity markers, ultimately constraining Algerian women. The comment sections under Mlle Maziw's videos provided valuable insights into the impact of her content on her audience, revealing diverse perspectives and showcasing instances where some individuals reject the

discussion of themes related to Algerian women's rights, along with instances where men expressing solidarity with women face mockery.

Feminist YouTube resistance against sexual harassment and normative beauty standards

Chapter Five delved into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers in their resistance against different forms of sexual harassment as well as women's oppression and exclusion through normative beauty standards within Algerian society. Through a meticulous exploration of my participants' social media content, the chapter unpacked their creative strategies in curating and employing a feminist language within their social media content that creates a space where well-needed conversations, perspectives, and alternative narratives on issues related to gendered identities and gender-based violence can take place.

With "The art of saying no, كي يقلك مديلي نيميرو" (when he asks for your number, the art of saying no), I examined Miss Cha's strategic and creative use of a popular Algerian song in order to create a video that is both playful, but at the same time sneaks in an important feminist message against unwanted sexual advances that women are subjected to in the streets of Algeria on a daily basis. I also examined how Miss Cha's subtle and indirect invitation in the caption of this video created an open and safe space for Algerian women's personal experiences of sexual harassment to be shared and validated. Then, in مع الأسف و شكرا (Unfortunately and thank you), I showed how Nour Brahimi's travel content challenges and raises the attention to the issue of the cultural perception of women's presence in public spaces as immodest, and how this feeds into the culture of victim-blaming that is used to justify the sexual harassment of women in Algeria. The final examples examined is "Mawazine Show - معاناة الحياة اليومية (Bnat/girls/woman)" (Mawazine Show - The suffering of daily life (Girls/girls/woman)) and "سمحيلي يا بلادي" ... (Oh country forgive me), two videos created by Mlle Maziw whereby she creatively demystifies traditional social constructions of femininities and

masculinities in Algerian society. I explored how in these videos, Mlle Maziw challenges the traditional common beliefs that associate make-up and domesticity, for example, with femininity, as well as violence and the need to display power against women, with masculinity. Joining her lived realities of gendered oppression to those of other Algerian women, Mlle Maziw has successfully created a space whereby traditional understandings of masculinities and femininities are re-evaluated, challenged, and resisted.

Furthermore, I examined my participants' feminist languages and vocabularies for resisting normative beauty standards that are imposed on women and are traditionally linked to their in/access to social acceptance, desirability, and success inside and outside social media platforms (Mahoney, 2020). Miss Cha's 'video حبيت ندير "TikTok"' (I want to start a TikTok account) as well as her Instagram post captioned: "It's been exactly 2 years since the last time I shaved my arms. No damage was caused to humanity since then ✅ you're all safe 😀", are both pertinent instances where an Algerian woman YouTuber publicly challenges and rejects the status quo of normative beauty and desirability standards in Algeria. Through her use of subversive captions as well as the humour and satire content genre, Miss Cha addresses her audience's internalised normative discourses on beauty and presents to them alternative narratives on what represents women's beauty, attractiveness, and femininity. Furthermore, Miss Cha's content questions and deconstructs the male gaze, which is deeply embedded in the traditional practices of gendered looking propagated in today's social media. The final example examined in this section was Mlle Maziw's video "H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast - أختي - ENP – Series" (H.S - Q&A 2.0 (F.A.Q) Podcast – My sister - ENP – Series), in which she curates her unique feminist resistance against normative beauty standards. Mlle Maziw's deliberate selection of comments criticising her looks and weight, and her unique way of responding to those objectifying and oppressive remarks, creates a space where traditional narratives on beauty standards can be shifted, and feminist resistance is role-modelled.

Feminist YouTube resistance against restrictions on Algerian women's freedom of movement

In Chapter Six, I delved into the feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers, particularly my participant, Nour Brahimi, for highlighting and addressing issues surrounding Algerian women's freedom of movement and their right to occupy public spaces, both online and in the physical world. The overarching goal of this chapter was to uncover the distinctive feminist languages crafted by Nour Brahimi through her social media content, which passionately advocates for Algerian women's solo travelling and personal mobility and independence. In this chapter, we discovered how Nour's travel content serves as a powerful vehicle for highlighting the challenges Algerian women encounter while navigating societal restrictions that limit their ability to move freely, access resources, and establish a presence in both virtual and physical public spaces.

Through various sections in this chapter, we have unveiled the transformative impact of Nour Brahimi's videos in reshaping the traditional narratives surrounding women's travel in Algeria. Not only does Nour boldly declare herself as the pioneer of women's travel content creation in Algeria—a domain that has vastly been male-dominated in Algeria—but her social media productions also work diligently to normalise and reclaim women's freedom of movement beyond the confines of the private sphere. Furthermore, we have delved into the diverse standpoints Nour takes in addressing the themes of women's travel and freedom of movement: she does this by highlighting the hostility women face in public spaces, especially in traditional food and coffee shops; she serves as a role model for emancipation and personal growth through her travel vlogs; she empowers Algerian women business owners and artisans; she also brings attention to safety concerns during her travels and provides valuable safety tips for her female viewers; and she emphasises the importance of asserting her agency over her religious identity and her personal choice to wear the Hijab within the context of her travel content.

This research has revealed that Nour employs a skilful blend of creative strategies to convey her feminist messages pertaining to Algerian women's freedom of movement. These strategies include her straightforward language, utilisation of popular trends and sounds on social media to extend the reach of her feminist messages to a broader audience, and her incorporation of personal travel experiences that navigate the social restrictions placed on women's movement. Through this artistically curated feminist language, Nour addresses various themes related to Algerian women's freedom of movement. This includes critiquing society's conventional expectations for women, such as the pressure to follow traditional educational paths, secure conventional jobs, or marry at a predetermined age. Another crucial theme she addresses is the stigma associated with women's travel in Algerian society, often fuelled by misinterpretations of religious teachings.

In essence, Nour's social media content serves as a catalyst for promoting and facilitating Algerian women's freedom of movement and their rightful presence within public spaces. It inspires and paves the way for Algerian young girls and women to embark on journeys of self-discovery, reassert their right to occupy public spheres, and embrace their personal independence. The impact of Nour's online presence as a visibly Muslim traveller and female content creator can be initially gauged through the intriguing discussions and debates that unfold in the comment sections beneath her thought-provoking videos. More significantly, it can be observed in the overwhelming number of comments and messages left by Algerian women who express their deep admiration and gratitude for Nour Brahimi's travel content. Her content instils hope and fuels aspirations in these women, motivating them to strive for personal independence and freedom of movement in their own lives.

Creative strategies for navigating hostile environments

This research has uncovered how Algerian women YouTubers confront and address pressing women's issues in Algeria while navigating two challenging environments: Algerian patriarchal society, marked by hostility and indifference towards women's concerns, and

market-driven social media platforms that often prioritise content aligned with a neoliberal capitalist economy. In response to these obstacles, Algerian women YouTubers employ a range of strategies to ensure their feminist messages are not outrightly dismissed and to mitigate the potential for violent backlash when creating subversive content.

To navigate a patriarchal society without inviting harsh criticism or total dismissal, Algerian women YouTubers strategically leverage various popular video genres prevalent on YouTube. They produce content that spans comedy videos, educational and informative pieces, and travel vlogs, all of which serve as vehicles for conveying their inherently feminist messages. In doing so, they engage and entertain their audience, allowing their feminist content to bypass immediate rejection and instead sow the seeds of change within traditional narratives about women. Moreover, they skilfully employ colloquial language, common expressions, and national popular songs to create a sense of familiarity among their Algerian audience. This approach serves as an effective means to seamlessly communicate their radical messages concerning women's rights in Algeria. When it comes to navigating market-driven social media platforms like Instagram, this research revealed that Algerian women YouTubers adapt their content to align with popular trends, soundtracks, video formats, and captions. This strategic alignment ensures that their feminist publications gain the visibility and engagement they rightfully deserve within the platform's algorithms, thereby broadening the reach of their messages.

Furthermore, the investigation has drawn insights from comment sections under the social media content of Algerian women YouTubers. These comment sections showcase intriguing discussions sparked by the women's content infused with feminist themes and perspectives. They also feature positive reactions from other Algerian women, providing evidence of the role-modelling effect these YouTubers actively foster. Through their social media presence, these women are creating a space where feminine voices, experiences, and visibility are amplified. They are actively challenging traditional narratives surrounding

womanhood, gender roles, and identities, while also interrogating the conventional divisions between the private and public realms within Algerian society.

Limitations of the study and insights for future research

The findings discussed above should be considered in light of several limitations. First and foremost is the lack of existing research documenting the presence and activities of Algerian women on the internet, particularly in their interactions with social media platforms. This lack of prior studies presented a challenge, as there were limited sources to review and contextualise my own research. To address this limitation, I resorted to employing autoethnography as part of the cohort I studied, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the subject matter.

The second limitation was encountered in the process of recruiting Algerian women YouTubers without having any prior relationship with them. Given the popularity of these YouTubers and social media influencers, reaching out to them proved to be quite challenging, even after multiple attempts through various social media platforms and email addresses. Consequently, a smaller number of women YouTubers responded to my calls than initially anticipated. However, it is worth noting that this limitation was mitigated by the wealth of data present in my participants' social media videos and publications, which provided valuable insights for the study.

This research delved into the various ways in which Algerian women YouTubers creatively occupy online spaces, sharing social media content that amplifies women's voices and visibility. Additionally, they promote themes related to women's rights and deconstruct prevalent images of women in Algerian society. Future research endeavours should focus on assessing the impact of such inherently feminist online productions in reshaping traditional narratives about women's roles in Algeria, and perhaps more broadly, in the MENA region. It would be valuable to conduct a thorough analysis of the comment sections beneath these

feminist online productions and explore the messages received by Algerian women YouTubers across their various social media accounts. This approach can shed further light on the extent to which these content creators are actively contributing to what Musa Shteiwi (2003) referred to as the "silent gender revolution in the Arab world."

Concluding thoughts

In conclusion, this thesis delved into the empowering feminist languages and vocabularies employed by Algerian women YouTubers across a diverse range of social media content. Their digital activism represents a noteworthy continuation of the ongoing struggle for gender equality led by the Algerian feminist movement. These women employ creative strategies to address various pressing issues confronting Algerian women in the contemporary context, with far-reaching impacts on the new generation and within the digital realm.

Algerian women YouTubers confront challenges facing women in Algeria by highlighting how they translate into daily instances of misogyny and oppression, systemically constraining their lives. Notably, these women approach advocacy for change in unconventional ways. They do not necessarily identify themselves as women's rights activists or feminists in the traditional sense, nor do they engage in conventional feminist activism like joining associations, organising workshops, or participating in demonstrations. However, this thesis extensively explored the innovative methods through which they express their passion for advancing Algerian women's rights by creating and disseminating content across various social media platforms.

The profound impact of their work lies in the integration of their feminist values and messages into content that is entertaining, satirical, and/or informative. This approach effectively initiates discussions, spreads new ideas regarding gender-based issues, and, ideally, shifts traditional narratives, shapes perceptions, and fosters change. Their work significantly influences Algerian youth, both male and female, providing an effective means to

challenge taboos and reshape mentalities. Consequently, this plays a pivotal role in advancing discussions and advocacy for changes to the Family Code and broader gender equality in Algeria. By courageously addressing these pressing issues head-on and actively engaging with their audience, these Algerian women YouTubers make substantial contributions to the ongoing evolution of societal attitudes. The strategic presence of Algerian women content creators on popular social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram holds particular significance in a society like Algeria, where " women can only secure their rights through a tactful revolution" (Smail Salhi, 2009; p. 122). This tactical digital presence is gradually dismantling barriers that have hindered societal progress, and is paving the way toward a more equitable and inclusive future for all.

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