DISCOURSE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: 'IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN SEXUALLY HARASSED TEENAGE GIRLS' NARRATIVES OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES'

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Algerian sexually harassed teenage girls' narratives of personal experiences focusing on how linguistic resources are used to index their identities. Its main purpose is to do much more than a mere academic work on one of the worst undeclared taboo types of sexual violence against teenage girls, but also for and with them. More precisely, with respect to those female survivors/victims who are no more reluctant to share their experiences with researchers, this article provides excerpts of teenage girls' oral narratives of personal experiences and examines the several ways in which their understanding of public sexual harassment is both discursively gendered in the name of the so-called honourable cultures and the social gender norms deeply rooted in their cultural epistemology. It investigates how these survivors are blamed and forced to accept occupied identities and show no sign of agency when telling those untold narrative discourses.

KEYWORDS: Gender Identities, Performativity, Discourse of Violence & Narratives

INTRODUCTION

"Look, I want to be free, to go where I want, when I want, wearing what I want, without fear of public sexual harassment, full stop!" (Anonymous girl says).

We like how, as a girl, she learns to own her voice and takes much courage to speak her feelings and thoughts honestly. It is important to note, even briefly, that we believe the voice of this girl constitutes a great force that will eventually be listened to and taken seriously. She still has the opportunity to be part of a positive change and to recognize her dreams and aspirations. Her words are a good start. She may say things without knowing their significance, but the fact that she says them shows that we can gain insights into the way she feels about herself. She tells what she is, what she wishes to be and as she tells so she becomes, she is her story. Through close analysis of what this girl says and how she says it, we can ask and perhaps even answer the question: why does she say it? It is our hope, then, to look at similar stories and see what conclusions they move to.

There is no escaping the fact that narratives of public sexual harassment must be told, generally the reason is that narratives are constitutive of reality and numbers alone would not lead us to the answers. As will be evident in this article, there are many things we wish to explain to the reader, all related to the ways teenage girls talk about public sexual harassment through their personal trauma narratives. Simply by being in a public space, they can be constantly cat-called, harassed, touched, threatened, followed, leered at and worse. Every day they are reminded that they live in a world where

they are a commodity because every day they are treated like a piece of public property. What emerges then is a picture of extensive abuse that affects their lives, but is systematically under-reported to the authorities. Overall, accessible yet rich, this article gives, first, a brief introduction to research on gender identities in discourse focusing on the hidden nature of the relationship between gender and sexual violence. Then, it provides a brief account of narratives as 'the representation of an event or a series of events' (Porter Abbott, 2002, p.13) followed, finally, by an analysis of selected excerpts of teenage girls' oral narratives of public sexual harassment and a discussion of the wider implications of the findings.

Gender Identities in Discourse

Bearing in mind how increasingly multidisciplinary identity research is, our task is neither to review the developments in language and identity research nor to assess the analytic tools employed in it. We simply need to look more closely; or more exactly to review the marked contrast between the essentialist notions of identity and the more recent preference for viewing identity as fluid, to wit: essentialism vs. performativity.

By way of explanation, Gee cited in Lia Litosseliti & Jane Sunderland (2002), observes critically that "some people tend to reserve the term 'identity' for a sense of self that is relatively continuous and fixed over time" (Gee, 1999, p.39). A sober look at the world around us shows that there are general as well as specific examples of this remarkable observation. Advertisements, for instance, frequently exhibit the same woman here and there: in domestic, maternal, professional or/and romantic roles. Now then, inasmuch as identity is recognized as fixed, rigid and always being static, many problems definitely can be inferred[1]. Ivanic (1998) knows how to put it. Even though identity is a useful term, it is indeed "misleadingly singular" (Ivanic, 1998, p.11). In this quotation, Ivanic appears to be answering questions which might be asked before.

Whilst one speaks convincingly of the need of the plural word 'identities', what is of essence hitherto is the question: where do identities come from? According to Ivanic (1998), social constructionists share the view that identity is the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities available in the social context, in any case, they offer a possibility of resistance. Jaworski and Coupland (1999) give a quick paraphrase of what Giddens has said. Giddens sees identity as a series of 'choices' one continually makes about oneself and one's lifestyle. With this result, identity is a process and not a state or set of personal attributes. Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland (2002) have the same opinion that identities can be seen as emerging from affiliation and choices (though not free choices), but they further claim that identities also come from the ascriptions of others, from an individual's different sorts of relationships with others. Identities then change as their relationships change (within a Community of Practice). Similarly, the development of gender identity can be recognized as fluid and never complete. Butler, a feminist of great renown, insists that there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results. She believes that masculinities and femininities are results we perform by the activities in which we partake, not predetermined traits we possess. However that does not assume that individuals are free to perform whatever gender identity they choose, Butler (1990) herself acknowledges that acts of identity performance take place within a rigid regulatory frame. In this sense, if social norms are broken, then negative evaluation can occur (Tope Omoniyi & Goodith White, 2006).

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[1] Problems with essentialist notions of identity in language research (See: Sociolinguistics of Identity, 2006:16).

One more point to make here and which ties in well with the claim we expressed earlier is the relationship between gender identity and discourse. All we know thus far is that, as Cameron (2001) argues, our words always tell our listeners something about ourselves. In conjunction with the social constructionist approach to gender, some recent studies adopt a dual definition of discourse[2]. Discourse, in its traditional linguistic sense, as 'language beyond the sentence' and discourse, in a much broader sense, as: "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p.49). The manner in which these two strands of analysis are crucially interlinked will now be fully elucidated.

Most scholars, following Ochs (1992), agree that: "any aspect of language can become indexical of social identities, from phonological variables to individual words, to complex discourse structures such as patterns of actions in narratives" (De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg 2006, p.15). As is evident from this view, it seems reasonable then to suppose that the indexicality model explains the way in which linguistic forms relate to diverse identities. Ochs (1992) points out that very few linguistic forms directly index gender (e.g. Mrs., Mr. s/he…). This means that, she comments, linguistic strategies should be seen as being indirectly indexed with (gender) identity (indirect indexicality). Directly related to performativity, indices are non-exclusive; Ochs (1992) said, and added that the same linguistic form can be used by man or woman. By way of example, McElhinny (2003) observes, female speaker does not use a tag question simply because she is a female speaker but she may use it because she is abiding by cultural and ideological expectations about femininity. So there is no reason to catalogue speech styles according to sex because linguistic features may be employed to index social meanings (stances), which in turn help to constitute gender identities.

Following the oft-cited Foucaultian view of discourse (1972), we can say that discourses do not only represent something already existing, discourses are both representational and constitutive. This perhaps has a closer meaning to this view: "speakers' identities emerge from discourse" (Bucholtz, 1994, p.4). On reflection, it is arguable that identities are both discursively represented and (re) constituted. According to Lia Litosseliti & Jane Sunderland (2002), the way we speak both to and about others can be seen as affiliation (there is some space for individual choice); but the way we are spoken about can be seen as attribution/ascription. Identity therefore, is a two-way process: the result of joint production (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Within this particular process, individuals can be presented more or less active. This mention of individual's identities as embedded within discourse raises the idea of "discourse mediating/shaping identities". Discourse which gives meaning that, for example, women by their dress or behaviour are often responsible for rape and sexual harassment, can be regarded as having the potential to shape or mediate the identities of some women. This constitutive capacity of discourse, identified by Hollway (1984) does not only represent gendered social practices, but also maintains and re-constitutes them. Altogether this implies that there is a link between Foucault's definition of discourse and performativity. Coates states that we all have "access to a range of discourses, and it is these different discourses which give us access to, or enable us to perform, different 'selves'" (Coates, 1997, p. 291). Coates has been able to shed light on two different discourses. She (1997) defines dominant discourses, which legitimize male superiority, and resistant / subversive discourses, such as feminist discourses. What she was able to deduce is that these discourses compete and can co-occur within the same stretch of talk. Finally, while plausible, it seems that a focus on identity and discourse inevitably entails an exploration of power relations (Lia Litosseliti & Jane Sunderland, 2002).

In case of the hidden nature of the relationship between gender and violence, we are not concerned with evaluating what is believed but with explaining and understanding it. A more profound understanding of this relationship

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[2] See Gendered Discourse in the Professional Workplace (2007).

may be achieved through, first; conceptualizing 'gender' as performative, closely intersected with other variables, and, second, visualizing 'violence' as a continuum. Violence must not be narrowly defined. Even the issue of what types of behaviours are regarded as violent is complex. Whatever the theories and whatever the causes in fact make it difficult to have an agreement concerning what is, or is not, 'violence'. Violence may be seen actually shaping the gender relations of a given society, while in turn sexist beliefs may be seen as both the causes and consequences of violence. Well, since violence is intimately interconnected with gender, does its discussion evoke fundamental issues such as power, ideology, culture, identity and discourse?

Above all things, we would like to emphasize that one of the vehicles through which this relationship is worked out is discourse. As we have already demonstrated how, in different context, discourse makes it possible to talk about things, phenomena, relations and positions; and makes it possible or impossible to talk about these issues in particular ways (Foucault 1972), to not complicate things, this concerns how discourses set the parameters for what is regarded as normal, deviant, true, false, right and wrong, meaning that discursively, naming something as violence, implies categorizing a social action as illegitimate. In this respect, to employ what is called discourses of violence is to make it possible to talk about violence, towards whom it can be directed, and how it should or should not be inflicted. This may indeed enable or restrict talk about violence towards women than violence towards men.

Narratives

Central to this article are different narratives of personal experiences. Specifically, oral narratives of the sexual harassment teenage girls face in public spaces. This, of course, brings us to the point with which we need to start: why narratives, in particular? Narrative, to put it simply, is "the representation of an event or a series of events"(Porter Abbott, 2002:13) but to emphasize only those meanings of the concept 'narrative' in the sense we feel is appropriate in the given context, Sherline Pimenta and Ravi Poovaiah (2010) use a working definition: narrative meaning to tell a story. In a similar way, Cortazzi (2001) asserts that when we tell stories, we make sense of past experiences by sharing them with others. Sociolinguistic research has provided important conceptual models of narratives, and most studies refer to Labov's (1972) seminal work on narrative structure to identify the key components of an oral narrative:

- abstract (a brief summary of the general propositions the story will make);

- orientation (essential background information like time, place, and people involved);

- complicating action (key events of the story);

- evaluation (highlighting the point of the story);

- resolution (how the crisis was resolved); and finally,

- coda (concluding remarks).

It must be said that not all narratives contain all components, but the complicating action and resolution are essential (Thornborrow and Coates 2005). It must be also mentioned that scholars suggest at least five functions of narratives. Narrative creates coherence (re-experiencing past events and making sense of them), serves a distancing function (we distance ourselves from the immediacy of events), a communicative function (experiences become shared); an evaluative function (gives the opportunity to re-evaluate and suggest alternative interpretations); and explorative function (to explore two sides of human experience: the real and the possible) (Hans J. Ladegaard, 2012).

Research Setting, Sample and Methodological Approach

We might remember from the beginning of this study that it is best to collect data from a variety of sources and in a variety of manners to compare responses and interpret results. Researchers call this triangulation of the data (The Wadsworth Guide to Research, 2009). Well, three common types of primary research were used to gather information for the analysis here: observation (of public spaces), semi structured interview (for the collection of teenage girls' life stories), and questionnaire (to both teenage female and male informants). In this case, it would be important to have a clear description of the methods used to conduct this research, including a description of the participants, how they were selected, what was observed, what questions were asked, how data were collected, and how they were analysed.

It appeared that narratives have important functions as they may be ways for teenage girls to escape isolation and loneliness. Consistent with this perspective, we, as researchers, realize that their narratives needed to be documented and shared with a wider audience. For this purpose, besides to observing the research sites, we interviewed about one hundred teenage girls (The minimum age is 14 years and the maximum is 22 years) from various areas in North West of Algeria, including Tiaret, Mascara, Oran, Relizane and Mostaganem. They were guaranteed anonymity for ethical reasons, that is to say, giving them fabricated names and omitting details that could reveal their true identities. In general, when we sat face to face with them, we quickly realized that most of them were more afraid of us, they were also curious, hesitant and sometimes indifferent towards us. Hence, before the interviews, we tried to explain the research topic and ask for their consent to use their narratives for research purposes. More importantly, it has been always advisable to take actions guided by respect for the wishes, the right and the dignity of the victim/survivor. In these instances, we conduct our interviews in private settings and with same sex interviewer. We have been good patient listeners who have maintained non judgmental manner and asked relevant questions. The questions we asked were related to what they felt they could talk about concerning problems they had faced in public spaces; including but not limited to streets, sidewalks, alleys, public buildings, such as hotels and restaurants, and common carriers such as buses and taxis; elaborating on how they had coped with. Of course, this was a question that we purposefully included to explore issues of agency and the construction of the self. In particular, the selection of participants was governed by a number of variables including:

- **Sex:** It was suggested to have only female teenagers.

- **Age:** To see whether or not experiences of the interviewees depended on their age.

- **Locale:** can be identified based on urban or rural geographical areas.

The method which was adopted in the analysis of oral narratives can be summarized in Fairclough's dimensions for CDA. This framework analyzes the narratives at three stages: description, interpretation and explanation. At the first two stages, the linguistic choices of the texts are examined. In the first stage 'description', narratives (texts) are seen as objects (discourse as a text), i:e linguistic features such as choices in vocabulary (wording), grammar (transitivity, passivization) and text structure (thematic choice, turn-taking system) should be systematically analyzed. In the second stage 'interpretation' (discourse as discursive practice), which means apart from analyzing linguistic features and text structure, attention should be drawn to other factors such as intertextuality. In the 'explanation' stage (discourse as social practice), we suggest then again to be in favour of plea for diversity. To illustrate, the linguistic choices will be explained in the light of Teun Van Dijk's approach of the concept of context in which the narratives are produced. Here briefly, we are going to draw on a variety of theoretical and methodological frameworks in order to answer questions about the way

specific discourses construct identity (the constructionist approach), power relations and the way aspects of ideology underpin social interaction. These three dimensions are presented separately here because they are considered as analytic procedures. But, the researcher ought to consider them so closely connected since one cannot conceive of description without interpretive and explanatory analysis (Maria Izabel S. Magalhaes, 1993, p.188).

DATA ANALYSIS

After several readings of the collected stories, five excerpts were selected on the basis of the criteria identified by Labov and Waletzky's (1967) definition. They illuminate the overall picture afforded by the interviews and illustrate important aspects of identity construction for teenage girls as well. Here is a selection of their stories translated in English:

- Int = female interviewer

- […] = short pause, pause in seconds

- Italics = trembling voice

Excerpt 1*: Ahlem, 18 Years Old, From an Urban Area in Relizane

Ahlem: Like any girl, I was sexually harassed on the streets of my village. I just learned to block it out. I experienced it with wearing hijab, pair of trousers, skirts... but it didn't make one jot of difference.

Int: Does this concern you very deeply?

Ahlem: Not at all, it's a trivial matter. I think it is not a serious problem. It's a natural phenomenon, men are attracted to women. THEY used to look at girls in certain ways and WE also do attract them. How can they control their looks? Yesterday, for example, an older guy looks at me and says "Hey, beautiful" but in a manner that I mean er [...]. I simply smiled, and a word cannot hurt, right? But if it's a single /young man harassing me on the street I tend to get quite aggressive. Or it is about touching; you know, it depends on the situation.

Normalizing Public Sexual Harassment

Excerpt 1 provides a picture of a simplified world that captures what is taken to be typical or normal. What is taken to be typical or normal, of course, varies by context according to Ahlem. The pressing question here is why did Ahlem begin her narrative with the expression "Like any girl, I was sexually harassed..."? Comments such as these generalisations are usually offered spontaneously. But this line indeed recapitulates what the narrative will be about.

Ahlem's account however contains interesting contradictions. She did describe scenarios in which she perceived herself to be at risk from sexual street harassers albeit her discourse minimized male's sexual harassment. In other words, despite the fact of being often subjected to overt observation, verbal commentary by male strangers and expressing frustration of being silenced "I just learned to block it out", lines 4, 5 and 6 (it's a trivial matter. I think it is not a serious problem. It's a natural phenomenon…) reveal that Ahlem's self construction is closely intertwined with the predominant stereotypes in her social milieu. She does so by giving attention to the way things are supposed to be and calling on discourses of naturalizing a binary gender system "THEY vs. WE". It interests us more to bring to the foreground the issue of how talking about sexual harassment implicates positioning oneself: Who is Ahlem in relation to sexual harassment? In fact, according to her narrative, she must be the target and not the perpetrator.

Excerpt 2: Salima, 16 Years Old, From A Rural Area in Chlef.

Salima: In my family, a girl needs permission where she could go and what time she needs to come back. My mother always says: "don't be too loud, don't talk to boys even if they tease you, move appropriately and don't attract too much attention towards yourself", you know, just to keep me safe. But despite these precautionary measures, men never stop teasing.

Int: what does this mean?

Salima: Let me share with you what happened that day. "I was fifteen years old, er[…] in my final year of middle school. Because I live in a very rural area, I would get the bus to school every day, often on my own. Occasionally, it was very crowded, so I was standing holding on to a hanging handle. "Suddenly, I started to feel the back of my hair moving. At first I thought it was caused by a breeze, but it happened again, I clearly felt fingers playing with my hair. Then for a very short time, I felt someone fondling me in the back. I turned around and I was faced with a man, I guess he was in his thirties, forcing me to make the contact.

Int: mhm, did you react?

Salima: I remember I really didn't know how to react. I couldn't even speak, so I said nothing, like nothing happened […] I believe if I didn't ignore it, our neighbours who were in the bus, they would tell my father and it would be a big problem and I might stop attending school.

Suffering in Silence

Salima's account of her family accepted norms is commonly heard among the informants. She is expected to be docile, shy, and not to be outspoken and opinionated. Her behaviours must be closely linked to notions of honour and shame purely and simply because she is under the close and continued scrutiny of society (Panoptic society). This means Salima is constantly under pressure to think about her family name in her daily life, ranging from the clothes she wears to the way she behaves in public. Thus she cannot stay overnight, she cannot be seen to roam around and she cannot be seen to be interacting with boys. Her experience of sexual harassment on a bus suggests that pressure exerting messages from her mother about the importance of being submissive seems pointless; it has no significant effects however. Salima, with a voice heavy with irony, puts it very aptly: "But despite these precautionary measures, men never stop teasing".

Also, here is an unpleasant truth. Salima experiences particular difficulties with transport to get education. She is transported to and from school each day and because of the lack of carriages she would often end up standing in the aisles or cramped in doorway. Even worse is the idea that if they are packed like sardines, Salima's whole body would be millimeters from others then. She reports that a strange man in his thirties played with her hair and touched her in a sexual way. Yet she has been silenced through this time by the fears of what could happen to her and how she would be perceived by the public: neighbours and her family in particular. She could not speak back to her harasser because of the social pressure to not make a fuss; that was a private event and nobody heard it. In line 14, Salima explains how simply blame might be placed on her and not the harasser "it would be a big problem and I might stop attending school". In other words, instead of speaking out against the seemingly overwhelming problem of harassment, Salima often takes steps to avoid it. Anyway, we are not sure if these are wrong or right ways to respond to harassment but we feel absolutely sure that when Salima speaks she is afraid her words will not be heard nor welcomed, and when she is silent she is still afraid. Regardless

of what she does or does not do, nothing changes. But to not make matters worse she defines herself in relation to her family; that it is impossible for her to show any sign of agency (identity for the other).

As can be concluded from what is reported by Ahlem, there is no clear conceptualization of what sexual harassment is. This is especially true if we consider her use of the tag question 'a word cannot hurt, right?' Irrespective of how the definition of sexual harassment is made, age could be of great importance. In line 7, Ahlem says 'but if it's a single /young man harassing me on the street I tend to get quite aggressive'. So, it could of course be debated whether only young men should be understood as harassers.

Excerpt 3: Kenza, 13 Years Old From an Urban City, Tiaret

Kenza: On my way to school at midday, two unknown men came creeping up behind me and pulled my school bag. They asked me if I had known anything about my period, I was so shocked that they used the word "period" […] I had never heard it from men before. Following their question, they slapped me on my […]. They laughed and went away. They made my blood run cold. There was nothing I could do, I didn't know who they were, I was so embarrassed; I ran all the way home.

Int: Did you tell your parents?

Kenza*:* No, never, impossible. I told my mother that I have got a headache and I am feeling a bit feverish, I didn't go to school that afternoon.

Controlling Talk

Kenza's narrative echoes with the previous account in terms of the way she responded to public sexual harassment; she kept silent. With respect to time of day, *Kenza, the newly arrived teenager, faced* harassment during broad daylight. She finds herself alone with two unacquainted men *whose comments are not only derogatory but also have profound consequences (lines 5 and 6). Besides,* it seems easy for us to judge whether their behaviours are intentional or not and therefore to question them. It does get us thinking: why did these guys think it was OK to just harass strangers? If we still sometimes use girls' sexuality as an excuse when a strange man is being inappropriate, the two men had made a slap and walked off, not waiting for any sexual advance or expecting Kenza to respond at all.

When Kenza was asked whether she told her parents, in line 7: "no, never, impossible. I told my mother that I have got a headache and I am feeling a bit feverish", she said. Her three negative answers 'no, never and impossible" show that something is not allowed. Her silence is so accepted that her mother does not even notice it. To the point, silencing Kenza does not mean to prevent her talk but rather shaping it, to restrict the things she may talk about and the way she expresses them. It all start with no communication, no room for claims of "it's demoralizing, I feel so embarrassed, humiliated and my blood run cold…" because of those unwanted behaviours. Kenza thus is learning how to become so skilled in brushing off lewd comments and feels ashamed if she draws any attention. Her silence however not only does fortify harassment but also promotes the system of exclusion from public spaces (line 8).

Excerpt 4: Samah, 15 Years Old From An Urban City, Mascara

Samah: I was 12 years old when I heard kissing noises. I know, it sounds awfully young, but I really looked pubescent girl when I was 12. Anyway, I was walking home alone when a group of boys who had to have been about 16/17 years old were sitting in the park just loitering. As I walked past them one of the guys yelled at me: "Hey, I want to

talk to you". He yells again: "Come here bitch, don't ignore me; I'm talking to you." so I ran away from them as fast as I could. They followed me in the street telling me: "they know where I live and they are going to come to knock on my door and tell my father and my brother".

Int: So you had to run again?

Samah: The problem is that daddy saw them commenting on regularly. He was not with me. Once I pointed at the perpetrators, he shouted angrily "go home […]". Yes, yes; he swore at me in front of them. It was a cruel punishment; my father beat me to death: "He pulled a knife and wanted to stab me". Even my aunts were against me, they asked questions like: 'why are you still outdoors; you already have big breasts?" and things like that. They said they felt great shame on what I have done. They believe that brings shame on me and my father.

Victim Blaming

Samah wants us to see that there is a misunderstanding of the difference between the victim and the harasser's conduct. Here in fact she uses no contesting strategies to challenge this view; her opening remark "…but I really looked pubescent girl when I was 12…"asserts that she expects to be a ready target for the same type of harassment that younger women might suffer more from, which is to say that she recognizes she is no longer young and perhaps more eye catching to be harassed. Probably at times Samah just gives credence to the idea that harassment is a matter of routine that she does not feel like she can take it seriously. In line 8, she says, "the problem is that daddy saw them commenting on regularly". Once again, the problem is not that she is routinely subjected to street harassment which frightens her and reinforces fears of rape; her only problem is her family reaction. When her father witnessed what happened, though she pointed at the harassers, Samah could never be believed. Her father thinks she attracts too much attention towards herself. The repeated discourse markers 'yes, yes my father swore at me in front of them' and her emphasis upon the expression 'punishment' indicate that especially relatives do not have a lot of sympathy for the victims, Samah was beaten and shouted at. Her aunts claim that she is responsible for her sexual objectification (line 12). In other words, they simply blame the victim and detract from the harasser's behaviour. This is of course based on certain considerations such as societal pressure. Now then, just pause and think for a moment: if the perpetrators are certain that Samah keeps quiet when she is harassed and she does not complain because she does not want to be blamed, it seems that they would really take advantage. All in all, we have no hesitation therefore to say that victim blaming is absolutely a part of an unfair culture.

Excerpt 5*: Hanane, 19 Years Old, From An Urban Village, Chlef

Hanane: I was about 18 when, one day on my way to home, a fifty year old man told me: "You got great eyes, baby!" In response, I scream, "My name is not a baby, you probably have a daughter older than me", and then I asked him: "how you would like it if your daughter or sister was walking and some random strangers called them inappropriate names".

Int: Did he apologize?

Hanane: Unconcerned by this thought he burst out laughing and said: "psst […]smile sweetie". Following this, I gave him an angry look then I said: "I am not a dog, don't whistle at me. I do not like this kind of treatment and I would report it to my father if you continue". He said: "Don't make me laugh!" He thought I would not do it.

Int: Did you call your father?

Hanane: Of course I did and he came but, unfortunately, the man ran away in fright. My father always tells me: 'if you feel overpowered then and there call me or call the police'.

Perpetrator Blaming

What is dramatic about Hanane' story perhaps is that a fifty year old man sexually harassed her. Look, we don't pretend that there is a lower or upper age limit for harassing women but we really feel disappointed that a man of her father's age on the street just looked at her like she is a whore. No matter who that man is, through looks, sexist words and gestures including phrases like 'hey baby' and 'psst' sounds; he asserts his right to define her as a sexual object; forcing her to interact with him and telling her to smile.

What is not being talked about so far, and should be, is the decision Hanane takes. More radically, lines 3 through 6 are all in direct speech and show the confrontation between Hanane and the harasser, each echoing two opposing figured worlds: the oppressed world of what ought to be for Hanane and the world of authority for the harasser. This is a clear episode of resistance indeed: Hanane explains her decision to speak out against sexual harassment; she did not wait a second to confront directly. Here she sounds confident; she does not care if she will be at risk; that is to say she has no fears that the situation might escalate further. One thing is certain: she just reinforced the fact that she is never at fault. This is absolutely due to certain reasons. Concurrent with this sense, we wonder: who is behind her self-emancipation?

What is specifically disturbing is that that man did not understand. His laughter and ironic reply suggest that he was not going to stop, he did not take her seriously; therefore her resistance appears futile. Given the seriousness of the issue, Hanane called her father whose feedback helps her to become an agent in her own experience. As she concludes, her father remained worried about her safety; he was advising her daughter on how to handle unpleasant situations and to take actions against harassers in particular. Note, by the way, that Hanane does not feel inhibited to talk to her father about the issue, and therein lies her power. Owing to his support, she describes the moment when the harasser finally understood.

CONCLUSIONS

From a large corpus of narratives by sexually harassed teenage girls in North West of Algeria, this article selected five excerpts for analysis focusing on identity construction in discourse. Based on these analysis, five themes have been identified. They show how most respondents agree that naturally males do commit public sexual harassment. They naturalize and justify it against themselves because this happens to all females and they get accustomed to that. Some of them, however, are in complete ignorance, why these acts are performed because males have no reason to do that. Additionally, it is impossible and undesirable for these girls to become such agents who decide to make a complaint against their harassers because they will be blamed and may be beaten. Though there are those who think more overtly about matters and abandons, if only for some time, the typical picture we had in some of the previous narratives and decide to be no longer victims and defend themselves, they may be considered as violent hysterical and dishonourable females.

Lin (2008) argues that there are at least two driving psychological motivations for identity: being-for-the-self and identity-for-the-other. There is no doubt that the identity constructions identified in these oral narratives belong to the second category. Most teenage girls are discursively affected by the so-called honourable culture and gender norms. For them, violence is exclusive to males and no need to report these incidents to the police. As having fixed occupied identities of sacrificial daughters and pretty sisters who are doing honorable and correct things, teenage girls should not show any sign of resistance because the patriarchal culture of honor has strongly legitimized males' sexual harassment

against them. Briefly, we may find that public sexual harassment is gendered in its practice, depictions and blaming. So, in addition to this forced occupied victim's identity, it could be also generalized that sexual violence is a gendered term.

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