

Sociocultural Components and Construction of the Algerian Amazigh Identity

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Abstract

Objectives: The present study investigates the components constituting Algerian Amazigh identity, how they perceive themselves and others, and how other social groups perceive them.

Methods: To achieve these objectives, 20 Algerian Amazigh were interviewed, and 100 Arab Algerians were asked to respond to a questionnaire. The participants' responses were analyzed within Van Dijk's (2007) socio-cognitive 'ingroup-outgroup' polarization framework.

Results: The findings indicate that Amazigh identity is constructed from multilayered identities; each layer reflects common attitudes and beliefs that are not static but negotiated. Amazigh identity can be represented by concentric circles radiating out from the central Amazigh group identity, interacting with other Amazigh groups' identities in the wider circle to form a homogeneous and cohesive group with shared interests. The Amazigh groups interact with the Arab community in a broader circle to develop a national identity, and then both interact with other communities in the wider peripheral circle. The questionnaire results show that Arab participants have positive perceptions of the Amazigh. However, the latter seem to have biased perceptions of Arabs due to faulty reasoning related mainly to political and social factors.

Conclusions: Amazigh identity is complex and layered, involving both internal group cohesion and external interactions with the Arab community. Despite positive perceptions from Arabs, the Amazigh hold biased views toward Arabs, shaped by historical and socio-political contexts.

Keywords: Algerian amazigh; national identity; social identity; ingroup vs. outgroup relations

المكونات الاجتماعية والثقافية وبناء الهوية الجزائرية الأمازيغية

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف عناصر الهوية الأمازيغية الجزائرية وكيفية تصور الأمازيغ لأنفسهم وللآخرين، بالإضافة إلى تصورات المجموعات الاجتماعية الأخرى عنهم.

المنهجية: تم إجراء مقابلات مع 20 أمازيغيًا جزائريًا، وتوزيع استبيان على 100 جزائري عربي. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام منهجية الإطار التحليلي "علاقات الجماعة الداخلية والجماعة الخارجية" لفان ديك (2007).

النتائج: أظهرت النتائج أن الهوية الأمازيغية تتكون من طبقات متعددة تعكس مواقف ومعتقدات مشتركة وتتطور. تم تمثيل الهوية بدوائر متحدة المركز، حيث تتفاعل هوية الأمازيغ مع هويات أخرى لتشكيل مجموعة متجانسة. كما يتفاعل الأمازيغ مع المجتمع العربي لتطوير هوية وطنية مشتركة. أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان أن العرب لديهم تصورات إيجابية عن الأمازيغ، بينما يظهر الأمازيغ تحيزات ضد العرب، مرتبطة بعوامل سياسية واجتماعية.

الخلاصة: الهوية الأمازيغية معقدة ومتعددة الأبعاد، وتشمل تفاعلات مع المجتمع العربي. على الرغم من التصورات الإيجابية من العرب، فإن الأمازيغ.

الكلمات الدالة: الأمازيغ الجزائريون، الهوية الوطنية، الهوية الاجتماعية، العلاقات بين المجموعة الداخلية والمجموعة الخارجية.



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1. Introduction

The concept of 'identity' can be considered a "phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 195). Through social interaction, an individual can display his/her identity, which can be shaped and reshaped as a result of this interaction. In this context, Bucholtz and Hall (2005, 606) assume that 'identity' or different types of identities are people's conscious and unconscious constructs, representations, and portrayals of themselves and others that can change over time. They add that each person can have a repertoire of identities (e.g., social, cultural, national, etc.) that are not always static. Social identity involves people's classifications and identifications of themselves and others based on shared interests and beliefs (Tajfel and Turner 1986). When somebody associates with a particular social group, this means that this person belongs to an 'ingroup' compared to people who do not belong to the same group, known as an 'outgroup' (ibid). The relationship between these two groups in Tajfel and Turner's (1986) view is understood in terms of comparison. Individuals from each group associate with ingroup distinctiveness, which includes positive attitudes, social status, and prestige, to maintain superiority over the outgroup.

Similarly, Van Dijk (1995, 22) introduced the notion of 'Us' and 'Them' to reflect 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' membership, respectively. This contradictory relationship occurs when there is a conflict of interest, opinions, perspectives, and different interpretations, which are often opposites. This phenomenon is explained by Van Dijk as the speakers of one group generally tending to present themselves or their group in favorable terms and other groups in negative ones. This occurs through one's lexical choice of particular vocabulary to express 'ingroup' belonging and/or shared ideological assumptions, which exclude a particular group and maintain the idea of an 'outgroup' membership.

Cultural identity relies on one's ideological and cultural beliefs and values juxtaposed and compared with other people or social categories (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 594). Likewise, Ferguson and Gupta (1992, 7) think that cultural identity is seen in expressions like 'our own culture' and 'we' versus 'other's society' (ibid, 13). For Hall (1997, 2), cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming as well as of being' since cultural identities change and go beyond 'space,' 'time,' and 'history.' Hall's (1997) and Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) studies emphasize the interaction between 'language,' 'society,' and 'culture' as three interdisciplinary components; we cannot understand one of these concepts without understanding the other.

Concerning national identity, it can be thought of as the feeling of a common belonging among individuals through which these individuals can identify themselves as different and distinctive from others (Edelman 1977). The construction of the 'national identity' depends on collective memory, which includes sharing a common history, important dates, and past events to maintain the continuity of a particular group because citizens will keep remembering their national history and narrating it to future generations (Halbwachs 1992). A further constituent of national identity is the shared common origin of these groups that confirms its existence. This symbolic construction is not only for a particular group but also for every other group sharing the collective memory.

Paltridge (2012) considers identity not fixed throughout one's life; instead, it is constantly modified and reconstructed as people interact. Thus, he thinks of identity as a 'two-way construction' composed of the performance of the identity one has created for oneself and that recognized by other social interactants. In this regard, Blommaert (2005, 205) states that "a lot of what happens in the field of identity is done by others, not by oneself." Thus, identity is reflected in one's performance and better recognized in the eyes of others. Accordingly, the assumption made is that 'identity' is partly about 'self-representation' and partly about others' perceptions. Therefore, people's understanding of who they are is correlated with the existence of other people in a particular setting to benchmark themselves against them to realize their distinctiveness.

Since the notion of identity involves people's representations of themselves, their perceptions of 'others' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), and how others perceive them, the present study aims to investigate how Algerian Amazigh identity is constructed by studying how they perceive themselves, how they compare themselves to Arabs as another social category, and how they reflect their 'ingroup' vs. 'outgroup' belonging and affiliation. Since identity is a 'two-way construction' (Paltridge 2012), this also calls for investigating the other side of identity construction: How Arabs, the other dominant

social category in Algeria, perceive and think of Algerian Amazigh. Therefore, this study attempts to address the following research questions :

1. How do Algerian Amazigh identify and perceive themselves in relation to others?
2. How do they think others perceive them?
3. What do Arab Algerians think of Amazigh groups?

The responses of Algerian Amazigh and Arab Algerians were analyzed within Van Dijk's (2007) socio-cognitive framework of 'ingroup-outgroup polarization,' where both groups of participants could express their ingroup favoritism and positive representation, as well as their distinctiveness from others (i.e., outgroups). This analysis reflects the participants' perceptions and opinions about themselves and the 'other'; it explains the mediation between participants' society, mental representation, and the discourse through which they express their opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. One's understanding of who they are, or their identity, is correlated with the presence of other people in a given social setting. This, in turn, leads to benchmarking oneself against others to realize their distinctiveness from them. This contradictory relationship is characterized by positive representation of the ingroup with or without the derogation of the outgroup.

2. Historical Background of Berber/Amazigh and Their Dialect Profile

Who are the Amazigh people? Where did they come from? There are various views about the origins of the Amazigh. According to Ibn Khaldun (Chapter 6, 127), "they are the children of Kanaan bin Hambin Noah, and their father's name is 'Mazigh' and their brothers are Arkish and Palestine." Derraji (2010, 15-16) presents two different historical views regarding the origin of the word 'Amazigh'. One view is that 'Amazigh' is derived from the proper noun *ma:zi:Y* 'Mazigh,' who was the grandfather of a national Median in Saudi Arabia, while the other view is that 'Mazigh' is very old and might have originated from Pharaonic or Greek times. He further argues that research in this area has found that some words used earlier in history, like Mazig, have similarities. For instance, the Greek historian Hekataios, who lived in the 6th century BC, used the word *ma:zjis*.

Similar to Mazigh. Moreover, Herodotus, who lived in the 5th century BC, used the name *ma:xji*

'Maxyes,' which was later adopted by the Latins and transformed into *ma:ziks*.

'Mazikes'; thus, 'Mazikes' is very similar to 'Mazigh'. For Derraji (2010, 16), the reason for naming Amazigh people 'Berbers' is due to a set of other names used by others throughout history. The Greeks and Romans used 'Barbari' to refer to all people who did not speak their language and who were outside the Greek-Roman civilization sphere. During the Islamic conquest, Arabs adopted the word 'Barbari' from the Romans and transformed it into *بربر* 'Barbar'.

What is the dialect profile of the Algerian Berber/Amazigh? It should be noted that the Berber/Amazigh in Algeria do not belong to one continuous geographical area; they are distributed across several regions. According to Haddadou (2000) and Benhattab (2001), Berbers/Amazigh in Algeria are divided into six major groups: Kabyle, Mezab, Chawia, Touareg, Chnawa, and Shlouh. Kabyle refers to the dialect they speak; this group inhabits the central northern areas of Algeria, namely Tizi Ouzou, Bouira, and Bejaia. Kabyle dialect is the most prevalent Amazigh dialect in Algeria; Kabyle speakers outnumber all other Amazigh speakers (ibid). Mezab is an Amazigh group that settles mainly in Ghardaia, 600 km south of Algiers, and speaks the Mozabite Amazigh dialect. They form a minority group but have a well-established presence within the Algerian community (Benhattab 2011). The Chawia group inhabits the Aurès Mountains, including Batna, Khenchla, and Souk Ahras. Their Chawia dialect is Algeria's second most prevalent Amazigh dialect (ibid). Touareg is a minority Berber group that settles in the southern borders of Algeria. Their Touareg dialect is the most preserved dialect among all other Amazigh dialects (ibid). Chnawa is a minority group inhabiting some of Algeria's northwestern states (ibid). Shlouh is the sixth Berber group. There is no accurate and documented statistics about the Shlouh of Algeria (Algérie: situation géographique et démolinguistique (ulaval.ca)).

3. Literature Review

EL-Aissati (2005) argued that after the independence of Algeria in 1962 and Morocco in 1956, both countries declared Arabic as their official language and Islam as their religion, without considering the Amazigh people and their language. However, Amazigh are a crucial part of both Algerian and Moroccan societies. EL-Aissati also claimed that Arab nationalism against colonizers led to the Amazigh crisis. According to Mouhleb (2005), these practices against the Amazigh ethnic group and their language increased awareness among the Amazigh, leading them to use their language in various domains, to the extent that Amazigh has become the primary medium of instruction in schools in the Kabyle region. Although there was hope that this would spark a national debate, it failed to elevate Amazigh culture and language to the same status as Arabic because Algeria is declared an Arab country. The Amazigh struggle for identity and language recognition was not only against Arabs but also against French and Spanish colonial policies in Algeria and Morocco. Tilmatine (2016) states that French and Spanish policies promoted the Arabic language in Algeria and Morocco at the expense of the Amazigh language, which was given a lower status. Consequently, these colonial practices contributed to the creation of the so-called Kabyle myth, which has become a significant argument for post-colonial governments in Algeria and Morocco to overlook and deny the distinctiveness of the Amazigh. Thus, considering Algerians and Moroccans as Arabs has contributed to the rejection of Amazigh linguistic and cultural demands.

In another study, Habbouche (2013) investigated language maintenance and shift among the Kabyle, an Amazigh group living in Oran, by exploring their attitudes towards their Kabyle dialect, a variety of the Amazigh language. The results revealed that participants showed positive attitudes toward Kabyle, their mother tongue, which they used in various contexts. They also expressed their belonging and loyalty to their origin and ethnic group. Similarly, by analyzing their narratives, Nilsson (2018) examined Kabyle identity and belonging. The results showed that Kabyle participants used personal narratives and self-identification; they viewed themselves as an Amazigh race, the first civilization in Algeria. In public records, they referred to themselves as an 'ingroup,' while the Algerian government considers them an 'outgroup.' However, Kabyle participants also distinguished between urban Kabyle and rural Kabyle, describing the former as 'open' and the latter as 'conservative' and 'traditional.' Consequently, urban Kabyle see themselves as the ingroup and rural Kabyle as the outgroup, and vice versa. Despite this, all participants considered language, religion, and Amazigh nationalism as taken for granted symbols representing them as Kabyle Amazigh.

So far, the researcher has provided a socio-historical perspective on the Amazigh language in Algeria and Morocco. EL-Aissati (2005), Mouhleb (2005), and Tilmatine (2016) noted that French colonization was a primary cause of the Amazigh identity crisis in Algeria and Morocco. The studies reviewed primarily focused on Kabyle, analyzing their language use as a means through which Kabyle Amazigh express their 'belonging' and identity. This suggests a need for further research to investigate not only the Kabyle but also other Algerian Amazigh groups from a sociolinguistic perspective, exploring how they position themselves in society through their ingroup vs. outgroup relationships. Little is known about other Algerian Amazigh groups, including Chaouia, Bni Mzab, Touareg, and Shlough, regarding how they position and perceive themselves within Algerian society and how different groups, such as Arabs, perceive them. Therefore, this study aims to investigate Algerian Amazigh's socio-cultural identity by examining how they perceive themselves, how they compare themselves to Arabs as another social category, how they reflect their 'ingroup' vs. 'outgroup' belonging and affiliation, and how other groups like Arabs perceive them. Accordingly, The researcher draws on Blommaert's (2005) and Paltridge's (2012) perspectives on 'identity,' which suggest that this type of two-way perception involves how an individual evaluates their performance concerning their ingroup compared to others' performance and their evaluation of their identity.

4. Methods

4.1 Data Collection

For the purposes of this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in Standard Arabic in which all participants are proficient. The researchers used this method of data triangulation to complement the interview results with data from the questionnaire, aiming to obtain richer data and

more reliable results. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information from Algerian Amazigh about their opinions and perceptions of themselves and others. This approach allowed for the exploration of various topics through a series of questions, along with follow-up questions that emerged during the interviews, giving participants the chance to express their views in their own terms. The semi-structured interview questions focused on how each Amazigh group perceives itself, how they view other Amazigh groups, how different Amazigh groups perceive Arabs as an 'outgroup,' and how they feel about how Arabs perceive them. The responses from the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. See Appendix 1.

The questionnaire comprised nine questions aimed at Arab Algerians to collect data about their attitudes and perceptions of Algerian Amazigh identity and culture. The questions explored Arabs' relationships with their Amazigh neighbors and friends and their views on Amazigh culture, including language, traditions, festivals, and music. Additionally, Arab participants were asked if they participate in Amazigh events and festivals and whether they support intermarriage between Arabs and Amazigh. See Appendix 2.

4.2 The Sample

The sample consisted of two groups of participants. One group included 20 Algerian Amazigh, while the other included 100 Arab Algerians. All participants reside in Algeria and come from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, age, occupation, and education. Efforts were made to diversify the sample groups according to age, gender, education, and employment. The 20 Amazigh participants were selected from six Amazigh groups in Algeria: Kabyle Amazigh from Bouira, Bejaia, and Tizi Ouzou; Chaouia Amazigh from Batna and Khenchela; Shlouh Amazigh from Baidh and Naama; Bni Mzab Amazigh from Ghardaia and Algiers; and Touareg Amazigh from Illizi and Tamanghasset. Similarly, the Arab participants were selected from areas where the Amazigh live as well as from other regions in Algeria.

The Algerian Amazigh participants included 12 males and 8 females, aged between 25 and 60. They had various educational backgrounds and occupations, including teachers, university students, architects, merchants, homemakers, retirees, business people, and engineers. All Amazigh participants are Muslims living in Amazigh regions in Algeria and speak the Amazigh language. Each participant was approached in person for a face-to-face interview, each lasting 30 minutes. The Arab Algerian sample consisted of 38 males and 62 females, aged between 10 and 62, selected from different educational and occupational backgrounds. All Arab Algerian participants are Muslims.

5. Results and Discussion

This study explores the concept of 'identity' in multidimensional relations. Section 5. Results and Discussion, presents and discusses Amazigh participants' perceptions of themselves and others from their own perspective. This section highlights Arab Algerians' perceptions of the Algerian Amazigh.

Based on the data analysis, Arab Algerians tend to have positive attitudes toward Algerian Amazigh. They believe there is no harm in sharing their culture with Amazigh, considering it a significant component of Algerian national identity. Most Arab respondents welcome sharing Amazigh festivals and social events and maintaining good relationships and neighborhoods with them. They also support intermarriage with Amazigh people, given their shared religion. For many Arab participants, the focus seems to be on a unified Algerian national identity composed of various ethnic and linguistic groups. As one Arab participant stated, "Being an Amazigh or an Arab does not matter; what matters is being all Algerians."

It is worth noting that both Arabs and Amazigh reported that religion is an integral part of Algerian cultural life. This is reflected in the fact that both groups share the same religious affiliations and encourage interethnic marriage since they are Muslim. This also explains Amazigh's positive responses to learning Arabic, as it is the language of the Qur'an, and their practice of giving Arabic Islamic names to their children. This result aligns with Barkhuizen and Knoch's (2005) view that religious organizations and activities are central to cultural life. Additionally, living in the same country, sharing a common history, and encouraging interethnic marriage may strengthen national identity. It is assumed that intermarriage may result in permanent bonds within family relationships (see Fishman 2007).

This section provides a detailed thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted to

understand Algerian Amazigh groups' views on their identity as an 'ingroup' in relation to others as 'outgroups,' along with a quantitative analysis of Arab Algerians' views on Algerian Amazigh.

5.1. Amazigh Perception of Themselves and Others

The researchers used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic qualitative method to analyze the semi-structured interviews. This analysis involved exploring participants' discourse data, identifying and categorizing themes and sub-themes relevant to the study's aims, and writing an interpretation of these sub-themes. Quantitative analysis was also used to evaluate participants' responses, with percentages calculated and presented in a table. The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that Algerian Amazigh share certain common interests, attitudes, and beliefs that distinguish them from others. They view themselves as belonging to an 'ingroup' compared to those outside their group, who are seen as an 'outgroup.' Based on their reflections, the researchers identified five sub-themes related to the main research question of how Algerian Amazigh perceive themselves and others and how they believe others perceive them.

5.1.1. Nativism and Ethnicity

Amazigh participants reported their deep-rooted presence in Algeria, emphasizing their long historical continuity by referring to themselves as the original inhabitants of North Africa, contrasting with Arabs who arrived later. They traced their lineage to their ancestor Barbar ben Tamlaa ben Mazigh ben Ham ben Kanaan ben Noah. Participants highlighted their social and ethnic identity as distinct from Arabs, as illustrated by Belhadj and Amina:

- 1- *Belhaj* : أمازيغ هي كلمة أو تسمية نسبة لجدها لول مازيغ بن حام بن نوح عليه السلام وهما سكان شمال إفريقيا الأصليين وكان في شمال إفريقيا كاملتا فلسطين واليمن وحتى لجزر الكناري
- 2- “Amazigh is a name after our first grandfather Mazigh bin Ham bin Noah; peace be upon him. They are the original inhabitants of North Africa and are spread in all North Africa, Palestine, Yemen, and the Canary Islands.”

2- *Amina*: أمازيغ ولا تامازيغت هما سكان إفريقيا لأصليين هما عجم ماشي عرب سلاتهم عجمية ماشي عربية

“Tamazight are the original inhabitants of North Africa. They are from a foreign origin but not an Arab one.”

Accordingly, Algerian Amazigh participants constructed their identity by contrasting themselves with 'Arab Algerians' to highlight their distinct 'ingroup' identity. In this context, Van Dijk (2007, p. 55) noted that 'ingroup-outgroup polarization' involves ingroup favoritism and positive ingroup representation, often coupled with the derogation of the outgroup. Thus, the participants emphasized their nativism and ethnicity as a unique collective Amazigh group without disparaging the Arab Algerian group.

5.1.2. Independence

Some participants described themselves as independent and distinctive. They notified that Amazigh means a free man who refuses all kinds of oppression, tyranny, and control, as indicated in 3:

- 3- *Zahir* : أمازيغي لي هوا رجل الحر، حر وين تسكن، حر وانش دير المهم حرية تا عوما يظلمش بيها ناس خرين حنا لقبابل عندنا النيف والرجلة

“Amazigh is the free man; he is free to live where he wants and do what he wants, but his freedom must not oppress other people. We the Kabyle have dignity and innocence.”

For the Amazigh, it is forbidden to oppress or cheat others. They believe that Amazigh individuals should have good morals and treat others exactly as they would want to be treated, as stated in example 4.

- 4- *Afef* : أمازيغي معناه رجل حر في نفسه ما يجيش لي بحكم فيه ولا يسيطر عليه وتاني لازم يكون مربى ومتخلق مع غيره وما يظلمش

“Amazigh means the free man who refuses all kinds of control, but he must be good to other people and does not oppress them”.

Amazigh participants form their perception by implicitly comparing themselves with other groups. They believe that Amazigh people are the majority group who have faced attempts to alter their ethnicity and identity throughout history due to colonizers. Despite this, they have managed to preserve their identity, language, and origins, unlike other groups who feel they lost their Amazigh identity and were Arabized when Arabs settled in Algeria.

Thus, Amazigh people emphasize their positive attitudes and qualities to reflect their collective 'ingroup' identity. They highlight their independence and distinctiveness compared to other groups who lost their identity and origins through

Arabization. In this regard, Stath (2008, p. 21) noted that individuals' self-perceptions can be shaped by shared features of commonality and solidarity within a collective group. However, they may sometimes derogate the outer group (Van Dijk 1995, p. 22).

5.1.3. Prejudice

According to Van Dijk (1984, pp. 13-14), prejudice is linked to stereotypes, such as 'false beliefs' or 'biased perceptions' that people within the same culture hold about other groups or nations. It arises from conflicts between 'ingroup' and 'out-group' dynamics, where individuals tend to "overgeneralize" their positive attributes as characteristic of a homogeneous and cohesive group, while attributing negative traits to out-group members based on faulty reasoning.

Thus, the theme of prejudice illustrates how each Amazigh group describes themselves and views other Amazigh groups. Each group tends to emphasize its own positive qualities in comparison to others. For example, Zahir, a Kabyle Amazigh, highlighted the positive traits of his Kabyle group by noting that they are 'open' to other people and accept others, in contrast to the Bni Mzab Amazigh, whom he described as 'closed off' and reluctant to intermarry with others. He stated:

Zahir: بني مزاب منغلقيين على رواحهم ما يتزوجون مع القبائل ولا العرب ولا الشاوية 5

"Bni Mzab Amazigh, are narrow-minded, they do not marry outside their community whether with Kabyle, Arabs or Chaouia".

6- Belhaj: حنا يا منتشرين في كل ولايات الجزائر و حتى برا الجزائر عايشين مع الناس لخرين نورمال و نتزوجو معهم نورمال و عشنا مع ليهود نورمال فترة طويلة معاناتو منفتحين على الناس لخرين

"We are spread across all of Algeria and even abroad. We live peacefully with others, marry them without any issues, and have lived alongside Jews for a long time. We are open-minded and welcoming to people from different backgrounds."

By contrast, Belhadj and Younes, who belong to the Bni Mzab Amazigh group, reported that they are "open to other groups, whether Arabs or non-Arabs." They emphasized that they are spread across all regions of Algeria and have lived peacefully for an extended period with Jews in the area of Ghardaia.

We spread in all the cities of Algeria, even outside the country; we live with other people and mix marriage with them without any issue. We lived peacefully with the Jews for an extended period; this means that we are open to other people."

They further argued that Bni Mzab Amazigh has preserved their values, principles, and customs stipulated by Ibadhi school of thought, which follows the Holy Qur'an and Sunna. They referred to themselves as 'conservative people' but not 'narrow-minded' because they have maintained their values and traditions compared to Kabyle Amazigh, who tend to be 'open' in their way of life, as stated by Younes in 7.

حنا يا بني مزاب محافظين على لغتنا ومبادئنا وديننا. هذا الشيء ماشي معنا تو منغلقيين. حنا نتميز بالمذهب الإباضي اللي أساسه مستمد من القرآن والسنة النبوية وصح حنا محافظين. مقارنة مع القبائل اللي هما منفتحين عن أسلوب الحياة تاهم

"We, the Bni Mzab, have preserved our language, principles, and religion. This does not mean that we are narrow-minded, but we are characterized by preserving and maintaining our Ibadhi school of thought, which is derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Indeed, we are more conservative compared to the Kabyle, who are more open in their lifestyle."

It can be said that both Kabyle and Bni Mzab participants selected positive terms like 'open' to describe themselves, but the participants from each Amazigh group used some negative terms to describe the other groups. To illustrate, Kabyle participants perceive Bni Mzab Amazigh as 'narrow minded' compared to themselves, whereas Bni Mzab participants utilized the lexical item 'open' to connote negative attributes like liberal and free for Kabyle Amazigh group. In contrast, they described themselves as 'conservatives' to reflect that they have preserved their Values and Customs: Therefore, Kabyle and Bni Mzab participants associated themselves with positive attitudes and good qualities to maintain their ingroup favoritism, while they used negative attributes to describe others' unfavorable characteristics. These biased and stereotyping beliefs about one another can be seen as 'prejudice.' In this context, Van Dijk (1984, 13) noted that in 'ingroup and out-group' relations, wrong beliefs or prejudice emerge due to conflicting concerns.

National Identity: The Amazigh participants noted that in social interactions, there are certain aspects, some of which may be inseparable from one another, that are shared between Amazigh and Arabs. These include the Arabic language, religion, Arabic names, as well as shared history and memories, which could be considered building blocks of a type of

national identity.

Arabic Language: Amazigh participants believe that Arabic is significant to them because it is the language of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic religion. Thus, they feel it is essential to learn Arabic to practice Islamic rituals. They also reported that Arabic is necessary for daily communication with Arab Algerians who do not speak Amazigh and is critically needed as a medium of education in schools. Consequently, Amazigh participants expressed gratitude and pride in knowing and speaking Arabic. The choice to use Arabic is influenced by the context in which it is used, such as religious, educational, and social settings. Amazigh participants emphasized that they use Arabic for social interaction and religious purposes. At the same time, they stated that they are proud of their origin and Amazigh language, regardless of whether they speak Arabic or another language. They explained that being Amazigh is not about speaking a particular language; rather, it is about how one is nurtured, raised, and the values and morals one acquires. The following excerpts exemplify the Amazigh participants' views regarding their use of the Arabic language and their commitment to maintaining their Amazigh identity:

8. Asma : شوفي اللغة العربية تعلمناها في المدرسة و في الحياة العادية باش نقدر و نتعامل و مع الناس و ما عندناش مشكلة نهديها بالعكس صحيح : حنان بقاو أمازيغ و هاد الشي ما يتبدلش لمجرد أنو هدرتنا لعربية و لا أي لغة

“Look, we have learned Arabic because it is necessary for schooling and in our everyday life to communicate with others. We do not have any issue with speaking Arabic, but we are Amazigh, and this does not mean that we change just because we speak Arabic.”

9. Boubakar: ما كانش مشكلة أنو نهديو للعربية و الفصحى هذي لغة القرآن تعنا و حنانا نفتاخرها بها لكن بيقى أصلنا و دمننا أمازيغي

“There is no issue with talking Algerian Arabic or Standard Arabic because this is the language of our Qur'an, and we are proud of it, but our origin and blood remain Amazigh.”

5.1.4. Islamic Religion

Similarly, all the participants expressed their pride and gratitude for being Muslims, an aspect which is also shared with Arab Algerians whose primary religion is Islam. The participants used the pronoun ‘our’ when talking about the Islamic religion. Thus, they foregrounded their religious affiliation at this point and considered themselves inseparable from Arabs regarding religious affiliations. In this regard, one of the male participants said:

10. هو دين تاعنا لإسلام و حمد الله اللي ربي كتب لنا نكونو مسلمين

“Our religion, we and Arabs, is Islam, and we thank God that he created us Muslims.” Likewise, another one said:

11. لإسلام هو جزء من هويتنا الأمازيغية الشاوية و حمد الله

“Islam is part of our Chaouia Amazigh identity, and thanks be to Allah for that”.

The examples above indicate that the Islamic religion is a unifying aspect between Amazigh and Arabs, and the participants associate their Amazigh identity with Islam, considering it inseparable from their identity. Nevertheless, they still refer to Arabs as ‘others,’ stating that being an Arab by origin is not a necessary condition for being Muslim

12. شرط نكون عربية باش نكون مسلمة باسكو كايين عربيهود و عرب مسيحيين وكايين ماليزيين وأتراك مسلمين. ماشي

“It is not necessary to be an Arab to be considered Muslim as there are Arab Jews and Christians. Besides, there are Malaysian Muslims and Turkish Muslims, as one participant stated”.

Similarly, another participant said that:

13. ماشي شرط تكون عربي ولا تهدي للعربية باش تكون مسلم

“It is not necessary to be an Arab or to speak Arabic to be considered Muslim.”

He further argued that Islamic religion is revealed for all human beings and is not restricted to a particular ethnic group as stated in the following Qur'anic verse:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاختلاف اللّسنتكم واللّوانكم إنّ في ذلك لآياتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.”

(Surah Ar-Rum, 30:22, Sahih International)

Therefore, it can be concluded that identity is neither constrained nor fixed. Instead, identity can be seen as a blending of affiliations or sub-identities. Amazigh participants believe that they remain Amazigh. However, they explicitly expressed

their very positive attitude toward sharing common aspects with Arabs, including the Arabic language and affiliation with the Islamic religion.

5.1.5. Arabic Names

Amazigh participants reported giving their children Arabic names like Ahmed, Zineb, Younes, and others. This tendency is influenced by their Islamic religion, which includes these names. These names are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and are shared by both Arabs and Amazigh. However, Amazigh participants explicitly emphasized their Amazigh identity, even though they live in the same community and share the Islamic religion, Arabic language, and Arabic names. In interviews, the participants used the first-person plural pronoun 'we' to refer to themselves as one Amazigh collective group (i.e., all Amazigh groups). Still, they used the third-person plural pronoun 'they' or the term 'Arabs' to refer to the other group, as indicated in these examples:

14. حَتَّايَا نَسْمِيُو أَسْمَاءَ إِسْلَامِيَّةَ.

“We give Islamic names.”

The following are some of the participants' responses:

15. Belhadj: حَتَّايَا نَسْمِيُو أَسْمَاءَ إِسْلَامِيَّةَ. هَادَا جَا مِنْ دِينِنَا الْإِسْلَامِي وَنَشَارِكُوهُ مَعَ الْعَرَبِ، فَهَازِي تَسْمِيَاتِ مَا كَانَتْ مَشْكَلَةَ

“We

give Islamic names because they come from our religion, and we share them with Arabs; there is no problem.”

Having lived adjacent to the Islamic Algerian community for an extended period, Amazigh have embraced the Islamic religion. Consequently, the Islamic religion has influenced Amazigh identity. Amazigh people found it necessary to acquire the Arabic language to understand the Islamic teachings revealed in the Holy Qur'an. Thus, the choice of Arabic is determined by the domain language it is used in and the particular purposes it is used for (e.g., giving Arabic names to their children).

5.1.6. Criticizing the Colonizer

This theme positions all Amazigh groups as one ingroup against the French colonizer, the outgroup, to emphasize their 'ingroup' collective identity. Chaouia, Bni Mzab, Shlouh, Kabyle, and Touareg participants consider themselves as one collaborative group by referring to themselves as Algerians versus the French colonizer. They believe that the French colonizer's policy was against ethnic diversity in Algeria (i.e., Amazigh, Arabs, etc.). Accordingly, Algerian Amazigh participants explicitly criticized the French by using negative terms like 'colonizer' and condemned their harmful practices. The participants emphasized that the French colonizer was responsible for spreading wrong beliefs and negative perceptions among Algerians about each other and their language. The following are some of the participants' extracts:

16. Lila : فَرَنْسَا فِي وَقْتِ الْإِسْتِعْمَارِ هِيَ خَلَقَتْ هَازِ الْمَشْكَلَةَ تَاغِ الْجِهَاتِيَّةِ وَبَلِي لَازِمُ كَامَلِ نَهْضُرُو لُغَةَ وَحْدَةٍ :

“During French colonialism, France raised the issue of ethnic diversity and insisted that everyone must speak one language.”

17. Amer: الْإِسْتِعْمَارُ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مَشْكَلَةَ بَيْنِ النَّاسِ حَتَّى وَ لَا وَ يَحْرُمُوهُمْ بِهَدْرٍ لُغَتِهِمْ :

“The French colonizer raised this problem so that Amazigh feel a kind of shame when they use their language.”

Opposition and hostility toward the French colonizer have also fostered cohesion among Amazigh ingroup members and between Amazigh and Arabs as an outgroup against a third party, the French colonizer. The Amazigh participants aligned themselves with Arabs and identified as 'Algerians' to oppose the French colonizer. Their unity arises from their shared history, memories, Islamic beliefs, and similar negative attitudes toward the French colonizer. In this regard, one of the Amazigh participants said:

نحن و العرب شعب واحد نعيش مع بعضنا البعض منذ زمن طويل و نعتنق ديننا واحدا و لنا تاريخ مشترك و نحن 18.
متحدون ضد المستعمر الفرنسي

“We and Arabs are one unified people living together in Algeria for a long time, embracing the same religion, having a common history, and uniting against the French colonizer.”

Thus, disagreement between Amazigh and Arabs may not necessarily lead to conflicts and breakdowns. Instead, it can be a way to strengthen their bond against the French colonizer by relying on the preexisting shared connections among them.

The thematic analysis of the interviews has shown that Algerian Amazigh have a multilayered identity. Each layer reflects common interests, attitudes, and beliefs that set it apart from other layers. For example, participants from the Kabyle and Bni Mزاب groups compared themselves to each other by highlighting each group's positive attributes relative to others' negative traits. Similarly, when Amazigh participants compare themselves to Arabs, they view themselves as one collective ethnic ingroup in contrast to Arabs, whom they see as arriving later. Consequently, they consider Arabs to be an outgroup. Emphasizing one group's positive attributes while disapproving of the qualities of the other can help enhance rapport and group cohesion among Amazigh groups.

Relating the analysis of Algerian Amazigh participants' responses to the social, cultural, and national perceptions underlying identity can provide insight into Amazigh attitudes and perceptions about their identity construction and understanding. As a social group, all Amazigh responses indicate that they function as a unified, cohesive group with their socio-cultural beliefs. They also emphasize their national identity based on shared aspects with Arabs, such as history, religious beliefs, the Arabic language, and negative attitudes toward the French colonizer. These shared elements make their national identity stand out against the 'other' (i.e., the French colonizer). Thus, the analyzed responses reveal that Amazigh identity consists of three sets of paradoxical but complementary layers. Each Amazigh group maintains specific attributes and ingroup boundaries that distinguish them from other Amazigh groups. Likewise, Amazigh groups retain unifying characteristics that set them apart from Arabs, the outgroup. Additionally, the national identity of both Amazigh and Arabs is highlighted to foster a sense of shared belonging and unity against the French colonizer, despite sociocultural differences between Arabs and Amazigh.

It can also be concluded that the concept of 'otherness' is central to sociocultural and national identities and is the cornerstone of this study. Each Algerian Amazigh group contrasts itself with other Amazigh groups to reflect and express ingroup favoritism. On the other hand, all the groups emphasized their Amazigh identity, highlighting their positive qualities and attitudes, while explicitly and implicitly referring to the negative attitudes of other groups. By emphasizing their distinctiveness, the Amazigh participants referred to Arab Algerians as an 'outgroup' compared to themselves. Likewise, Algerian Amazigh participants explicitly criticized the French colonizer. They aligned themselves with Arab Algerians to act as one community with a shared history, common beliefs, and perceptions about the French colonizer to reflect their Algerian national identity. In this context, Van Dijk (1984, pp. 13-14) suggests that 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' dynamics result from conflicted relations where individuals of one group tend to "overgeneralize" their positive attitudes and similar interests while selecting negative attributes of the other group, often based on faulty reasoning, to protect the interests of their ingroup.

1. 5.2. Arab Algerians' Perceptions of Algerian Amazigh

In this section, the researcher examines Arab Algerians' attitudes towards Algerian Amazigh culture and language, including their relationships with Amazigh individuals, such as friendships and neighborhood interactions. The researcher also explores how Arabs view sharing festivals, events, and traditions with Amazigh people. Additionally, the researcher considers Arab reactions to Amazigh music, intermarriage, and their appreciation of the Amazigh language.

Table 1. Arab Algerians' Perceptions of Algerian Amazigh

Questions	Yes	No	Good	Not interested	Somehow	Bad	No answer	Total
1-Do you have Amazigh friends or neighbors?	66	34						100
2-How is your relationship with them?			61		5		34	100
3-Do you mind having Amazigh friends or neighbors?		92		8				100
4- Do you like to share	62			38				100

Questions	Yes	No	Good	Not interested	Somehow	Bad	No answer	Total
Amazigh's festivals ,events and traditions?								
5-Do you listen to Amazigh music?	65	25		10				100
6-Do you welcome mixed marriages between Amazigh and non- Amazigh?	88	4		8				100
7- Do you welcome learning the Amazigh language as a compulsory language?	48	52						100
8-Do you welcome using the Amazigh language alongside Arabic in schools, television, radio, and governmental installations?	47	27		26				100
9- Do you consider Amazigh culture and identity influential in Algerian society?	80	17					3	100

Table 1 indicates that Arab participants provided positive responses regarding friendships and neighborhood relationships with Amazigh people, as well as sharing festivals, events, and traditions with them. It also shows that Arabs have favorable reactions toward Amazigh music and intermarriage between Arabs and Amazigh. Additionally, the table reveals Arabs' appreciation of the Amazigh language.

Regarding friendships and neighborhood interactions with Amazigh and sharing their festivals, events, and traditions, Table 1 indicates that 66% of Arab respondents have Amazigh friends and neighbors, and 62% maintain a good relationship with Amazigh individuals. The vast majority of Arabs (92%) do not mind having Amazigh friends or neighbors, with 62% expressing enjoyment in sharing feasts, festivals, and traditions with them and listening to their music. The remaining 38% of Arab Algerians who are not interested in celebrating Amazigh feasts and festivals clarified that this does not reflect any negative attitude toward Amazigh celebrations but rather a general disinterest in commemorating such events. This also applies to the 35% of respondents who stated they are not interested in listening to music in general. In response to questions about intermarriage, 88% of Arab Algerians reported that they support intermarriage with Amazigh. An Arab male teacher commented, "Ethnicity or race is not a condition for marriage, but religion is." Similarly, a female graduate student stated, "It is not an issue for Arabs at all to have mixed marriages with Amazigh since they are Muslims like us." When asked about the importance of Amazigh culture in Algerian society, 80% of Arab participants agreed that Amazigh culture is vital to Algerian society. They noted that the Amazigh community is essential to Algerian national identity due to its significant contributions to the country's development over the decades.

On the other hand, many Arab respondents (52%) indicated they do not support making Amazigh a compulsory language. Some justified their opinion by suggesting that Amazigh could be taught optionally rather than obligatorily. However, 60% are in favor of using Amazigh and Arabic in schools, on television, and in government institutions. One Arab participant remarked, "There are many Amazigh people in the country; thus, it is their right to have their language alongside Arabic in schools, on TV, etc. "

6. Conclusion

A thorough examination of the results from the interviews with Algerian Amazigh and the

questionnaires

addressed to Algerian Arabs shows that Amazigh identity is constructed through interactions with other groups. Rather than viewing this interaction in terms of polarization (i.e., emphasizing one's group's positive traits versus the 'out-group's' negative ones), it is more accurate to understand Amazigh identity as multilayered. Each layer reflects shared attitudes and beliefs that are not static but are negotiated over time. Amazigh group identity can be visualized as concentric circles, with the core representing the central Amazigh identity and outer circles representing interactions with other Amazigh groups' identities. This forms a cohesive group with similar interests.

This conclusion supports Habbouche's (2013) findings that Kabyle participants have a positive attitude towards their mother tongue and demonstrate a strong loyalty to their Amazigh ethnic group. Similarly, Nilsson (2018) found that Kabyle participants view language, religion, and Amazigh nationalism as unifying features. However, urban and rural participants may view themselves as an ingroup and outgroup respectively, or vice versa.

Based on preexisting socio-cultural bonds, Amazigh groups, while appearing unified, interact with the broader Arab community to form a national identity. This interaction then extends to other communities, such as the French colonizers, at a more peripheral level. The identity of a particular Amazigh group reflects a kind of fluidity, where each group is centered around its core attitudes and norms, while gradually losing some of its specific features and changing attitudes as it engages with the wider community. Conversely, the closer one is to the core circles, the stronger the influence of the Amazigh group's local features.

At the outer edge of these concentric circles, Amazigh groups may have varied relationships, either negative due to conflicts or positive due to shared concerns. The common concerns between Amazigh and Arabs likely contribute to group cohesion and create a relational identity that binds them together against a third group, the French colonizers, who face significant derogation and criticism. This perspective aligns with Eckert's (2002) view that individuals may have multiple identities functioning simultaneously for specific reasons (Bucholtz 2011), though not all identities are equally prominent at any given time (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002).

Since identity is a "two-way construction," involving both self-perception and how one is perceived by others (Paltridge 2012), the primary purpose of the questionnaire was to determine how Amazigh identity is recognized by others (i.e., Arabs). The findings reveal that Arab Algerian participants generally have positive perceptions of Algerian Amazigh, while Amazigh participants sometimes hold biased and derogatory views about Arabs. These biased perceptions among the Amazigh appear to be influenced by political and social factors related to Arab nationalism, which, according to their responses, has exacerbated the Amazigh crisis. It seems that Amazigh views may be skewed due to faulty reasoning, where negative traits are selected and used against the out-group to protect the interests of the ingroup (Van Dijk 1984). This reasoning is flawed because it was French colonial policy, not Arabs, that promoted the Arabic language in Algeria and denied the distinctiveness of Amazigh (Tilmatine 2016). The French colonizers regarded all Algerians as Arabs in an effort to dismiss Amazigh linguistic and cultural demands.

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