

Voices of Iggi n Issnayn: Gender, and Narrative Memory in a Moroccan Mellah

Brahim Akaya^{1*} 

AFFILIATIONS

¹Culture, Langue, Arts et Société (CLAS)
Laboratoire, Faculty of Languages, Arts, and
Humanities, Ait Melloul, Ibn Zohr
University, Agadir, Morocco.

CORRESPONDENCE

Email: brahim.akaya@edu.uiz.ac.ma*

EDITORIAL DATES

Received: 04 April 2026

Revised: 30 June 2026

Accepted: 01 July 2026

Published: 21 July 2026

Copyright:

© The Author(s) 2026.

Published by [ERRCD Forum](#).

This is an open access article distributed
under Creative Commons Attribution (CC
BY 4.0) licence.



DOI: 10.38140/ijrcs-2026.vol8.1.06

Abstract: Females have historically played a vital role in preserving and maintaining a rich reservoir that nourishes cultural memory. In this paper, I employ narrative research to gather data from participants in the villages of Ighalen and Mastour, which are adjacent to the only Mellah of the Ait Inzal subfraction of the Mesfiouia tribe in the Northern High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. My objective is to demonstrate that, in the absence or scarcity of individuals who have had close contact with the Jews of the Mesfiouia tribe in the El Haouz region, elderly rural females from these two villages continue to retain intimate memories, customs, and oral traditions that reflect the Jewish influence on Amazigh culture in the area. Utilising thematic analysis, I collected and statistically analysed narratives from the elders residing in the Ighalen and Mastour villages who interacted with the Jews who once lived in their community (10 males, 5 females). The findings reveal that females from these rural villages employ reported speech in 35.19% of narratives compared to 9.63% for males. An examination of the data indicates that the status of the Jews in these two villages is influenced by the gender of the indi-

vidual recalling them. Males tend to speak on behalf of the Jews, whereas females provide them with a voice. I contend that, despite their marginalised status in rural Morocco, females from Northern High Atlas Mountain villages remain reliable carriers of memory, steadfast guardians of memory, and abundant reservoirs of memory.

Keywords: Cultural memory, reported speech, Mellah, Gendered memories, Morocco.

1. Introduction

One of the narratives circulating in Amazigh culture, particularly in villages that had close contact with Jews, recounts the story of a Jewess who wished to join an Aḥwaš ceremony held by some villagers in celebration of a special occasion. Although this may seem like a simple request, it is rarely granted to a member of the group, let alone to someone who is religiously different from the Aḥwaš community. Such a request must be earned by demonstrating on-the-spot improvisation skills and a proficient mastery of rhythm and rhyme. The Jewess's request was met with the following line from a Muslim Amazigh:

Yat tadla t-jdr ġ unnrar, t-walaṭṭrf

one bundle of wheat is sitting burning in the threshing floor.

Rbbi, ġwr kwlu qidn-t, tilli-t iwalan

Thanks to God that it (she) did not burn the ones next to it (her)

The Jewess retorted with the following lines:

Yan ad gan middn, gar tasa at-tn yaṭṭun

People are the same, only the evil heart splits them away

Yan ad gan iduḍan ġ ufus afasi

The fingers in the right hand are equally the same

Ddin ibḍa-t ilahi, lfrh nra at-t n-šrk

God has made different religions; we want to share happy occasions

How to cite this article:

Akaya, B. (2026). Voices of Iggi n Issnayn: Gender, and narrative memory in a Moroccan Mellah. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies*, 8(1), a06. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijrcs-2026.vol8.1.06>

The sources of our knowledge regarding the Jewish presence in Morocco can be categorised into two types. The narratives and tales circulating, such as the lines above, and those circulating in the media, represent two different sources. The first source resulted from interactions between the Imazighen and their erstwhile Jewish neighbours. The second source stems from a long-standing conflict between Arabs/Palestinians and Zionists/Israelis.

In September 2020, I participated in a conference on memory and identity in North Africa. I had the opportunity to engage meaningfully with Moroccan anthropologist Aomar Boum. During lunch breaks, we often discussed the limited knowledge regarding the history of rural Moroccan Jews and the predominance of research that focuses on the urban environments of Moroccan Jews. I was inspired by his efforts and aimed to preserve as many testimonies as possible from individuals who had personal encounters with the Jews who once resided in their village or tribe before age and death rendered them silent.

Mnemosyne is the Greek figure for memory (Ricœur et al., 2010, p. 9) and is known as the mother of the nine muses (Kattago, 2015, p. 1). According to Hesiod's account in his *Theogony*, Mnemosyne lost her nine daughters to their father, Zeus, shortly after their birth (Jocelyn S. Martin, 2022, p. 2). Lethe, on the other hand, is the river of oblivion and forgetfulness. This account symbolically excludes females as active agents from a male-dominated field of cultural memory and historiography, leaving them to their own unacknowledged memories. However, the myth conceals certain facts: while Lethe, the river of oblivion, is referred to in a masculine form, the goddess Mnemosyne is feminine. This suggests that females are reliable carriers of memory, steadfast guardians of memory, and abundant reservoirs of memory. This notion is not necessarily linked to genetics, but is rather the natural outcome of a lifelong process of caring for and nurturing others in an unequal society.

Recent literature on gender and memory shows that the Greeks had good reasons to portray Mnemosyne as female. Moroccan culture is replete with sayings that stress the strong memory of females. "*dir ha flhya o nsaha. dir ha fl mera o terjja- ha*" (harm a snake and forget it; harm a female and wait for the response sooner or later) is an illustrative example. In Amazigh culture, there is no better illustration of the role of female memory than the existence and continued use of the *Tifinagh*/ⵜⴰⴳⴷⵓⴷⴰⵢⵜ alphabet. Nowadays, there is a consensus among linguists, anthropologists, and even archaeologists that *Tifinagh*/ⵜⴰⴳⴷⵓⴷⴰⵢⵜ is one of the oldest writing systems (Ilahiane, 2006). Paradoxically, the *Tifinagh* alphabetical system has not been used for a long time, yet it was maintained and preserved until its recent revival by state institutions such as L'institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe (IRCAM) in Morocco. Linguistic theory contends that when an alphabetic system ceases to be used for an extended period, its language dies. The lingering question is how and why *Tifinagh* was not eroded or lost like other old writing systems. The answer lies in the memory of Tuareg females (Ilahiane, 2006, p. 181). It is argued that Tuareg females were able to retain the *Tifinagh*/ⵜⴰⴳⴷⵓⴷⴰⵢⵜ alphabet because they associate it with weaving. The ability to weave patterns (*Tifinagh*/ⵜⴰⴳⴷⵓⴷⴰⵢⵜ) from memory into carpets not only helped preserve *Tifinagh*/ⵜⴰⴳⴷⵓⴷⴰⵢⵜ but also contributed to the preservation of Amazigh language and culture in general.

Cultural memory is a medium that grounds and anchors identity for those who share a common culture (Assmann, 2011; Erll, 2011). According to Jan Assmann, "The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilise and convey that society's self-image" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 132). In the introduction to the *Signs* special issue on Gender and Cultural Memory, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith (2002) extensively reviewed the barrage of feminist literature that calls for a "redefining of culture from the perspective of females through the retrieval and inclusion of female work, stories, and artefacts" (Hirsch & Smith, 2002, p. 3). Common to these reviewed works is the question of gender and cultural memory, especially when tackling issues of sexual abuse, trauma,

and how these are transmitted within the family and society. Recovered memory divided feminists into those who relied on autobiography and those who relied on oral history as they struggled to define and redefine how gender is manifested in these genres and how gender differences are reflected in personal as well as cultural memory (Hirsch & Smith, 2002, p. 3).

In *How Societies Remember*, Connerton (1989) defines cultural memory as a transferring act through which a group constructs an identity by recalling shared norms, conventions, and practices (Connerton, 1989, p. 39). A complex dynamic is at work when a collective identity is being constructed in this way. There is tension between the past and present, between remembering and forgetting—individually or collectively—between what happened and what we think could have happened (history/myth), and between the powerful and the powerless. Dijk's mediated memory contends that mediation is what sustains cultural memory (Dijk, 2007, p. 16). The mediation of memory has certain implications; it implies that cultural memory is the fragmented articulation of personal as well as collective experiences given vent through the technologies and media that carry it. Cultural memory, then, is an act of representing and interpreting the desires of the present within specific contexts and temporal frames. Memory is selective by nature. What is manifested at the cultural level represents the desires and decisions of those in power.

Feminist theory can provide a new lens through which cultural memory can be studied. Identity is marked by many variables, such as race, gender, and class. When power relations are invoked, gender is concomitantly invoked as well. Given that cultural memory is a site of tension where these power relations are manifested, what is selected to be remembered or forgotten is tied to power and hegemony, and by consequence, to gender (Budgeon, 2014; Schippers, 2007).

Cultural memory is a site where worldviews are invoked or reinvented, and where unequal power relations are legitimised (Lears, 1988). There is no doubt that females are active agents in the preservation of a group's memory and identity (González Mandri, 2006). However, in a world of inequalities, their role has been considered secondary, both at the national memory level and the historical level.

In this paper, I explore the ways in which males and females from the villages of *Mastour* and *Ighalen*, both belonging to the *Ait Inzal* sub-fraction of the *Mesfiouia* tribe in the Al Haouz Province, Morocco, remember the Jews who used to live in *Iggi n Issnayn* Mellah, using the tools developed within the feminist framework. I will investigate the use of direct and indirect speech as a vibrant gender aspect that characterises males' and females' reminiscences. According to some researchers, this linguistic aspect is associated with gender (Ely & Ryan, 2008). The broad question that guides this study is: how does gender shape the memory of the Jews in this area? Can this question be further bisected into the following sub-questions: Are there gender differences in the frequency of reported speech in narratives about Jews? What narrative strategies do males and females use to represent Jewish voices? What do these differences suggest about gendered social spaces in rural Morocco?

In a very rigorous work, Brahim El Guabli (2023) labelled the events that shape the collective memory of Moroccans, which are not acknowledged in public discourse, as "other-archives." Other archives include: "texts, artefacts, alphabets, embodied experiences, toponymies, and inherited memories where stories of the excluded, the silenced, and the forgotten live in a ghostly state, ready to articulate loss even as they are situated outside the margins of what is considered canonical" (El Guabli, 2023, p. 1).

El Guabli (2023) argues that marginalised communities in Morocco, including the Amazigh, Moroccan Jews, and political prisoners, have developed alternative repositories of memory to counter the dominant narratives often perpetuated by state-controlled archives. El Guabli's *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence* examines survival testimonies alongside

the testimonial literary works that discuss the *Tazmamart* gulag. He also questions cultural symbols and oral histories to give voice to a silent past that has, until recently, been backgrounded.

In contrast to the official archives, "other-archives" begin with absence, rather than presence, as loss and absence are integral to these "other-archives." *Tifnagh*, the Amazigh alphabets, and the cultural Amazigh flag are viewed by El Guabli as sites of memory and resilience in Morocco. The obliterated memory becomes visible after many years of denial by the official narratives. El Guabli refers to novels that address this obliterated memory as "mnemonic literature." Mnemonic literature focuses on situations where absence and silence prevail, unlike historical fiction, which addresses "affirmed memories" (El Guabli, 2023, p. 63).



Figure 1: Motifs Berber (Rachid Sadeg, 1991: Boufark Edition)

The role of females at the national memory level and the role of gender in cultural memory are scant not only in Morocco but also in many other places across the world (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2008). The nation-building of the 19th century shaped the national memory for many countries, and cultural memory was a significant part of it. National memory was centred around monuments, commemorations, and celebrations that shaped the national consciousness. After independence, Morocco rebuilt itself as a nation, following the same model used in the 19th century (Karrouche, 2017). Although females were considered an integral part of the nation and fought on equal terms with males to gain independence, they were not placed on equal footing with males when the national memory of the country was being established (Sadiqi, 2024). The national memory was male-centred, and females as agents were excluded and marginalised in that process in Morocco. The national movement is portrayed in Morocco as a group consisting solely of males, with the enemy depicted as weak and effeminate (Menin & Zentrum, 2014). In schools, when official history is taught or national holidays are commemorated, a male-dominated framework is presented. Osire Glacier (2013) argues that females' political power and agency in Morocco are relegated to mere historical footnotes, highlighting an intentional erasure of the political role and agency of historical Moroccan females. The role and agency of females in rural Morocco, who carried arms, risked their lives by hiding national movement militants in their homes, and provided and collected intelligence (as seen

in the cases of Fatima Roudania and Rqia Bent Moh Afrania), have been downplayed by male narratives that have largely shaped that era of Moroccan history (Karrouche, 2017). Male militants were rewarded in post-independence Morocco with veteran pensions for their deeds and were granted seats in the Houses of Old Veterans and Militants of Independence, while females were largely excluded or minimally represented.

The exclusion of females from the national memory is most evident in the sites of memory that the state created. Sites of memory are attributed to Pierre Nora, who was interested in anchoring the French national identity (Nora, 1989). Sites of memory in Morocco run the risk of anchoring a national identity and memory that is exclusively male. This is exemplified by the tension between different agents in the political sphere in Morocco when naming and renaming many streets in various cities; an initiative was taken by the MALI movement in Rabat to feminise Moroccan streets in response to this.



Figure 2: A female Moroccan militant replacing a street with a male's name with a female one

2. Methodology

One way to study memories of Jews in places that lack official archives is by collecting oral histories, testimonies, and accounts from people who are old enough either to remember Jews living in their tribe or to have secondhand memories from reliable sources who do. This paper draws on interviews I conducted with rural villagers in the *Ait Inzal*, a subfraction of the *Mesfiouia* tribe in the Al Haouz province of Morocco, as part of my doctoral thesis. Since 2021, my first year as a PhD student, I have engaged in fieldwork collecting narratives, tales, and folklore about Jews from rural areas in markets and villages I visit or from older people I meet. I always seize the opportunity to start conversations with any man or woman who looks old enough to remember Jews or have second-hand memories of them.

The interviews I conducted were not limited to any specific themes or structure, and no instructions were set. The interviewees engaged in acts of spontaneous remembering and spoke freely, with no interruptions from my side. Many of the people I spoke to were in their eighties or older, and they had extensive memories of when the Jews began to leave Morocco. Most of the interviewees live in villages adjacent to Mellahs. They were willing to share stories about the Jews who used to live in

the Mellah of *Iggi n Issnayn*. I benefited from the fact that they were more inclined to share their stories with me, an outsider from the village, than with a next-door neighbour. I acknowledge that my interviews could have been influenced by my gender or by the fact that I culturally belong to the same group (Amazigh culture) and share the same language as the participants (*Tashlheet*).

The presence of a Mellah was the parameter that guided my choice of research sites. The name *Mellah* here does not refer to an enclosed space, as in urban areas. The term is found only in legal documents and is used by religious males to denote a place where Jews live, similar to urban settings. The locals refer to the area as *Iggi n Issnayyn*. In my effort to understand how female memories differ from those of males, I looked for women who had close contact with Jews or second-hand memories of their presence in their village. The choice of this research site was dictated by the presence of a Jewish neighbourhood (the Mellah) and its proximity to the research site.

Ighalen and *Mastour* Villages are located at the top of the Northern High Atlas Mountains in Morocco. Both belong to the *Ait Inzal* subfraction of the *Mesfiouia* tribe. *Mastour* village is more populated than *Ighalen*. Most of the inhabitants of *Ighalen* village were *Mastourians* who, due to drought, moved down to an area called *Iggi n Issnayn* (the Mellah of *Iggi n Issnayn*) when the Jews who inhabited it left the area.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the study

	Male Participants	Female Participants	Overall Cohort
Sample Size (N)	10	5	15
Total Target Population (N)	—	—	20 (75% total population coverage)
Age Span	70s–90s	70s–90s	85–90 years old
Verification method of the age	It is estimated in most cases due to lack of birth certificates	It is estimated in most cases due to lack of birth certificates	cross-referencing the age with historical events such as Jewish departure from Morocco
Inclusion Criteria	Being able to recall the Jewish departure from the <i>Mellah of Iggi n Issnayn</i> Being an inhabitant of the village	Being able to recall the Jewish departure from the <i>Mellah of Iggi n Issnayn</i> Being an inhabitant of the village	100% compliance
Total Narratives	436	216	652
Average Narratives per Participant	43.5	43.2	43.46

Villages, like the whole tribe of *Mesfiouia*, rely on both agriculture and livestock as their primary economic sources. The *Mesfiouia* tribe's economy is shaped by its geography and its mountains, particularly Mount Dern (*Adrar n Dern*), since ancient times. The early inhabitants lived in agrarian societies, relying on agriculture and herding (Paul Pascon, 1983, p. 316). This is why the presence of the Jews was of paramount importance to the tribe, as they supplied the market on Wednesdays in *Tighdouine* with necessary goods, and Jewish peddlers also travelled across these agrarian villages selling their wares

For my research, I used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves selecting the most relevant cases for a study to obtain more reliable, credible, and representative data (Leavy, 2017). My participants were selected using a snowball sampling method. Homogeneous sampling was employed because I am seeking individuals who had close contact with Jews or lived in areas that

previously hosted Jewish inhabitants. The sample for this study was 15 participants. 10 males and 5 females, all in their seventies or eighties, with some not having an exact age due to the absence of a birth certificate. The parameter for characterising a participant as being fit for the study is their ability to recall the Jewish departure from the Mellah of *Iggi n Issnayn* (see Table 1 above). I admit that the sample (N=15) may be criticised for being small in traditional quantitative and sociological studies. Nevertheless, the sample for this study is homogeneous and is rare due to age criteria. In localized studies such as this, the small sample serves as a micro-cohort. In our case, there were only 20 older participants who could be classified within the age cohort of 75-90. Out of this sample, 15 individuals met our inclusion criteria. Hence, our sample, though small in number, represents 75% of the entire surviving older population.

2.1 Theoretical units of analysis

One way to understand and convey the world we live in is through narratives. Our senses and our worldview of who we are and where we came from are shaped by them. The cultural differences between groups can be attributed to the varying styles of narratives they hold. Labov's (1967) definition of narratives is invoked and adopted in this study (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Labov defines the characteristics of a narrative as a structure that contains two clauses, ordered temporally, and describes an event (Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 21). The Labovian definition of a narrative serves as a linguistic device that distinguishes narrative discourse from non-narrative discourse. In our case, a story is counted as a narrative unit if it is a topical and chronologically bound episodic story. The transcribed interviews were segmented into narrative units if they focused on one core event or theme, such as an anecdote or a humorous story featuring a single Jewish character, and if they involved Labov's components of a narrative (setting the scene, the event, and the return to the present).

2.2 Data analysis and coding

Data were analysed using MAXQDA 2020 software and SPSS software for the Chi-square test. The coding of the interview transcripts was carried out in three stages following a thematic analysis approach. Initially, I coded each transcript using descriptive codes to identify visible themes and topics. According to Saldaña (2016), initial coding "creates a starting point to provide the researcher with the analytic leads for further exploration... All proposed codes during this cycle are tentative and provisional" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 55). Next, the initially defined descriptive codes were reconsidered, and the emerging themes were regrouped under subcodes. Finally, the revised initial codes were refined and retrieved using the segment retrieval option of the software. The result was a coding of the retrieved codes under one broad parent node. Consistency in code application was ensured through the iterative re-examination of the transcripts, which ultimately led to theoretical saturation regarding the emerging themes.

2.3 Statistical analysis and findings

In this study, we wish to determine whether the use of reporting verbs in the identified narratives correlates with the narrator's gender. To this end, the following variables are considered: the independent variable is gender (male and female), while the dependent variable is the occurrence of reporting verbs in the narratives.

The null hypothesis (H0) of this study posits that there is no correlation between gender and the use of direct/reported speech in the narratives of both males and females. The alternative hypothesis (H1), however, states that there exists a significant difference between gender and the use of direct/reported speech in the collected narratives, with females resorting to it more than males.

Following Labov and Waletzky's (1967) definition of a narrative, females produced 216 narratives and males produced 436, with an average of 43.2 narratives per female and 43.5 narratives per male.

To test the use of reporting verbs by gender, raw frequencies were used to determine the extent to which they are linked to females more than males. In all the females' narratives, there were 76 instances of direct speech, accounting for 35.19% of the female narratives. In the males' narratives, 42 instances of reported speech were observed, which constitutes 9.63% of the males' narratives. Table 2 provides a clear representation of the key statistics related to the use of reporting verbs by gender in the male and female narratives.

Table 2: Statistical representation of males' and females' narratives

	Female Narratives	Males Narratives
Total Narratives (<i>n</i>)	216	436
Narratives with reporting verbs	76	42
Narratives without reporting verbs	140	394
Percentages (%)	35.19%	9.63%

At this stage, a quantitative analysis was performed on the narrative corpus to examine how the use of reported speech correlates with gender using SPSS software. A Pearson's Chi-Square (χ^2) test, along with Yates' continuity correction, was used to evaluate whether the observable differences between male and female narrators in terms of the use of reported speech are statistically significant. The corpus of this study consists of 652 narratives: 216 female narratives and 436 male narratives. 76 narratives contained instances of direct speech among females, accounting for 35.19% of the female corpus. In contrast, 42 instances of reported speech were observed in the male narratives, representing 9.63% of the male corpus. A cross-tabulation was performed on the gender of the narrator, and the binary presence (YES) or absence (NO) of reporting verbs was applied to each independent narrative. The frequency of narratives lacking reporting verbs was mathematically derived by subtracting the active instances from the total narrative baseline per gender. See below table 3.

Table 3: Contingency table of observed and expected frequencies by gender

		Reporting_Verbs : Yes	Reporting_Verbs : No	Total
1.00 (Female)	<i>Count</i>	76	140	216
	<i>Expected Count</i>	39.1	176.9	216.0
2.00 (Male)	<i>Count</i>	42	394	436
	<i>Expected Count</i>	78.9	357.1	436.0
Total	<i>Count</i>	118	534	652
	<i>Expected Count</i>	118.0	534.0	652.0

A chi-square test was performed to assess whether the use of reported speech is statistically significant in the collected narratives. χ^2 (1, $N = 652$) = 61.91, $p < 0.001$ (with an exact mathematical p -value of 3.59×10^{-15}) suggests that there is a highly noticeable correlation between the narrator's gender and their use of quoted speech. As the p -value falls below the standard significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative. Empirically, the findings suggest that female narratives contained more instances of reported speech (35.19%) compared to male narratives (9.63%).

2.3 Memory and gender: Reported speech as an aspect

Reported speech is, by nature, a discussion about past speech. Genette (1988) identified several ways in which reported speech can be characterised. One of the famous approaches is to classify reported speech into a direct one, an indirect one, and a narratized one (Banfield, 1973, p. 4). Direct speech presents an utterance in its original form and, in written texts, it is always enclosed in quotation marks. "Direct quotation" is commonly understood to apply when another's utterance is framed as dialogue in the other's voice (e.g., Sam said, "I will come") (Tannen, 2007, p. 102). Indirect speech

allows for the reporting of what someone said without using their exact words. It is marked by infinitival or nominal clauses and is accompanied by some changes to the original utterance. "Indirect quotation" (or "indirect discourse" or "indirect speech") is commonly understood to apply when another's speech is paraphrased in the current speaker's voice (e.g., "Sam said he would come") (Tannen, 2007, p. 102). Genette (1988) describes narratized speech as a speech event in the form of a summary. This kind of speech, though it may contain additional information such as topic, place, address, or location, conceals the sense and feelings of the original speaker.

Empirical evidence shows that reported speech does not necessarily represent a pure recollection of a past speech (Sachs, 1967; Tannen, 2007). Tannen (2007) argues that memory of the surface structure is often poor and is of little relevance, especially in long conversations and discourse, although the semantic gist and content are important (Tannen, 2007, pp. 112-114). Clark & Gerrig (1990) attribute an important role to quotations, asserting that they selectively depict what someone did or said (Clark & Gerrig, 1990, p. 2).

It should be noted that Tannen's (1988) concept of reported speech as "constructed dialogue" has been criticised by others as a form of "ventriloquism," because reported speech is an active and selective mechanism rather than merely a transparent or neutral mechanism of historical accuracy (Bakhtin et al., 2011). The use of direct quotations can be considered a gendered narrative strategy that reflects the nature of interactions that may have occurred between female Muslims and Jewish individuals, as well as between female Muslims and Jewish peddlers. It also reflects the differences in the experiences that males and females have had with Jews and the types of memories each retains.

Reported speech has been central to both linguistic and literary theory. Bakhtin et al. (1986) and Clark & Gerrig (1990) examined how reported speech is exploited in literary texts. For instance, in indirect speech, there is always a tension regarding what to report: is it the referential content or the stylistic and expressive nature of the utterance? Giving voice to the past speech that will undergo reporting is subject to the whims and predilections of the writer or speaker, who imposes their interpretation when quoting and selecting from an utterance (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Banfield, 1973; Tannen, 2007). This also applies to direct speech. A speaker may be faithful to the utterance but will always stress certain words or lexical items prosodically. Additionally, a past utterance is invoked in the present, whether directly or indirectly, in a different context and for a different purpose.

Although Crawford et al. (1989) do not agree with the idea that females remember conversations better than males, there have been ample studies showing that there are, indeed, gender differences concerning the use of reported speech in personal narratives. Goodwin's (1995) study of talks and disputes among African American children found that girls resort to "he said/she said" structures more than boys do.

For the same purpose, Johnstone (1993) explored the use of reported speech among middle-class Americans. The author found that males use quoted speech less than females. By using reported speech, both males and females were able to create and construct different worldviews through the process of reporting what was said or what is believed to have been said (Johnstone, 1993). The creation of different story-worlds was also a hallmark of Georgakopoulou's (1995) study of how males and females tell stories in Greece.

The analysis of the narratives collected for this study shows that there are pronounced gender differences in the use of reported speech when narrating stories about interactions that took place between Muslims and Jews. Females use reported speech nearly twice as much as males. They quoted Jewish utterances both directly and indirectly. The analysis also revealed fascinating gender differences, particularly in how males and females made sense of the remembered memories, the events surrounding them, and the terminology used to describe them. Males tend to employ more modern terminology and involve themselves more in their narratives. In contrast, females say little

about themselves and use neutral terminology. Females narrate the past more vividly and with more detail than males. Their narratives included rich quotations, dialogues, and reported speech. Females' narratives gave voice to the Jews within their stories. Below are the maps of the themes that our data analysis yielded, following a thematic analysis.

Female Narratives: Map of codes

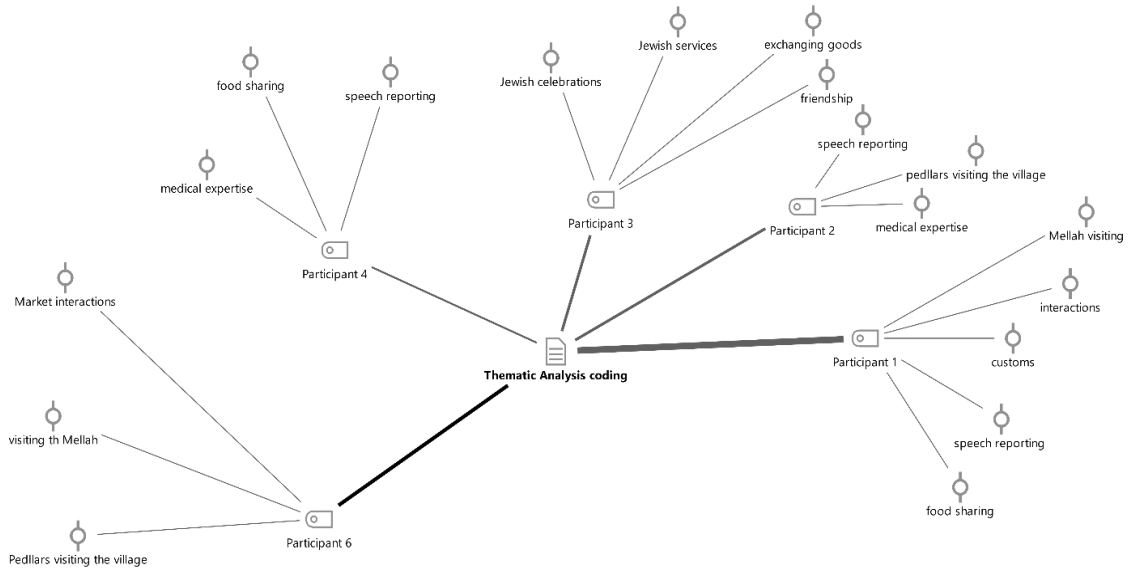


Figure 3: Female narratives, map of codes and subcodes

Male Narratives: Map of codes

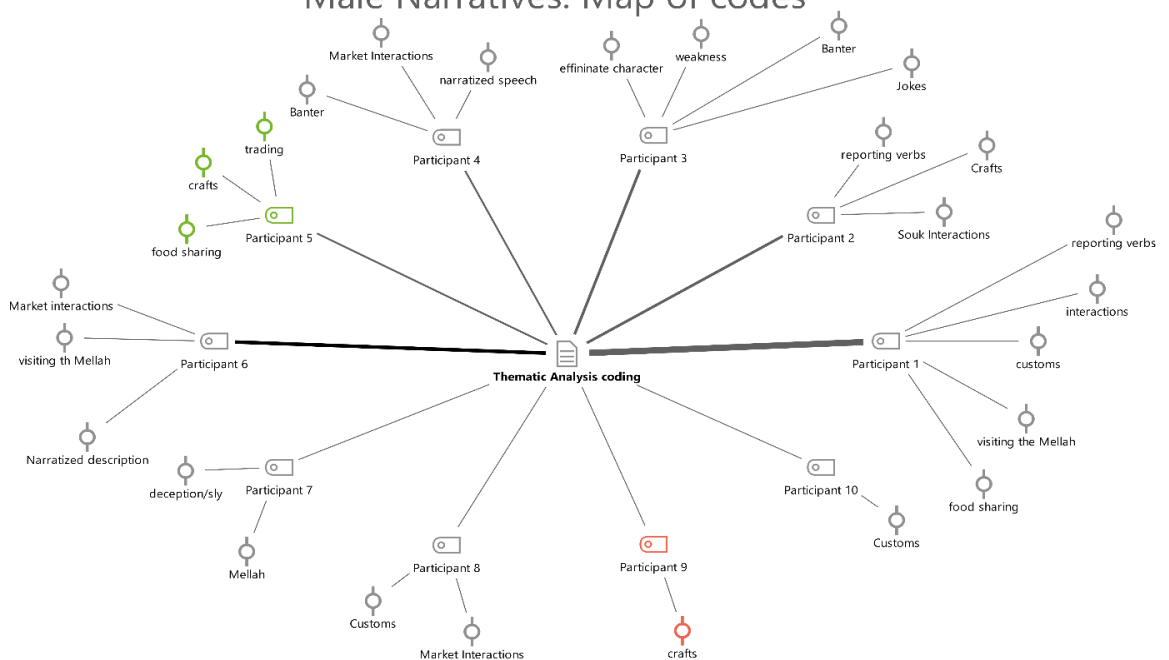


Figure 4: Male narratives, map of codes and subcodes

3. Discussion and Interpretation of the Results

A thematic analysis of the reminiscences of rural Moroccan males and females reveals stark linguistic and structural variances in how the cultural memory of the Jewish community is conveyed. The mapping of narrative codes demonstrates that male storytellers frequently employ modern terminology and heavily rely on speech that is narrativised or summarised. This approach effectively strips past utterances of their emotional resonance and the distinct voice of Jews. In contrast, female narratives are characterised by intense vividness and a notable absence of self-centering. Females mostly employ direct and indirect speech, dynamically reconstructing literal dialogues, accents, and emotional nuances. They tend to make their accounts of Jews more sensible and vivid, incorporating as many details and original words as possible.

People were sitting in the alley of *Ait amer*. When *Tabua'llamt* was passing. When she saw them, she said: "God be with you" and then she went to greet them. She lent and kissed the head of each. See there was Is-haq (Isaac) among them, but she did not take notice of him. When she arrived at him, she bent to kiss his head, but everyone shouted at her: "watch out a *Tabua'llamt* that is *Is-haq* the Jew". See Is-haq has a sense of humor and said to her in his Jewish accent "ooh just go ahead a *Tabua'llamt* that is just the right thing to do".

It can be seen in the above quote that *Tuda*, one of the older women, presents an account of what Is-haq said in a vivid manner that includes his voice and accent. By doing so, she linguistically "gives voice" to the Jewish figures, transforming her memories into dynamic, detailed dramatizations rather than detached historical summaries.

Males tend to use more narrativised speech, which, as mentioned earlier, does not convey the feelings and emotions of the original utterance. Consider the following excerpt of a story narrated by both males and females in two different settings. The story is about how Jews sing during a skin masquerade called "bou-ilmawn." These masquerades take place either after the *eid Alkbir* or during *εashura* and go by various names such as *boujloud*, *bou-ilmawn*, *talkzduft*, and *bou-bTayn*. Participants in these celebrations dress up in animal skin clothes specially made for such occasions, singing and dancing all day while visiting every house in the village to collect food, sugar, wheat, and barley (Hammoudi, 1993, pp. 62–65).

Female version

Jewish husband sings: "*Hanna brid asngar ha-ya ġu nufat*"

Jewish wife retorts: "*iġ ila uġu d usngar terħa nyt takat*".

Jewish husband sings: "Hanna grind the corn we have found the buttermilk."

Jewish wife retorts: "If there are buttermilk and corn, there is nothing to worry about."

The females were chanting the above lines chorally in a way that was full of laughter.

Male version

The males talked about the same celebration in the following way.

bouilmawn n udyn iġa kullut lfrajt. da lssan ilmawn n waġad. irgazzn da lssan lħwayj n tmġarin d timġarin da lssan lħwayj nergazzn. a rasn t-dwarrn mdn: udyn ola imuslmn. iezza darns uġu d usngar. yat t-ħwašt dast tassn alsnas luqtan hli t-ħušn. das itini uday i Hnna adas d t-bri asngar ašku ywid aġu. nutnin iġ ufan aġu han chbaet nesen.

The Jewish *Bouilmawn* is full of laughter. They are dressed in goat skins. Males dress in females' clothes and females dress in males' clothes. They are surrounded by Jews and Muslims alike. The Jews love buttermilk and corn porridge. They even have a song they sing repeatedly during the celebration. The Jewish husband would ask his Jewish wife, Hanna to

grind corn because he has buttermilk. They (the Jews) become extremely happy when they have corn porridge and buttermilk.

In our targeted area, Females' use of quoted speech adds more details and renders the story closer to what the Jew could have said. By giving voice to Hanna and her husband in their narrative, the old females are able to not only remember but also keep the memory alive in the culture. This way, the Jews in the Moroccan culture are not just a phantom memory as it is depicted by males' narratives, but they have a continuity in the presence due to incorporating their voices in the females' narratives.

There are instances where females resort to others asking for actual words of a Jew. This echoes the frustration of females in Johnstone (1993) when they could not recall exact words in a conversation.

Participant 1: *wa lla Aisha inyi mamnkas sul tna tu dyt gh uḥwaš i urgaz nes liḡ as inna "ti-witaḡ-s iggi"*

Participant 2: *irgazn da tassini : "tiwit-aḡ s iggi a tudayt inu Timḡarin da sn- traran s "uhuy awday inu"*

Participant 1: Lady Aisha, tell me how the Jewish lady answers her husband when he sings "you are taking us to the edge ooh My dear wife"

Participant 2: The males would chant "you have taken us to the edge ooh my dear wife" The females would retort back "Oh no worry not my dear Jew."

Including quotations in their memory narratives means that old females had very close relations with female Jews and that borders were crossed by the two as the following story suggests.

Interviewer: *in iyi ala xduj izd da-d tkat iggi issnayn liḡ sul ḡs llan udayn?*

Lala xduj: *yeah, luqtan hli aḡ twi luqt s iḡaln da tid slayḡ. mra izd urd yat tfqirt ḡ lmelah da stini Sulika n ukha likut ierzm iyyi babak hma*

Interviewer: *mamnka zem?*

Lala xduj: *tarwa imzwara inu gan kullu tiferḡin. ewa babk Hma innak ira afruḡ. Yan was tḡlid Rahil s udwar tafiyyid ḡir da tḡmamḡ. ewa niḡ-as ma illan. tnay iyyi "is trit adam zerg lbaraka n lala Sulika. Han kullu ma dars ikan yawed lbaraka nes das yaka rebi iferḡan". Iwa zuḡ-tid irzq iyyi rebbi Hassan d Lahcen.*

Interviewer: Tell me lady *xduj*. Did you use to visit the Mellah when there were Jews there?

Lady xduj: Yes, I used to visit it whenever I visit *Ighaln* village. I would have been divorced had it not been the advice of lady there called *Sulika n Ukha*.

Interviewer: How is that?

Lady xduj: You see my first-borns were females. My husband (Hamma) wants a boy. One day Rahil paid us a visit, and she found me anxious and worried. She asked me what was wrong with me, and I told her the story. Then she told me, "Would you like me to get you the blessings of Lady Suleka, by experience, all females who got her blessings they gave birth to baby boys." So, I visited her and got what I got from her and ever since then all my babies have been boys.

Males' tendency not to resort to quotations does not necessarily imply that there used to be a tense relationship between male and female Jews. Examining the data reveals that males tend to express the nature of the interaction between themselves and their Jewish coreligionists using humour, banter, and ruse. This aligns with the findings of Levin (2017) in the Tifnout valley.

These distinct linguistic patterns are intricately linked to the gendered socio-spatial realities that governed Muslim-Jewish interactions in rural Morocco. The thematic codes associated with old male narratives in our case reflect their primary domain of interaction: the competitive, public sphere of

the marketplace. Consequently, male memories frequently frame Jewish males as market rivals or subjects of ruse, banter, and deception, conceptualising the relationship through a lens of economic friction and masculine pretension (Levin, 2007). Conversely, analysis of the data also shows that rural females were largely excluded from public trade; their cross-religious interactions occurred predominantly within the domestic sphere (Driver, 2018). Consequently, females were not in a competitive relationship with Jews, perhaps because they were not engaged in trade or had to take care of the house, just like other Jewish females. Their interactions suggest a more cooperative dynamic. This spatial reality fostered intimate, cooperative, and deeply interconnected relationships between Muslim and Jewish females. The thematic richness of female narratives is replete with shared domestic practices, mutual advice, and communal celebrations. These narratives directly mirror a historical intimacy and cooperative coexistence.

According to Tannen (2007), when a voice is given to a character, the story is rendered a drama, and listeners assume the role of interpreters (Tannen, 2007, p. 133). The use of reported speech by Muslim females suggests that they are still engaging with Jewish memory, even though the Jews have left the village, in contrast to males, who view their presence as something of the past. Chetrit (2019) persuasively depicted the political, cultural, and humane interactions between Jews and Amazigh. However, the memory of Jews and Berbers, who shared both sweetness and bitterness for centuries, is now "a fog of remembrance ... a phantom memory, the felt presence of an absent limb" (Rosen, 2002, p. 103).

4. Conclusion

These findings suggest that male narratives tend toward summarisation, which may reduce Jewish presence in cultural memory, whereas female narratives, through frequent use of quoted speech, actively re-voice Jewish perspectives. The divergence in these gendered memory frameworks has profound implications for the preservation and continuity of multicultural history. The male tendency to employ detached, narrativised speech and frame interactions around market rivalry effectively silences Jewish existence and relegates their historical presence to a fading, one-dimensional "phantom memory." This narrative strategy unconsciously contributes to the historical erasure of the Jewish experience as it heroises the male Muslim narrator at the expense of the marginalised "other." In stark contrast, the female mastery of quoted speech acts as a vital mechanism of historical preservation. By continuously re-enacting the exact words, humour, and voices of their former Jewish neighbours, rural Moroccan females function as adamant guardians of cultural memory. By doing so, they ensure that the legacy of a deeply interconnected, multicultural past remains vibrant and continuous within the community's oral traditions.

"Ddan Udyan ida lxir zgh lmghrib" (the Jews left, the blessings have left with them from Morocco). _ This is a common saying circulating among elders who had close contact with the Jews when they left en masse for Israel. Nevertheless, this nostalgia among the elders and their respect for the Jews is now fading and being replaced by an animosity-laden discourse. The image of a neighbour, a village member, and a friend has not been transmitted to the next generation, and as *Taba'mrant*, the Amazigh singer and poet, sings in one of her beautiful songs: *"iks uzlay itfilit gh-ili gh ibbi ghar ghaman."* (The necklace is missing a bead, and the place where it used to be is left empty).

I have shown that even when older generations remember the Jews of their village or tribe, the way each gender remembers them varies in style. This variation in remembering is attributed to the position each assumes within the tribal hierarchy. The findings of this paper are supported by Chouraqui (1968) and Goldberg (1983). Chouraqui (1968) summarises the state of the Jews in North Africa by stating that the status of the Jews differs from one place to another and from one temporal context to another (Chouraqui, 1968, p. 40). The examination of my data shows that the status of the Jews is also determined by the gender of the person remembering them. Males tend to speak on behalf of the Jews, while females lend them a voice. I have shown that females do this through the

use of quoted speech in their narratives and reminiscences of the Jews of their tribe and village. Couched in this way, museums and memory institutions in Morocco should consider collecting and archiving female-authored oral histories as a corrective to male-dominated official narratives. Researchers should be trained to recognise reported speech as a valuable memory practice, not merely as an anecdote. This study has its own limitations. The size of the sample is one of them; it would be very useful if the sample were enlarged to include all elders of the villages where the Jews used to live in the tribe of Mesfiouia, Morocco. A larger sample will affirm or disconfirm whether the use of reported speech in remembering the past is a gender issue.

5. Declarations

Funding: This research did not receive any external funding

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: The data is not publicly available due to confidentiality agreements with participants whose names have been changed in the text for privacy restrictions. However, de-identified data can be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to approval by the ethics committee.

References

- Assmann, J. (2011). Communicative and cultural memory. In P. Meusburger, M. Heffernan, & E. Wunder (Eds.), *Cultural memories* (Vol. 4, pp. 15–27). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8945-8_2
- Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective memory and cultural identity. *New German Critique*, (65), 125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>
- Bakhtin, M. M., Holquist, M., Emerson, C., & Bakhtin, M. M. (2011). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (18th paperback printing). University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M., Holquist, M., & Emerson, C. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (1st ed.). University of Texas Press.
- Banfield, A. (1973). Narrative style and the grammar of direct and indirect speech. *Foundations of Language*, 10(1), 1–39. JSTOR.
- Budgeon, S. (2014). The dynamics of gender hegemony: Femininities, masculinities and social change. *Sociology*, 48(2), 317–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513490358>
- Chetrit, J. Y. (2019). Intimacy, cooperation and ambivalence. *European Judaism*, 52(2), 18–30. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ej.2019.520203>
- Chouraqui, A. (1968). *Between East and West: A history of the Jews of North Africa* (M. M. Bernet, Trans.). Varda Book.
- Clark, H. H., & Gerrig, R. J. (1990). Quotations as demonstrations. *Language*, 66, 764–805.
- Connerton, P. (1989). *How societies remember*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, M., Herrmann, D. J., Holdsworth, M. J., Randall, E. P., & Robbins, D. (1989). Gender and beliefs about memory. *British Journal of Psychology*, 80(3), 391–401. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8295.1989.tb02329.x>
- Dijck, J. van. (2007). *Mediated memories in the digital age*. Stanford University Press.
- Driver, C. T. P. (2018). *Muslim custodians of Jewish spaces in Morocco: Drinking the milk of trust*. Palgrave Macmillan US.
- El Guabli, B. (2023). *Moroccan other-archives: History and citizenship after state violence* (1st ed.). Fordham University Press.
- Ely, R., & Ryan, E. (2008). Remembering talk: Individual and gender differences in reported speech. *Memory*, 16(4), 395–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210801949869>
- Erlil, A. (2011). *Memory in culture*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230321670>
- Genette, G. (1988). *Narrative discourse revisited*. Cornell University Press.

- Georgakopoulou, A. (1995). Women, men, and conversational narrative performances: Aspects of gender in Greek storytelling. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 37(4), 460–486. JSTOR.
- Goldberg, H. E. (1983). The mellahs of southern Morocco, report of a survey. *The Maghreb Review*, 8(3–4), 61–69.
- González Mandri, F. M. (2006). *Guarding cultural memory: Afro-Cuban women in literature and the arts*. University of Virginia Press.
- Goodwin, M. H. (1995). *He-said-she-said: Talk as social organization among black children* (Nachdr.). Indiana University Press.
- Hammoudi, A. (1993). *The victim and its masks: An essay on sacrifice and masquerade in the Maghreb*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hirsch, M., & Smith, V. (2002). Feminism and cultural memory: An introduction. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1086/340890>
- Ilahiane, H. (2006). *Historical dictionary of the Berbers (Imazighen)*. Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Martin, J. S. (2022). *Memory/memory studies* (1st ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Johnstone, B. (1993). Community and contest: Midwestern men and women creating their worlds in conversational storytelling. 911409 Bytes. <https://doi.org/10.1184/R1/6469613.V1>
- Karrouche, N. (2017). National narratives and the invention of ethnic identities: Revisiting cultural memory and the decolonized state in Morocco. In M. Carretero, S. Berger, & M. Grever (Eds.), *Palgrave handbook of research in historical culture and education* (pp. 295–310). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52908-4_16
- Kattago, S. (Ed.). (2015). *The Ashgate research companion to memory studies*. Ashgate.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7(1–4), 3–38. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.02nar>
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1997). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7(1–4), 3–38. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.02nar>
- Lears, J. (1988). Power, culture, and memory. *The Journal of American History*, 75(1), 137–140. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1889658>
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Press.
- Levin, S. F. (2007). Wit, ruse, rivalry, and other keys to coexistence: Reflections of Jewish-Muslim relations in Berber oral traditions. In N. Boudraa & J. Krause (Eds.), *North African mosaic: A cultural reappraisal of ethnic and religious minorities* (pp. 178–200). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Levin, S. F. (2017). *Narrative remembrance: Close encounters between Muslims and Jews in Morocco's Atlas Mountains*. University of California.
- Menin, L., & Zentrum, M. O. (2014). Rewriting the world: Gendered violence, the political imagination and memoirs from the "years of lead" in Morocco. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 8(1). https://www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/view/3044/pdf_105
- Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, 26, 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>
- Pascon, P. (1983). *Le Haouz de Marrakech* (Editions marocaines et internationales, Vol. 2).
- Ricœur, P., Blamey, K., Pellauer, D., & Ricœur, P. (2010). *Memory, history, forgetting* (Paperback ed., Nachdr.). University of Chicago Press.
- Rosen, L. (2002). *The culture of Islam: Changing aspects of contemporary Muslim life*. University of Chicago Press.
- Sachs, J. S. (1967). Recognition memory for syntactic and semantic aspects of connected discourse. *Perception & Psychophysics*, 2(9), 437–442. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03208784>
- Sadiqi, F. (2024). Women in Morocco. In F. Sadiqi (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.1232>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and Society*, 36(1), 85–102.
- Sylvia, S., & Sylvia, P. (2008). Remembrance and gender: Making gender visible and inscribing women into memory culture. In *The gender of memory: Cultures of remembrance in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe* (pp. 267–287). Campus.
- Tannen, D. (2007). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Disclaimer: The views, perspectives, information, and data contained within all publications are exclusively those of the respective author(s) and contributor(s) and do not represent or reflect the positions of ERRCD Forum and/or its editor(s). ERRCD Forum and its editor(s) expressly disclaim responsibility for any damages to persons or property arising from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referenced in the content.