

***Extensions of gender cultural conflict from the real self to the virtual self***Boulerbah naama <sup>1,\*</sup>, Hicham Abada <sup>2</sup>

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The study aims to shed the light on the representations of gender cultural conflict and its transition from reality to websites, that is to say, from the real self to the virtual one, through communicative content in social media, especially what relates to the sexes, to identify the differences in values, motives, and tendencies that explain gender roles, as well as to monitor the gendered features of the virtual space among media users. Social communication in the light of the digital climate, which is characterized by a greater margin of freedom than in other media, which makes dealing with gender issues and even attitudes towards them characterized by flexibility and closeness to accurate diagnosis of them.

**Keywords:** *gender; culture conflict; public space; Virtual public space; Virtual identity.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Technology, in light of the multiplicity of virtual media and social networking spaces, has enabled the creation of a parallel world to the real world of individuals and has contributed to the emergence of the so-called virtual body, which serves as a digital twin of the person and even maintains a close connection with the real body, which in turn becomes the basis of the virtual body's identity.

The user today has found himself between different worlds, including augmented, mixed, and virtual worlds, and between two- and three-dimensional spaces with multiple ways in which users can participate in interactions with other users in which they enjoy the freedom to express everything in their minds through assumed identities free of gender-based biases. Race and other socio-demographic characteristics. Between the real self and the cosmic digital self-involved in the parallel world stream that generated the so-called third human that resulted from the marriage of all these worlds, the self oscillates in its interactions with various topics between the real and the virtual.

The social-cultural determinants of a person's belonging to one of the sexes constitute the essence of what is called gender according to determinants that distinguish between what is social, cultural, values, and the like, and which seem to have become characterized by flexibility. The sociology of women's presence in virtual spaces has been facilitated by several factors, including the characteristic of anonymity, which has made it possible. By creating spaces for dialogue that is opposed to classical media dialogues, which are discourses characterized by rebellion against sociocultural and symbolic coercions, in addition to the freedom to assume fluid virtual identities characterized by flexibility, which many resorted to to escape the pressure of gender identity, as well as the emergence of a feminist discourse in the virtual world, which prompts us to question how men are constructed. Women have cooperative, social, and emotional relationships in these worlds. Does gender influence the dynamics of online social networks in accordance with gender norms offline?

### 1. Gender conceptually and philosophically:

#### 1.1 The concept of gender:

It means the relationships, roles, and appropriate behavior that society predetermines for both men and women in light of social legacies and a cultural system that includes a set of customs, traditions, and values prevailing in a society and in a certain period of time. This concept was used for the first time by Ann Oakley in 1972. In the following sense: "The word sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, and to the apparent difference between the sexual organs, and also to the differences in their connection to the function of procreation. As for gender, it is a cultural factor. It refers to the social classification and arrangement of masculine and feminine. Gender is attributed to the English language, which translates as gender, which is essentially a cultural and political statement that differs from sex as a biological factor, and means the roles and differences that societies decide and adopt for both men and women.

For reference, the definition of the term gender distinguishes two different phases: Twenty years ago, it had the same definition as sex, which is a word that is not easy to translate into other languages. Therefore, a way had to be found to describe the concept of gender in ways that are understood in every language, but over time, each of them has an independent use. What is expressed by the term gender is not expressed by sex, and vice versa. Here we come to mention the importance of distinguishing between the main points of difference between them. The term sex refers to the physical, skeletal and biological structure that develops gradually in an individual's life, especially at puberty and at birth - and here it is referred to as the sex assigned at birth - as sex is determined. The newborn is based on the appearance of the genitals, whether male or female. (p. 17, 2016)

### 1.2 The concept of virtual space:

A virtual space is a networked domain that allows a user to interact with both the computing environment and the work of other users. Document sharing applications via email, chat, and the web are all examples of a virtual space. In essence, it is a shared, networked operating space that allows the creation of a psychological state in which an individual sees themselves as existing. Within the virtual environment and surrounds the user perceptually, which increases his sense of presence or presence within it. **(Jeremy N. Bailenson, 2002)**

Asia Briggs and Peter Burke defined it as: “that space that is created when a person accesses the Internet or computer and dissolves from his physical reality and dissolves in the new reality that the network or computer provides. He becomes part of it, so he becomes the player inside the computer game, as an example. It is worth noting According to them, the symbolic space, unlike television and uncensored reading, has no guards at its doors **(Burke, A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet, 2009)**

The concept of virtual space is considered a comprehensive and fused concept within which social and cultural institutions of all kinds have merged, where spatial and temporal boundaries have merged and the geography of information navigation has appeared in parallel with it in various directions and at the same time.

### 1.3 Social media:

Social media is a form of online communication. Social media platforms allow users to have conversations, share information, and create web content. There are many forms of social media, including blogs, small blogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo sharing sites, instant messaging, video sharing sites, podcasts, gadgets, virtual worlds, and more.

The number of social media users in January 2023, according to the Essential Digital Headlines website, is 4.76 billion subscribers, i.e. 59.4 percent of the total world population. The detailed analysis conducted by the team at Kepios shows that there are 4.76 billion social media users around the world in January 2023, i.e. Equivalent to 59.4% of the total world population. The number of social media users has continued to grow over the past 12 months as well, with 137 million new users joining social media since this time last year. This equates to an annual growth of 3 percent, at a rate Average of over 4 new users every second.

The latest figures indicate that more than 9 in 10 internet users now use social media each month. Note that the numbers for social media users may not represent unique individuals, and due to issues such as duplicate accounts, the numbers for social media users may exceed the numbers We publish them to Internet users – or even to the general population.

On the other hand, it is also worth noting that comparing social media users to overall population numbers may not represent the full scope of social media use, as most social media companies limit the use of their platforms to people aged 13 and above.

Facebook is still the most widely used social media platform in the world, but there are now six popular social media platforms that each exceed a billion monthly active users or more. Three of these seven platforms are owned by Meta. Furthermore, 15 social media platforms have at least About 400 million active users in January 2023, the most important of which are:

1. Facebook includes 2.958 billion active monthly users and is based on the principle of creating personal files, sharing information, sending messages, and publishing user updates on the Facebook wall. It was classified as the most active platform by Data Reportal **(Kemp, 2022)**, and in 2021, The company name was changed to Meta to reflect its business beyond just social media.
2. YouTube is a site based on the principle of sharing, uploading and publishing videos. According to Global Media Insight, YouTube has more than 2 billion monthly active users....
3. WhatsApp This free instant messaging application is for users to send text messages, make video and voice calls, and share documents. According to WhatsApp, it has more than 2 billion users around the world.
- 4 .Instagram This free social media platform allows users to share long and short videos and photos and has been designed primarily for iOS and Android smartphone users, but a desktop

version is also available. However, sharing and uploading content is only available through the Instagram app. Instagram, also owned by Meta, has more than 2 billion monthly active users as of December 2021, according to CNBC.

5. TikTok. This application is used to share and create personalized short videos.

TikTok caters to a younger audience and is famous for being a social networking platform. According to the Business of Apps newsletter, TikTok has more than 1.2 billion users as of the end of 2021.. (Kemp, 2023)

## II. The theoretical framework of the study

### 1. Feminist presence and forms of gender conflict in the transition from female to woman:

**Fathi Al-Miskini says:** Entering the arena of what is “feminist” as it is a standard space that defines a woman’s identity every time. There is an annoying difference between what is called female writing and engaging in feminist issues. Only women’s liberation is a feminist problem, while the female experience is a free aesthetic and moral adventure about the meaning of “the self” that does not necessarily have to be a feminist tendency. The feminist transition from female to woman is not a “subjective” decision: there is no feminist “subject” that decides when to become a woman, that is, when to become a “feminist” type. When a woman appears, the female time has become an aesthetic past. There is a difference between the female “self” and the feminist “identity”: between the female possibility and the woman’s reality.

The female is the promise of being, but the woman is a social invention. This means that women’s “identity” is a linguistic (grammatical/discursive) effect produced by every culture. (Al-Miskini, 2019)

Based on what was mentioned above, it becomes clear the difference between “woman” and the female, which feminism later turned into a party in a conflict that took several different forms as an explicit and structural resistance to what is known as male hegemony. It arose as a result of a chronological and social hierarchy that took into account the semantic description of the concept itself within the systems. So that the concept of “female” varied with each wave of feminist movements, especially in the post-modern period, which worked to undermine the idea that “sex” is a natural concept and also considered the body to be a historical concept.

According to this perspective, “gender” becomes a social construct and sex precedes “Gender” because it gives value to physiological traits that in themselves have little significance for classification (Canovi, 2017, p. 12) It is the hierarchical division of humans into two sexes that structures sexual difference and this is challenged by the constructivist paradigm.

Butler also agrees with this feminist approach, as she considers “sex” and gender to be cultural, social, and political constructs that can be changed, adding that gender, sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity do not share any structural, necessary, or even metaphysical connection, and this is a clear indication of an attempt to isolate the concept from All previous components.

### .2 Gender conflict from a sociocultural perspective:

It must first be recognized that consideration of women does not exist in isolation from the social system. Women are an integral part of a total formation in which the presence of women is considered a very important element within it. It is known that the element within the social system performs a function that cannot be performed by another element within the social system, in addition to that The elements that make up the social system govern its proper functioning by certain relationships, such as influence and being affected, in the service of the general system, all with the aim of achieving the preservation of the stability and balance of the social system.

The first features of the role-based conflict we see clearly in the field of work, as it seems that Arab societies have not accepted women’s work to the extent of social debates in various areas of life, and even cognitively, as Fatima Mernissi goes in her book *Beyond the Veil*, in the midst of dealing with the issue of women’s work, to the point that Women's right to work has

always yielded to the traditional image of modesty in Arab societies, where masculinity was linked to economic power and femininity to feminine poverty. (Marnissi, 2005, p. 166)

Between maintaining Weber's system, which requires each individual to exercise his role in society for the safety of the overall formation (Allah, 2020, p. 99), and attempts to consolidate the oppression of women in Arab societies, a hypothetical, declared, and hidden conflict has risen to the surface, based on the social role, as we have recently noticed the emergence of counter-hypothetical discourses. By exploiting virtual spaces and various blogging and social spaces, as a counter to what was considered discourses devoted to the exclusionary view of women, who are usually confined to stereotypical and limited social roles, this paved the way for the emergence of a feminist virtual public space that represents the feminist trend opposing the traditional institutions of society and the roles they have carved for each gender.

### **3. Media stereotyping of social roles:**

The media, despite its diversity between written, audio and audio-visual, played the role of promoting gender socialization by assigning specific roles to both sexes based on the biological characteristics of masculinity and femininity. This in turn contributed to gender stereotyping by feeding gender differences in a soft manner in which the direct character of media treatment was absent. It does not call, demand, or address the issue of equality in women's rights with men's rights explicitly - while recognizing in advance the great influence of the media on the masses, especially television, through its diversification of content, whether drama, news, or different types of journalism.

Gender stereotyping of social roles takes several forms in television programs, and one of its most prominent issues is the focus on addressing family problems and specifically the different roles of women within the domestic system in terms of presenting the traditional perspective of the social role in the family, at home, and outside home, whether in the workplace or social relationships.

The distribution of roles on television took different forms, extending to the point of distributing masculine and feminine characteristics. It depicted women as emotional beings subservient to men's authority. The focus of the Television content on women often revolves around traits like gossip and spreading rumours and scandals, and delving into personal issues, envy, and meddling in others' affairs. In contrast, men were depicted as powerful, rugged, and authoritative beings.

It seems that the television stereotyping of gender roles has considered the psychological aspect in the philosophy of children's conformity with new characters emerge during a certain age period as an attempt to be independent from parental authority and also experimenting with new topics, the first of which is emotional relationships, as the female mimic fashion trends, diet programs, sports and fitness, and wearing clothes in the sense of fulfilling certain roles and considering them as standard roles. Normative Accordingly, television programs perform the function of ostensibly addressing the problem of equality for the audience while nourishing, extending and reinforcing gender differences.

#### **4. From public space to virtual public space:**

The world of the Internet, which was previously used only to collect and share information, has expanded to become a place where people can meet, chat, learn, and play together. The virtual world is even differentiated between contradictory virtual communities, utilitarian communities, and pleasure communities. In the utilitarian virtual community, the main focus is on searching for information and sharing it, and communication (for example social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, etc., where people tend to represent themselves fairly closely).

The term virtual self has been used by many researchers without in-depth clarification. Therefore, the meaning of the virtual self may differ from one person to another. Some may consider it an extension of their physical self into the online world, while others experience it as a completely different identity. Avatars are simply used to represent social narratives on a virtual platform. Which means that there is no difference in identity but only in place (virtual instead of real world). The avatar only functions as an extension of the individual's physical self in the virtual world and has been defined by others as "somewhat realistic, ideal self," which supports the idea that people tend to adopt idealism through their avatars. In this case, the virtual self becomes the ideal form of self in virtual worlds. The Internet is thus a new field of the self. (Higgins, 1987, pp. 320-322)

The comparison between the realistic "spiritual" self, which included the cultural identity components and the individual's moral sense and conscience, and the normative "social" self, that is, between what others believe a person should or should be (i.e., the normative aspect) and the person's belief in what he "ideally" wants. It aims to know the position of the virtual self and its position on social role conflict from a cultural standpoint, whether the real self identifies with its components within the virtual space, and how to reflect the conflict and deal with it within this space.

Electronic conflict arenas provide a space for extensive discussions according to two main trends: fairly specific discussion spaces, those that promote, above all, a certain sociality (intimacy) and are significantly widespread in social media, in which self-expression becomes clearer more freely without censorship taboos, and on the other hand, more groups. Homogeneous people with whom we share common interests with clearly defined methods of organization.

#### **5. Virtual identity and trying to reshape social roles:**

Society interacts in a virtual electronic environment, and its members share many bonds, interests, and common social activity. It is a group that may grow in number compared to reality. Identity is considered as a flexible concept, as social networks play a major role in defining its features. They contribute to creating new concepts and redefining old concepts within a social space. Dialectically, it is the product of the cross-fertilization of the information society and virtual societies, in which the individual is more likely to change his identity towards a globalized identity, and this may lead to a decrease in social cohesion in reality.

The identity of Arab and Islamic societies has been affected by the globalization trend, which has had a great impact in the areas of real and virtual life, especially since it targets local and private identities, trying to impose a model culture and stereotyping on global culture.

Goffman believes that identity “is a person’s efforts to display his distinguishing characteristics from others while shaping his behavior.” (Chriss, 2015, p. 13), social identity is a person’s awareness of belonging to a particular social group that arises through human interactions, which are considered the primary factor in its formation. On the other hand, providing features in cyberspace creates conditions for users that differ from real-world communication. With factors like speed and anonymity, the online environment is similar and consistent regardless of gender, class or ethnicity requirements. It creates different experiences for users through the interactions that occur in this space, which produces new situations for users that can change their behaviour and interactions in the real world. Virtual communities even build the identity of individuals through communication innovations, which Changes occur in individual perceptions about identity in its new situation that is radically, or at least relatively, different from the real reality.

The characteristic of the new identity, as an identity that crosses geographical boundaries, is diverse and enables the user to experience different identities. However, the failure to establish a balance between real space and cyberspace creates a dual identity. A new form of life has been formed in cyberspace, and relationships between people have become different from their traditional form. It created undeniable effects on social relations.

The gender conflict in the virtual space has been marred by a kind of freedom in presenting topics that pertain to both sexes, and by allowing for the feature of interactivity, the real self relatively carries with it the standards of its identity and adopts them in the virtual space. The social media user will clearly notice the degree of gender stereotyping of social roles, and in return, will detect the emergence of feminist trends. Hypothetical calls for the same principles called for by the first waves of feminist movements in Europe.

Real identity carries ideas and positions regarding gender conflict that were not previously able to be expressed in the public space, and it was easily expressed in the virtual space, especially Facebook, given the large size of its users and the diversity of their social groups.

## **6. Digital spaces and the struggle for recognition:**

Recognition in conflict philosophy is not considered something new, but the struggle for recognition in social movements such as the civil rights movement in the early 1960s in the United States or feminist movements is considered something new because what these movements demanded as a new trend was different, seeking to draw attention through regular demands that It revolved around feminist movements, and often the purpose of this was a struggle not to obtain economic capital, but rather to obtain a share of symbolic capital, which in this case is an attempt to legitimize the demands of feminism by seeking appreciation, recognition, belief, credit, and the trust of others. These purposes only works when convincing others of their existence becomes a reality.

Minority is not a concept that can be quantified. In fact, in terms of numbers, minorities are sometimes more important than the majority. This matter is clearly evident through the demands of feminist movements for equality, justice, etc. Although the number of women exceeds the number of men, they constitute a minority and may still constitute a minority. The minority is not a group of quantitative minorities, but rather a minority consisting of all those who are considered to have a feminist orientation. On the other hand, the majority is not a quantitative concept that unites the majority, but rather it is the prevailing trend known to us as social custom, in addition to the elements of identity that all members of society are supposed to humble themselves with.

What should be pointed out here is what the “feminist” minority can do when the model imposed on it stifles it or denies it and refuses to adopt it as a general model. Then it can only seek to form one model that pushes it into a struggle to form a new identity. Then the struggle takes a specific form. It is a struggle for Recognition. Thus, monitoring and analysing some social movements made it possible to identify a relationship between the state of domination and the absence of recognition.

Based on what was mentioned above, these visions can be projected onto virtual public spaces in which the margin of conflict increases in line with the increasing horizon of freedom in expressing different intellectual orientations, especially with the advantages offered by virtual media, such as virtual identity, which many use as an electronic cover to express their opinions under names. Borrowed without taking into account censorship restrictions, size, cost, etc

## 7. On the transition from real selfhood to virtual selfhood:

Research into the philosophy of the self is considered a diverse and complex whole that often overlaps with identity in this regard. Alain Touraine defines selfhood as “the identification of an individual or group with the form of the self that matches their culture and practices, just as socialization is the identification of an individual or group with standards and ways.” Organizing social life in time and space” (Badla, 2020, p. 115). If the real self is inferred by distinct characteristics given to a person in society, which are apparently fixed and allow him to be identified, such as height, weight, or hair colour, these characteristics make it easy to separate the real selves into its embodied form. In contrast, the virtual self is built on a set of self-perceptions of the individual according to a specific role or social environment. From this standpoint, the individual develops a virtual self that is characterized by instability, fluid and changeable, in which he takes into account his inner desires in addition to his social interactions with others. Consequently, the individual adopts multiple personalities. It is balanced and harmonious to form a person’s sense of self, benefiting from the unlimited freedom to create avatars and participate in various social interactions. As a result, social networks have become, as a witness, for example, personal and social spaces in which players project their intentions, expressions, and movements, which allows the exploration of identity in new ways.

Identity emerges through the coalescence of several components that include the social construction of reality and a relationship between beliefs, ideologies, and power represented by structural elements on the one hand, and daily ideas about roles, values, and norms on the other hand. It falls within several components, including:

**Roles:** Roles contribute to creating culture because they require social interaction and awareness of others.

**Values:** Values are general ideas that support social norms and provide a sense of order through which role behaviour itself is articulated.

**Standards:** Specific rules that dictate how people should behave in a given situation. These are behavioural rules used to perform roles in an acceptable manner that are flexible and subject to modification.

**Beliefs:** The basic, deep-rooted ideas that make up values.

**Ideologies:** Ideologies are patterns of ideas that claim to explain and legitimize the social structure and culture of a particular group in society. Ideologies are important in the social

construction of reality because they help build society. Ideologies are mental maps that guide the development of various aspects of society.

**Power:** The ability to make others do what you want, even against their will. Anthony Giddens says in this regard: Power relates to the social construction of reality, because those in power can impose their definition of social reality on others, to achieve order and stability. (Dickie-Clark, 1986, p. 169)

### **Gender identities:**

Biological gender refers to the physical characteristics that make people classified as male or female, while gender refers to socially acquired assigned roles. Contemporary societies, for example, are witnessing a crisis of masculine identity due to long-term unemployment and lower educational attainment compared to girls, and thus a decline in the traditional role of providing for the family or controlling economic resources. In contrast, globalization has exposed societies to new behaviours and ideas, which has led individuals to become consumers of identity. This has led to individuals forming fragmented cyber identities in which social rules have been relaxed. Consequently, people have the freedom to invent identities and adapt them to their personal style, which leads to a loss of centrality. Identities; That is, social standards no longer specify rules about how to position one's identity, whether gendered or socially. Consequently, the basic sources of identity have become less important when defining the self. When analysing some Facebook pages in terms of general content, we find that they did not adhere, in their treatment of social roles, to the principle of division according to the traditional standards that constitute masculinity and femininity.

The depiction of physical stature or what refers to it in such a way that it suggests that the character is strong, for example the content that depicts a man moving heavy objects or hitting something, the characteristic of being firm, unemotional, hero, brave, leader, offender, rich and other characteristics have not become It is restricted to masculinity, just as emotionality, care of the body, obedience, care for others, and other qualities are no longer binding on femininity without femininity in the virtual world, especially social networks.

### **8. Gender identity in virtual spaces:**

What is cultural identity? This concept is the subject of multiple appropriations: it covers a range of symbolic and ideological meanings at the expense of a solid conceptual conception. This is the observation made by Genevieve Vincennot. From an interactionism perspective, she proposes to consider cultural identities in the light of intercultural dynamics and identity negotiations at work. This proposal is based on a constructivist understanding. Culture "as a human production, depends directly on social actors and their interactions" and, according to the author, is a "center of resources" that are constructed and shared by social actors. Genevieve Vinsonneau also conceptualizes identity as dynamic: "It is the process of developing a meaningful system, in the actor who interacts With other actors and with the symbolic system in which everyone develops." (Biscarrat, 2020, p. 2), this dynamic concept of identities is of epistemological importance in the study of television representations. This idea actually has two strong points. First, it avoids the pitfall of the essentialist notion of identities being homogeneous and stable. Hence, it escapes the fixed vision of culture and the mechanical conception of identity that characterizes the cultural trend. and as "media cultures" (Duccini, 2023, p. 137).

Virtual spaces therefore constitute a cultural resource that can be mobilized within the framework of identity strategies. Both are considered an arena for the dynamics of the public sphere and a performative scene that shows social representations of various shades. Therefore, the process of communication within these spaces appears as a distinct observation point for the formation of imagination and social representations of gender, whether it is related to social roles. In its traditional or new stereotypical dimension.

### **III. Conclusion:**

Halfway between the normative and the subjective, between social oppression and personal identity, gender is a phenomenon whose implications have extended to reach the new virtual environment in which gender was keen to present the female as a single and independent entity in an attempt to undermine masculine centrality and establish a feminine centrality that reformulates the equation of the relationship between men and women in a correct manner. The peer and whoever contemplates the contents of social media will notice this clearly through the adoption of virtual femininity to the principle of separation between what is masculine and what is feminine, not to show the difference, but rather to try to impose the principle of equal to peer by seeking to prove the superiority of the female gender in various areas of life. If we notice, for example, the social contents in social media Social communication: We will find that its main axis is discussing women's issues and their relationship with men, such as work, family care, marriage, etc., as well as economic stewardship, and even extended to the gendering of the entertainment dimension, such as indoor sports, for example. This is due to the attempt to prove the logic of the equal balance of power between men and women, this phenomenon known as Digital arenas.

What is certain is that in light of the freedom provided by the digital environment in expressing different opinions, including gender issues and user protection, by impersonating virtual characters as independent entities that argue about masculinity and femininity through various forms, the most important of which is interaction within different groups, as some of them have become a platform for spreading the principles of feminism as an example on the other hand, we find "memes" as a hostile reaction to these groups and so on...

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