

***Women's Education in Colonial America and Colonial Algeria: a
Historical Perspective***

تعليم المرأة في أمريكا المستعمرة والجزائر المستعمرة: منظور تاريخي

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Received: 10 /05 / 2021 Accepted: 20 /09 / 2021 Published: 30 /09 / 2021

Abstract:

Women's education is a basic element in the development of societies; American and Algerian women's education during the colonial period of both countries was a concern of many scholars and historians especially those who dealt with the colonial periods of America and Algeria. This paper aims to compare Colonial America and Colonial Algeria in terms of women's education and to have a historical background of the two cases. It also aims at shedding light on the challenges women faced in their way to securing their education. To achieve the aim of the study a comparative method is followed as well as a descriptive historical method. The results of the study showed many similarities between the two cases despite the fact that the two cases took place in two different periods of time.

Keywords: *Algerian; American; Colonial; Education; Women*

ملخص

تعليم المرأة عنصر أساسي في تنمية المجتمعات؛ كان تعليم المرأة الأمريكية والجزائرية محور اهتمام لكثير من العلماء والمؤرخين وخاصة أولئك الذين تعاملوا مع الفترات الاستعمارية لأمريكا والجزائر. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى المقارنة بين أمريكا المستعمرة والجزائر المستعمرة من حيث تعليم المرأة والحصول على خلفية تاريخية للحالتين. كما يهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على التحديات التي تواجهها المرأة في طريقها لتأمين تعليمها. ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة تم إتباع طريقة المقارنة وكذلك المنهج الوصفي التاريخي. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أوجه تشابه كثيرة بين الحالتين على الرغم من أن الحالتين وقعتا في فترتين زمنيتين مختلفتين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *الأمريكية :التعليم :الجزائرية : الاستعمارية : المرأة*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Colonization of any nation in the world has its effects on the different aspects of life; the colonizer tries to impose its policies on the colonized, political, economic, and military. The colonizer tries even to affect the cultural background of the colonized basically using educations as the most effective tool to guarantee that. In the case of America the colonizer was British and in the case of Algeria the colonizer was the French. Women as their counterpart men were affected not only by their own social components, but also by the new colonial components, women's education submitted to the social rules that society decided for them before the colonization of their countries, and after the colonization their education, like all aspects of life, changed. The colonial American society and the Algerian one had many things in common as well as differences when it comes to education for women. Questions of the study are how was the status of American and Algerian women during the colonization of their countries? What kind of an education they received? What are the differences and similarities between American and Algerian women's education during the colonial periods of both countries?

1. American Women's Education during the British Colonization:

Education in colonial America started by enacting many laws in the colonies, and the begging was from Massachusetts. The education laws passed in the colonies did not target girls. The 1642 law of Massachusetts, stated that children ought to acquire the skill of reading; the law did not specify whether girls or boys. In 1710, the previous law was amended to clearly address reading and writing should be taught to boys, and just reading should be taught to girls. In 1771, a law was passed in Massachusetts which stated that boys should be taught to read, write, and cipher. The same law stated that girls should be taught reading and writing (Davidson, 1989). Girls were not expected to cipher which was a mental complicated action that they were believed not to possess due to their nature. The American colonies imitated the English educational laws.

Education laws in the Southern colonies were not like that of Massachusetts that depended on public schools; the difference was that Southern families were rich enough to hire private tutors to their children. In the middle colonies, Pennsylvania passed a law in 1683 that stated parents and masters were requested to teach boys and girls of twelve reading the scriptures and writing as well. In 1690, Philadelphia Friends Meeting created a school that received boys and girls alike (Monaghan, 2005). The school was intended to receive poor boys and girls, the latter were more fortunate in Philadelphia because of its education laws.

Education for American women, during the colonial period, was very limited; less than one-third of them could not sign their names, women were not allowed to attend schools (Cooke, et al, 1993). Throughout most of the early American colonies, teaching girls reading was for the purpose of promoting religious instructions as well as reading the Bible; women were allowed to do so because they were thought to have the responsibility of teaching their children and raising them based on the religious values (Mays, 2004). The belief that women did not have a sufficient brain was an obstacle in front of women's education in colleges because they were thought to be unable to understand abstract ideas, thus an elementary education was more than adequate for her. However, boys could obtain skills in trading, and they could get involved in the family's business, or go to college (Berkin, 2005). Because of the thought that boys and girls were different in mind, chances for boys to obtain education in colleges and to run the family business as well as trading skills were decisively higher compared to girls.

In colonial America, education for girls was affected by gender issues, the gap between male's and female's education was very prominent; girl's education, according to colonial families, was not lucrative to her family thus educating girls was considered as a waste of time and wealth of the family, whereas, teaching boys was lucrative because they were supposed to run the family's business and to help their families. Girls were believed to be inferior to boys and based on that they were deprived from obtaining education (Lockridge, 1974). In most of the time, girls had not the right to have a higher education, except in summer time during which

boys were out of the schools for vacations, or in case there was an unoccupied room of boys (Monaghan, 2005). Discrimination and a sense of inferiority were the prevailing feeling of colonial American women that were the source of their education hindrance.

An educational system was created by the American colonists that enhanced the establishment of schools for boys and girls to eliminate illiteracy. During school days, girls were taught enough reading, writing, and arithmetic for the purpose of reading the Bible and for the purpose of taking care of the household. A governess, mostly, from England and a bit educated would teach girls art, music, French, social etiquette, needlework, spinning, weaving, cooking, and nursing (Greer, 2003). Girls' education was considered unnecessary thus they were not allowed to travel to England for obtaining higher education. There were a few girls who learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. Religion and domesticity were the main courses colonial girls received; schools prepared girls to be housewives. Obtaining higher education thought to be unnecessary and hard to accomplish by American colonist girls.

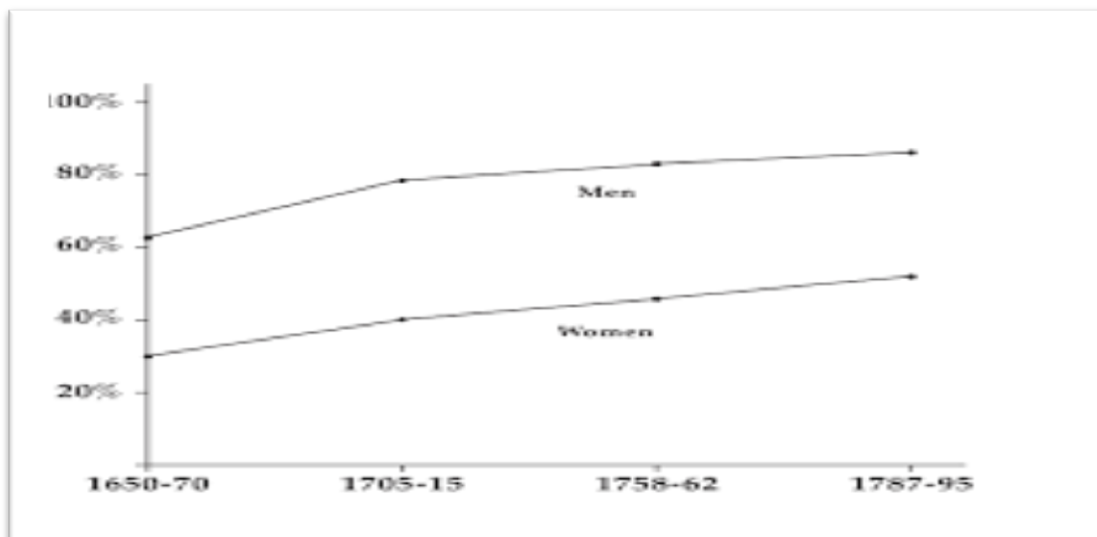
Basic abilities of reading and writing were the only educational elements girls could obtain, and they were neither encouraged nor permitted to obtain more than the basic skills of education. Education for girls and women was restricted to domestic skills and decorative arts. Women's education in colonial America was defined by, race, class, and location in terms of level and manner. Among the reasons for women's education was to have a suitable husband, and that needed basic education not higher one. Thus, obtaining higher education from a woman was a hindrance to her marriage because men considered highly educated women as dangerous and not fit for establishing a family (Berkin, 2005). Requiring more than the basic education was a disadvantage in the lives of women, and most of them would stick to the basic education in order to have a family based on the domestic skills they needed. Colonists considered women's presence in the household as the most important goal in their lives. They considered that education belonged to men, and the household belonged to women, they even accused women who read and write as insane.

1.1. Female Literacy vs. Male Literacy

There was a difference between men and women in literacy rates; women had low literacy rates compared to men from the first settlement of the colonies. The following figure shows the disparities between males and females literacy rates:

Figure1.

Literacy of New England Men and Women



Note. Adapted from *Literacy in Colonial New England: An Inquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West*, by K. Lockridge, 1974, p. 50, Norton. Copyright 1974 by Norton.

As Figure 1 illustrates (Lockridge, 1947, p. 50) diversity between men's literacy percentage and women's literacy percentage between 1650 and 1670 from their signatures of their wills, the literacy rates of men were 62% compared to that of women that was nearly 30 %. In the years between 1705 and 1715 literacy rates of men were nearly 79% compared to that of women that were 40%. The third period that was between 1758 and 1762, literacy rates for men were nearly 82% and for women 42%. The last period that was between 1787 and 1795, men's literacy rates were nearly 83% whereas women's literacy rates were nearly 43%. The literacy rates of men were doubled compared to that of women from the first period to the fourth one, despite that fact that women's literacy rates augmented in the New England Colonies, women still did not reach the level of men's literacy and continued to be nearly the half percentage compared to men's literacy rates.

Colonial American girls received no formal education; Dame Schools were the form of private schools girls used to go to for obtaining literacy. Girls did not need to formally register to have an education; they just needed to be enrolled into Dame Schools that usually run by women in their homes receiving a small group of children. The women who would teach these girls were not formally educated, and they wanted to have some income from teaching children alphabets and rudimentary skills (Long, 1975). For American colonists Dame Schools were beneficial for girls and women because girls could obtain basic knowledge that they needed to raise children and be housekeepers and women would have an income to help her and her family, especially when the husband was dead.

Dame schools were based on home instruction for small groups of children, the schools prepared boys for obtaining formal education usually town schools and academies, whereas few girls were able to attend town schools or academies. After the Dame schools, girls usually study in private schools, single gender schools, and exclusive schools for the rich (Riordan, 1990). Until the 19th Century, Dame schools, in general, did not prepare girls to join the town schools. In case girls could manage to join town schools, they would study in different times of the day from boys, typically, summer vacation or holidays (Riordan, 1990). The colonial educational system supported sex separation in schools. In these schools, girls were prepared to be housewives who could depend on themselves to take the responsibility of their houses and children.

Some exceptions appeared in the American colonies where women were not just literate but rather educated. These women confronted the social stifling of their eagerness to obtain an education more than that of basic one. Girls obtained formal education and even higher education in the eighteenth century colonial America, and more precisely Boston in Massachusetts. The latter was prominent in terms of publications which enhanced female literacy in the area, literary works published led to the increase of female literacy where the publication of Samuel Richardson's novel that was a form of exchanged letters between two young women; the novel contributed to the change in colonial women's lives (Middleton & Lombard, 2011).

2. Algerian Women's Education during the French Colonization:

2.1. Girls' Education in the pre-colonial Period:

Before the French colonization, Quranic Schools were the source of Algerian children's education. These schools received boys and girls, but girls received only basic education that was reading, citing, and memorizing the Quran, unlike boys who were allowed to obtain more than the basic education. Girls education was restricted to the basic Quranic one, because Algerian parents believed that it was all what their girls needed to obtain. Thus neither Madrasahs nor Zawiyahs' enrollment was feasible for girls. Madrasahs and Zawiyahs were two forms of higher education in Algeria; they received boys not girls (Gordon, 1968). Girls' education was restricted to rudimentary elements, and it was believed that they did not need more than that to be aware of their religion and to practice it properly.

In the Nineteenth Century, girls were enrolled in Quranic Schools that were established to receive just girls and not boys to guarantee separation of the two sexes. In these schools, female teachers would teach girls these teachers were called “Mouallemat”. Girls also were taught at home where fathers and brothers would be teachers for their daughters or sisters. Girls of wealthier families would have better chances in education, they even would acquire higher education; private teachers would be hired and would be carefully selected by the fathers because they would frequently enter the girls’ rooms. The teachers often were affiliated to the nearest mosque to these wealthy families’ houses (Laaredj-Campbell, 2016). Wealthy girls were luckier compared to poorer ones because they received education as a privately.

2.2. Girls’ Education during the colonial Period:

During the French colonization, the decree of 1850 promoted for the establishment of the Arab-French Schools. These schools, theoretically, would receive boys and girls, however, the French authorities paid no attention to girls’ education. The latter would put them in direct confrontation with the Algerian conservative society. In addition to that, the French considered that the creation of these schools for girls would be non-beneficial for them and costly. The French attitude towards Algerian girls’ education took it further to discourage Algerians establishment of schools for girls. For forty-five years after the French colonization, there were no schools for girls in Algerian capital city (Rogers, 2013). Algerian women were between two bitter choices; their patriarchal society and the French excluding policies.

The French colonial administrators considered Arab-French Schools for girls non-beneficial because these schools would not prepare them to in the working force. The French saw that the indigenous girls had specific religious and traditional restrictions in Algerian society and that they believed in the domestics roles designed for girls other than being educated and working. The French strongly believed that they could not reform the Algerian society using education as a means for that. Teaching urban native girls reading, writing, arithmetic, and sewing according to the European methods was not reachable at all (Lazreg, 1994). The French considered that educating Algerian girls as Europeans would end to the creation of women who would unfit the Arab society.

The 1870s were an era of changing perception for education of girls by the French. Based on their “Mission of Civilization”, the French considered Algerian girls’ education as a useful tool. The French wanted to produce a modern loyal generation that would support the French rule in Algerian and to have a productive generation in the Algerian society (Rogers, 2013). Charles Jeanmaire, the rector of the Academy of Algiers suggested an educational reformist policy to guarantee girls’ education. (Surkis, 2006). Jeanmaire proposed three ways to introduce education for girls.

Home-teaching was the first way for girls’ education where they depended on French women who could be relatives of French teachers; wives, daughters, or mothers. These women would have access to the Algerians’ homes after the acceptance of the parents in order to teach their daughters; they would teach them French language, and other skills basically housekeeping like hygiene lessons and sewing (Surkis, 2006). Children’s School was the second way of education for girls, in these schools, girls of four would learn how to handle needles to make small knitwear, in addition to some French (Rogers, 2013). The purpose of these schools was exposing little girls to the French education before they get veiled and separated from boys

The French suggested vocational schools as a third way of education that was addressed to girls between six and fourteen. Separation of sex was the basis of these schools as a form of respect to the Algerian society, the schools’ aim was to teach girls how to be more productive and could support themselves financially through learning trading and to participate in industry. By the creation of these schools would make girls’ productions sold to Europeans and Arabs (Benjamin, 2003). The schools were considered as workshops-schools, they were established in Algiers and Constantine, in these schools girls produced embroidery, but unfortunately their products were not always bought, and thus they were unemployed and their future was mysterious (Rogers, 2013). Girls received courses in skills of sewing, knitting, weaving, and

embroidery that they had a background of from their mothers and grandmothers either partially or fully. Till the 1940s, these schools continued to be active where they applied the skills in education (Lazreg, 1994). The aim of these schools was to have a second class citizen where its women were prepared to be servants.

In general, education of girls in Algeria had not been changed from nineteenth century to the 1950s. The French, systematically, took off Arabic Language and the Quran teaching from grade schools' curriculum. Girls, in these schools, were not supposed to take the exam of the sixth grade that would allow them to obtain higher education; the best these girls could obtain was the "Sertificat d'etudes primaires". The latter was the top of the seventh grade. Algerian girls who wanted to carry on their education had to be enrolled in the French schools for girls where they would learn Arabic as a second foreign language after English (Lorcin, 2006).

Algerian girls' education was very limited; they had workshops that provided them with domestic skills and handicrafts in most of the schools. In 1938, the number of Algerian girls who had any kind of education was less than 5 percent. In primary schools, the number of school-age girls continued to be less than 2 percent in 1890, and 9 percent in 1918 and 1944, and in 1954 the number was 13 percent. In Algerian schools, boys overwhelmingly outnumbered girls (McDougall, 2017). In 1954, Algerian school-age population between five and fifteen was over 2.000.000, and just 300.000 enrolled in primary schools. The number of boys, in the primary schools was 2018.000, compared to the number of girls that was 76.610. The difference between boys' and girls' education was mainly in higher education led to boys' enrollment with 5.308 boys and just 952 girls (Heggoy, 1974).

2.3. Female Literacy vs. Male Literacy:

There was a difference between male and female literacy in Algeria, education for girls was limited compared to that of boys due to the nature of the Algerian Muslim conservative society, and due to the fear of the French influence on girls' Muslim culture. Girls for the family were the source of honor and reputation of the family depended on their conservatism, modesty, and chastity. The conservative attitudes of the Algerian families affected their females' education acquirement; being feared from and of led to the deprivation of Algerian girls from obtaining an education. It was believed that girls' education would not benefit their families, but boys' education would.

Table 1

Trends in Enrolment Ratios in Algeria According to Census Data (1948-1998)

Gender Population aged 6-14						
Years	1948	1954	1966	1977	1987	1998
Male	13.4	23.5	56.80	80.80	87.75	85.28
Female	4.6	9.5	36.90	59.60	71.56	80.73
Total	9.1	16.6	47.20	70.40	79.86	83.05

Note. Adapted from *Changing Female Literacy Practices in Algeria: Empirical Study on Cultural Construction of Gender and Empowerment* by A. Laaredj-Campbell, 2016 p. 115. Copyright 2016, by Springer VS.

Table1 illustrates (Laaredj-Campbell, 2016) the enrollment's ratios of boys and girls and the difference between boys' and girls' enrollment from 1948 to 1998. Boys' enrollment rate in 1948 was 13.4 percent compared to 4.6 percent of girls, in 1954, there was an increase in the rate of enrollment for both sexes but still girls' enrollment was less than that of boys with 9.5

percent for girls and 23.5 percent for boys. After the Independence the rate of enrollment for girls increased gradually, but still it was less than that of boys.

Algerian women's literacy was very low, they were nearly all illiterate. In 1954, almost all women could not read and write with the exception of just 4.5 percent. In their society, women had a minor role; they did not have jobs. There were only 6 female doctors, and 25 teachers at secondary schools on the other hand, there was no female teacher in high schools. In the same year, there were just 50 female students in the University of Algiers out of total 500 Algerian students (Amrane & Abu-Haidar, 1999).

In the Academic year 1955-1956, in the region around Algiers, there were 36.261 Algerian Muslim girls who enrolled in primary schools. And in the Academic year 1958-1959, the number increased to 61.641 enrolled Muslim girls in primary schools; the number was nearly the double. The French policies in education led to the increase of the number of Muslim girls' enrollment because the French thought that if they win women's side, they would weaken men's instance on Independence and Revolution (Heggoy, 1974). The French tried to acquire women's support by securing them higher education, thus secondary schools received 6.719 Muslim girls (Heggoy, 1974). On the other hand, the Algerian Nationalists were aware of the French plans that targeted Algerian Muslim women to alienate them from their origins and their Muslim values in addition to their nationalistic cause; nationalists considered the French education, women received, as a means to create a new generation that would be loyal to the French, a generation that would affect the Algerian men's attitude towards Revolution and National cause.

2. Methods and Materials:

The methods followed in this study is the descriptive historical when dealing with the different historical events, chronological order of them and the different education laws and decrees concerning American women's education and Algerian women's education. The historical method is also used to describe the different development in the history of education in general and that of women in particular in both cases, the American and Algerian. The historical method also appears in the specific period of colonization of both cases from different colonizers, Britain and France. The second method used in this study is the comparative method where the two different cases from time and space are compared to show the various similarities and differences between the two cases, the comparative method is used to compare between female and male education and literacy rates in both cases. An analytical method is also used in this study that deals with the data analysis of literacy rates in both cases, and it is used to analyze the different views of historians towards the two cases.

3. Results and discussion :

The two cases' comparison resulted in many similarities and differences as well. The comparison of the American and Algerian cases resulted in that the two countries were colonies, one of the British and the other of the French, but contrary to the Algerian case who have been colonized by the heterogenic colonizer in terms of religion, language, and culture, the Americans have been colonized by the homogenous colonizer who shared the same religion, language, and culture. The similarity or difference between the colonizer and the colonized affected the educational system of both cases. Americans inherited their cultural components from the British, whereas Algerians did not accept the French intruding policies in their social components.

Women's status during the colonization of both countries submitted to the social patriarchal rule where men were the core of the society, and women were depending on them, and that affected women's education just like other issues in both the Algerian and American cases. Women in both societies had negative reflections about their lives; being a rich or a poor a woman was faced with lots of barriers and limitations. In both cases, societies limited the lives of women and defined clearly their roles as being dependent to men, and being wives who would raise their children. In both cases, women's place was their homes, and they were

expected to act as such. Women from an early age, in American and Algerian colonies, were taught based on this basis.

For the American case, the English settlement defined the rules to govern its colonies. In addition to the English rules, the social rules inherited from the Europeans were among the sources of social rules in the colonies. These rules marginalized women and they enjoyed very few liberties. The sources of the rules that governed the American society were social, religious, and historical. The purpose of these rules that were laws, perceptions, and customs, was to restrict the lives of the colonists, in general, and the lives of women in particular. On the other hand, in the Algerian case, the French colonization of Algeria marked an attempted to substitute the Algerian rules by its own rules that were totally different from the Algerian ones. Algerians wanted to preserve their own rules that were deprived from the Berber, Arab, and Muslim customs. These rules like the American ones were restrictive to women's liberties.

Education in both cases was embodied in the familial and religious principles. In colonial America people derived from their education from the family and the church. Similarly, in colonial Algeria people derived their education from the family and mosques. However, the American colonists did not have cultural clash with the English, but the Algerians did have a cultural clash with the French.

Education in both America and Algeria, during the colonial periods, had a form of religious education as the first form for it. In colonial America the Dame Schools were the first religious schools encouraged by the Pilgrim and Puritans, these schools were informal. The goal of these schools was to promote the Christian morality and ethics in colonial society. In Algeria Madrasahs, Quranic Schools, and Kutab were the first religious schools, they were informal too. The purpose of these schools was to maintain and preserve the Algerian Muslim values, in addition to resisting the French policies of spreading Christianity to replace Islam in Algeria.

As far as education of women is concerned, both the American and Algerian cases had gender differences in education where girls were discriminated. Both Americans and Algerians believed that girls should not have higher education because it was useless to teach girls. In both cases, girls were not permitted to obtain education contrary to boys who were encouraged to obtain it. In both cases, if they were allowed to obtain education, they could only have primary and rudimentary elements in education. Thus girls in both cases were prevented from carrying on their education in more than the basic educational schools. In the American case, girls were allowed to have an education that enabled them to read the Bible. Similarly, in the Algerian case, girls were allowed to obtain an education that enabled them to read the Quran.

In both cases, literacy rates varied considerably between men and women. Women had lowest literacy rates compared to men in the American context and the Algerian context as well. The low rates of girls' education, in both American and Algerian cases, was because of the two societies' views concerning education for girls that believed that it was worthless, and because girls were always depending on their males who were to be the source of the family's prosperity; that's why boys were encouraged to obtain higher education.

The content of education in the American and Algerian cases was basic where girls were taught enough reading, writing, and reciting religious scripts. Girls in both cases were taught aspects of the household. In the American case, girls were taught some reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as recording the household in addition to reciting the Bible. Girls were taught by women in a sex separated schools. In the Algerian case, girls were taught some reading, writing, and reciting the Quran. Algerian girls too were taught by women in schools where boys and girls were separated.

In both cases, girls' schools were not intended to prepare them for future jobs unlike boys' schools that were intended to prepare them to occupy jobs because they would be the responsible for the house economic supply. In the American case, boys were taught marketable skills to occupy their fathers' business, or to occupy any other job. In the Algerian case, boys received French education targeted them to be skillful workers. The Algerian families'

conservative views towards girls led them to deprive them from education, and the French did not dare to intervene in the Algerian basic cultural and personal elements in society thus they did not encourage girls to obtain education because they would be non-beneficial for them.

4. Conclusion:

In reviewing the historical picture of women's educational experiences in the colonial American and Colonial Algeria, it appears that expectations for girls in school have been different than expectations for boys. Historically, girls have been raised to assume specific and limited roles in society such as raising children, teaching them, and taking care of the households as housekeepers. The two cases share in common many educational perceptions about girls' education. The two cases had minor differences that of the time and space of the two historical events and the main actors of the history; American against British, and Algerian against French, but they share the same perception of women's place in society, and their education, and roles.

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