In this paper, we propose to interpret how Algerian women use fashion during wedding ceremonies to assert their position in society especially within the Kabyle sub-culture that just opened up to exogamic marriages. Results show that new consumptions of Arabo-Islamic codes allow women to participate indirectly in the current inter/intra acculturation process in Algeria although ambiguities and tensions remain vivid.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In this paper, we propose to decipher how Algerian women use fashion during wedding ceremonies to assert their position in society especially within the Kabyle sub-culture that just opened up to exogamic marriages. Algeria was a former French department (1830-1962) that experienced a socialist regime (until the 1990s) and the construction of a Nationalist Arabo-Islamic collective project as a firm reaction to the French Colonization. The rise of a consumer society is then very recent and challenges social positions, identity projects and gender issues. Within this context, we investigate the Kabyle sub-culture in particular. Kabyle people are a sub-group of a larger ethnic group named Berbers widespread across North of Africa, sharing their own language (Tamzight). Basically, it is a Mediterranean sociolinguistic group that faces a cultural assimilation (Arabic and French) as well as a mutation of its social organization. We propose in this paper to tackle gender issues and fashion consumption showing how aesthetics do shift and convey different identity positions among Kabyle women today.

MARRIAGE AS A SITE FOR IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS
Marriage “is not and has never been, and cannot be a private issue” (Levi-Strauss, 2002). It is driven by cultural and economic considerations. Then, marriage depends on some objectives that a society might manage to achieve through endogamy or exogamy. In the Kabyle context, starting the 17th century, local assemblies (Djemaas) did forbid both women and men to marry people outside their community (endogamy) otherwise they would not be eligible for heritage. This was in order to avoid the dislocation of lands and of the region. By studying the current period of a shift from endogamic to exogamic weddings in Kabyle sub-culture this research aims understanding how fashion consumption mediates Kabyle women’s identity projects.

METHODOLOGY
This paper is part of an ethnographic research on acculturation in Algeria. Authors performed participant observation, interviews and a structural semiotic analysis of past/present wedding pictures (Floh 1990, 1995). One of the authors did attend 15 weddings in Algeria (from preparation to ceremony). Marriages under study represent a “qualitative diversity” (Schwarz, 1990, p 41) rather a representative sample, couples having very diverse backgrounds, being between 23 and 42, living in Kabylie region or in Algiers. We focus here on the results of a structural semiotic approach performed to capture the meaning of hundreds of wedding visuals' from the 70s until now (Greimas & Courtès, 1986, Floch 1990, 1995). Holt and Thompson 2004, Kozinets 2009, Ourahmoune and Nyack 2008). Drawn from a deep reading of cultural texts on Algeria and the Kabyle culture, as well as observations and interviews, and the analysis of wedding photos, we construct a semiotic square to interpret feminine fashion in kabyle wedding ceremonies and their link with consumers identity projects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A semiotic square allows analyzing the relationships and meanings of paired concepts and enriches binary oppositions (Greimas & Courtès 1986, Floch 1990, 1995, Holt and Thompson 2004, Kozinets 2009, Ourahmoune and Nyack 2008). Drawn from a deep reading of cultural texts on Algeria and the Kabyle culture, as well as observations and interviews, and the analysis of wedding photos, we construct a semiotic square to interpret feminine fashion in kabyle wedding ceremonies and their link with consumers identity projects.

INSIDE vs. OUTSIDE semantic opposition allows capturing the dominant narratives that prevail in the Kabyle culture today.

Being INSIDE the community means valorizing ancestral Mediterranean culture and aesthetic references to the Kabyle and Berber fashion together with the highly French inspired style.

At the opposite, being OUTSIDE the community means valorizing the Other/Exotic, in this case the Arabo-Islamic aesthetics and fashion that were forbidden to Kabyle women until recently. Other regions folkloric outfits, Ottoman Heritage, Moroccan Caftans, Lebanese Make up, Gold Jewels vs. traditional Kabyle silver and coral jewels are then adopted.

The semiotic square is useful enriching and overcoming this binary opposition emphasizing two other signified. Being NOT OUTSIDE which is strictly conforming to Kabyle ethics and aesthetics and negating any resemblance and inspiration from the Arabo-Islamic Algerian culture, which is mainly the position, occupied today by Autonomy seekers (weddings cannot be exogamic in this case and displays only typical Kabyle folklore in terms fashion, music and food during wedding ceremonies). Fashion consumption then stands as a mirror of a minority radical resistance as regard the dominant culture through the display of “natural”, “pure”, “Arab Free” signs.

Finally, Being NOT INSIDE means a renouncement to the Kabyle specificities and the adhesion to the nationalist Arabo-Islamic ideology although people acknowledge their Kabyle origins. This position will mainly concern families that moved to other Algerian regions for decades or have been basically connected at a high level to the political regime. Algerian regimes instituted the Arabo-Islamic identity as a unique source of “Algerianity” (in a Jacobinist manner). In terms consumption and fashion, exogamic weddings become a rule and even though families’ names might be Kabyle, people live themselves as Arabs (highly acculturated) and then exclusive Arabo-Islamic fashion is displayed.

Our research emphasizes that until now most of the mixed marriages are mainly a Kabyle male phenomenon rather than women espousing Arabs. This might be explained by the role of women in Latin cultures as regard identity/tradition transmission and speaks of the gender asymmetry in this subculture (cf. Bourdieu’s work on masculine domination in the Kabyle context). But, even though women are still less directly involved, new consumptions allow them to participate in the Kabyle/ Arab acculturation process. Especially, analysis of the evolution of kabyle brides’ wear shows how they recently shifted from a double aesthetic

Nuptials And Fashion: The Case of The Kabyle Acculturation
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reference (Kabyle and French styles) to a juxtaposition of references including the valorization of Arabic aesthetics.

The young female generation displays signs of very syncretic references escaping some clichés. But, while doing so, they introduce a new uniformity. All brides displaying the same signs according to scripted sequences representing basically the main ideological forces in Algeria today. Thereby, they do construct a very chameleonic self-identity through consumption. A 5th position within our semiotic square is then discovered through this research and accounts for a “swapping” (Oswald 1999) between INSIDE AND OUTSIDE the community rules. Fashion in the case of a minority in a developing country speaks of the inner desires of women to overcome gender restrictions. Fashion as a “soft” stylistic consumption permits to insert liberator feminine claims in a closed and scripted world. But, while opening the box and entering a multiple identity framework, our respondents seem more able to signify it through fashion signs than explicit/verbal discourse. Kabyle women interviewed adopt a conventional discourse as regard their Kabyle identity and formulate their wish for their relatives to maintain endogamy rules as a priority for the Kabyle identity to be.

This point needs to be addressed by future research therefore to deeply investigate whether fashion consumption stands as a simple stylistic/recreational effect or as a profound sign of gender identity deconstruction within the Kabyle minority in Algeria.

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