

# BLEU BLANC NOIR

Assimilation Trajectories, Identity Dynamics, and Boundary Work  
of French Antilleans, West Africans, and their Children in Paris

by

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# Abstract

This study compares the assimilation trajectories, identity dynamics and boundary work of French Antilleans, West Africans and their descendants in the Paris region. While previous studies have focused on the experiences of French Antilleans and sub-Saharan Africans separately or those of Blacks in France as a whole, this study engages in a more minute comparison of the experiences of West African immigrants and French Antilleans across two generations in mainland France. This comparison primarily aims to determine the role of the divergent civic, cultural and religious backgrounds of these groups alongside their largely shared racial characteristics in how they assimilate to French society across two generations. These variables are of particular interest given the salience of civic and cultural distinctions in France, while racial distinctions are notoriously downplayed. The main theoretical goal of the study is to assess the usefulness of segmented assimilation theory in accounting for the various assimilation outcomes of these groups.

Drawing on 55 in-depth interviews complemented with wide-ranging statistical data, I explore the impact of cultural, religious and racial factors on the intergenerational educational and professional trajectories of both populations, analyze how these factors influence their identification patterns and assess how members of these groups seek to negotiate the various symbolic boundaries that they come up against, both in their relations to each other and to the majority population.

The results suggest that French Antilleans have more favourable educational and professional outcomes than West Africans. Despite the importance of racial barriers for both groups, the findings also underscore the salience of cultural and religious forces as well as the identification dynamics and boundary work that both groups engage in. While some segmented assimilation mechanisms remain valid in the French case, the study also demonstrates the importance of empirically identifying societally specific assimilation barriers and cultural segments for the theory to retain its usefulness in other national contexts.

## Lay Summary

While previous studies have focused on French Antilleans, sub-Saharan Africans or Blacks in France in general, this study seeks to compare more specifically the challenges faced by West Africans, French Antilleans and their children born in Paris in becoming part of French society. A key goal is to assess the role that the distinct civic, cultural and religious backgrounds of these populations play compared to their often similar racial characteristics. This is particularly interesting to examine in France, given that civic and cultural distinctions are often put forward in daily life while racial distinctions are routinely downplayed. Drawing on 55 in-depth interviews and wide-ranging statistical data, I compare the educational and professional attainment of both migrant groups and their children. I then analyze how their differences and similarities affect their identities and the way they interact with each other and the broader society.

# **Preface**

This dissertation is the original, unpublished, independent work by the author. The qualitative fieldwork of the study was approved by the UBC Ethics Board Certificate Number H11-01322.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

On May 10, 2008, the French Republic officially observed the 160th anniversary of the abolition of slavery.<sup>1</sup> In Paris, the *Conseil représentatif des associations noires* (CRAN)<sup>2</sup> organized a “march of freedoms” set to depart from *Place de la République* and head to *Place de la Bastille*, not only to commemorate the abolition of slavery, but also to denounce persistent problems with prejudice and discrimination. Another march organized by the *Collectif des fils et filles d’Africains déportés* (Coffad)<sup>3</sup> was planned to depart from the same location at the same time, but was heading instead towards *Place de la Nation* (Nouvel Obs 2008).

Lucien,<sup>4</sup> a retired French Antillean woodworker who had simply come to participate in the commemoration, remembers his reaction when he arrived at the square and found out that these marches would not only be heading in different directions, but apparently also involved different populations:

If I had known I wouldn’t have gone. I saw one demonstration for Africans, and one for Antilleans. One went to Bastille and the other went to Nation... When I saw this I said to myself “we’re really buffoons”. If there’s a demonstration it should be for everybody. You shouldn’t have a separate one for Antilleans and a separate one for Africans.

This vignette neatly encapsulates many of the key themes explored in this dissertation. First, these separate demonstrations highlight the downplaying of racial allegiances in the French conception of nationhood, despite the fact that experiences of discrimination and racial prejudice seem widespread in the country. Despite Africans’ and Antilleans’ shared experience of colonial rule, this incident is also a reminder of the very different legacies that the French imperial enterprise has left in its former colonies. Moreover, it hints

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<sup>1</sup> Introduced by president Jacques Chirac in 2006 to observe the “memories of the slave trade, slavery and their abolition” – the specific date was chosen in reference to a law adopted on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001 identifying the transatlantic slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity.

<sup>2</sup> The Representative Council of Black Associations, a prominent black advocacy group created in 2005 which primarily struggles against discrimination, but has also made reparations for slavery and colonialism a part of its agenda. The organization officially represents the Rainbow Push Coalition, founded by Jesse Jackson.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee of the Children of Deported Africans primarily works for the rehabilitation of the memory of the Africans deported during the transatlantic slave trade, as well as for moral and material compensations for deportation and slavery.

<sup>4</sup> The respondents’ names have been modified to protect their anonymity.

at the distinct social positioning of two populations with different degrees of embeddedness in the national fabric, and is suggestive of the complex relationship that a shared racial background inevitably institutes between them both, as well as between them and the racially distinct mainstream population. Furthermore, through the prism of Lucien—put in a position where he fundamentally has to pick a side—it reflects not only the salient social boundaries between these two populations but also a strong desire to overcome them. Finally, these divergent marches also raise the question whether these two populations will themselves be heading in different directions over time, as their respective legacies would suggest, or if on the contrary they will converge around common experiences and aspirations as a result of their shared racial status.

We will explore these themes by studying the assimilation trajectories, identity dynamics and boundary drawing strategies displayed by French Antilleans, West Africans and their descendants in the Parisian metropolitan area. Unlike previous studies—which have either focused on sub-Saharan immigrants, French Antilleans, or on the experiences of Blacks in France in general through a variety of analytical lenses—this dissertation intentionally compares the assimilation patterns of Black Antilleans and West Africans across two generations in the Paris region.

While Antilleans from Martinique and Guadeloupe are French citizens and are linguistically, culturally and religiously similar to the majority population, West African immigrants from Mali and Senegal diverge more sharply from the French mainstream in these respects and are frequently stigmatized for their religious and cultural practices. However, despite greater racial mixing in the Antilles, both groups have a substantial overlap in their racial features. Since the French approach to immigrant incorporation tends to emphasize civic and cultural distinctions but refuses to formally acknowledge any racial differences between French citizens, comparing the assimilation patterns of these populations and generations will help to empirically determine if the sharp cultural and religious differences between them actually overshadow their racial commonalities, or if race actually remains the 'master status' that shapes their social experiences and identities.

Drawing on 55 in-depth interviews and descriptive statistical data, I first explore how these civic, cultural, religious and racial characteristics affect the intergenerational educational and professional experiences and trajectories of these populations. I then analyze how they influence their identification patterns, and assess how they seek to negotiate the various symbolic boundaries they come up against, both in their relations to each other and in French society as a whole.

## I. Background and Rationale

### Republican Universalism, Colour-Blindness, and Secularism

The French Republic is notorious for the abstract universalism that it inherited from the French Revolution, which founded its political model upon the equality of individual citizens before the law regardless of their religious, ethnic, racial or other group characteristics. This legacy has largely contributed to the elimination of religious matters from the sphere of public life, the refusal to recognize any ethnic, racial or religious distinctions among French citizens, and the forging of a national culture which its members are largely encouraged to perceive as colour-blind and universalistic.

A central component of the French revolutionary ideals was what has become known as the principle of *laïcité*, i.e. the stringent form of secularism that has gradually eroded the influence of the Catholic Church on public life since the Revolution, reflected for instance in the elimination of religious instruction in the late 19th century and the separation of Church and State in 1905.<sup>5</sup> As a large Muslim population has developed through recent immigration waves, the principle of *laïcité* has again come to the forefront of public debate, and is routinely invoked to regulate various expressions of Islamic religious life

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<sup>5</sup> Rather than springing from a pragmatic desire to federate an existing religious pluralism, which for instance animated the founders of the United States, French secularism was instead shaped through a more fervent power struggle between revolutionaries inspired by enlightenment ideas, and the established Catholic Church. In the revolutionary era and its aftermath, Church property was seized, recalcitrant parts of the clergy were executed, the non-religious functions of the Church were taken over by the state, and several substitutes for the Christian religion, which would put more emphasis on philosophy and reason, were avidly experimented with. The fervent roots of this secularism explain why the state not only proscribes the funding of any religious activities, but that it also plays a more active role in emphasizing the need for expunging any presence of religion in public life.

in public space, the most notorious example being the controversy surrounding the headscarf (Bowen 2007; Laurence and Vaisse 2006).

This antagonistic stance towards ethnic, racial and religious divides within the French polity has also favoured the promotion of a staunch form of assimilation that has successfully incorporated several large waves of primarily European immigrants by encouraging naturalization, acculturation and loss of ethnic distinctiveness (Hargreaves 2007).<sup>6</sup>

Although this 'Republican model' of immigrant assimilation has undergone substantial changes over past decades—as greater latitude has been given to the preservation of cultural specificities and racial discrimination has gained greater recognition—a substantial majority of the French population still remains attached to this model. Its defenders see in it the only means of safeguarding a cohesive society of equal individuals relatively free from the tribalism of ethnic politics, which many associate with an undesirable 'Anglo-Saxon' societal model. Its critics on the other hand see in this "French phraseology of universalism" the perpetuation of ethno-racial inequalities and discrimination as this universalism "serves before anything else as a shelter for an ethno-racial nationalism which refuses to say its name." (Mbembe 2005: 152).<sup>7</sup> My goal is not as much to take sides in these debates as to examine empirically the role that this republican model of integration may play in forging a sense of shared civic identity among the descendants of these populations or in contesting the legitimacy of social identities which they may not be able to disregard given the social barriers they give rise to in their daily lives.

Given the deep historical roots that this republican approach to assimilation rests upon, it has created substantial practical, cultural and intellectual obstacles for scholarship dealing with race and ethnicity. Debates over discrimination in the past decade and a half have nevertheless slightly eroded the

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, the French model of secularism and of assimilation are intimately linked and historically intertwined, as reflected for instance in the policies adopted towards the Jewish minority after the Revolution. While the revolutionary ideals had granted Jews equal rights as individuals it also required them to eschew their group affiliation to a large extent by relegating their religious activity and identity to the private sphere. *Laïcité* thus on the one hand opened a "neutral space" where Jews and Protestants were put on an equal footing with the Catholic majority, but on the precondition that their religious identity would not come to interfere with their adherence to the universalistic precepts that underpinned their French citizenship, which in practice required substantial cultural assimilation (see e.g. Hyman 1998).

<sup>7</sup> All quotes from French language sources are my own translations.

hegemony of this paradigm (Simon and Sala Pala 2009) and a few works focusing on France's Black population have appeared in recent years, but have typically taken the form of essays (e.g. Durpaire 2006; Kouvidila 2007; Zika 2008) rather than rigorous empirical analyses. Although important efforts have recently been made to encourage and develop research on this population (see Blanchard et al. 2011; Ndiaye 2008), no empirical studies to date have to my knowledge analyzed the assimilation patterns and identity dynamics that unite and divide the Black population in France and attempt to understand what these dynamics hinge upon, and what influence, if any, the 'republican model' may have on them. Nor have any studies to my knowledge engaged in any serious comparative analyses with the French Antillean population to determine the specificity of their experiences as quasi-immigrants and as racial minorities in mainland France.

### **West Africans and French Antilleans**

Although sub-Saharan Africans have been present in small numbers in France since the colonial era, their numbers only began substantially growing after the mid-1970s, primarily as a result of changes in migration policies. About 1.3 million first and second-generation sub-Saharans were estimated to reside in France in 2011, which represents around 11% of the country's immigrant population across two generations (Tribalat 2015).<sup>8</sup> They primarily concentrate in the Paris region, where 61% of sub-Saharan immigrants and 65% of their descendants reside (Beauchemin, Lhommeau and Simon 2016), and primarily hail from former French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. The two largest sub-Saharan African populations in France have their roots in Senegal and Mali in West Africa.<sup>9</sup> These early African migrants started coming to France in the 1960s to fill low-skilled industrial jobs in the Paris region. They are primarily of rural origin and have limited French

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<sup>8</sup> This is by far the fastest growing population in France, and is likely to represent an increasingly large proportion of the immigrant population over time. According to the calculations of Michèle Tribalat, the sub-Saharan population in France increased by 90% between 1999 and 2011 across two generations (Tribalat 2015), and by an additional 43% between 2011 and 2015, which would actually bring its size up to 1.85 million in 2015 (Tribalat 2017)

<sup>9</sup> Other major sending countries include Congo, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Lessault and Beauchemin 2009).

language skills and low educational qualifications, and are also predominantly from Muslim backgrounds (Moguérrou, Brinbaum and Primon 2016; Timera and Garnier 2010).<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, the Antillean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe are part of a handful of French overseas departments and territories (DOM-TOM) that are an integral part of the French Republic,<sup>11</sup> and have been part of France for longer than some parts of the country's mainland. Antilleans have been French citizens since the definitive abolition of slavery in 1848, and have since had full access to metropolitan France,<sup>12</sup> where they were estimated to constitute a population of 372 900 with their descendants in 2011 (Marie 2014). Antillean migration to France was initially sparse and primarily hailed from the upper-middle class, but economic difficulties in the islands led to the creation of a specific migration policy in the 1960s that sought to attract low-skilled Antillean workers to fill labour shortages (Anselin 1990).

Antillean migrants have a higher labour force participation rate compared to other migrants, largely because of their ability to access public service sector jobs from which foreign nationals are barred. But just like other immigrants, Antilleans who arrived during this period have lower qualifications on average compared to the majority population, and primarily live in low-income housing projects with high concentrations of immigrants in the greater Paris region (Hargreaves 2007).<sup>13</sup> As deindustrialization and mass unemployment have particularly affected these areas over the past few decades, this raises the question of the assimilation trajectories that their children are likely to follow. The job security that their parents enjoyed in the public sector is not available to them to the same degree, and they report experiencing comparable levels of racial discrimination as their sub-Saharan African peers (Beauchemin et

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<sup>10</sup> This sets them apart from the more recent waves of immigrants from the African Guinean Gulf, who are predominantly Christian and came to France more recently with higher educational credentials and more favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Despite focusing solely on Malian and Senegalese immigrants and their children in this study, we will for the sake of convenience sometimes simply refer to them as “Africans” despite the fact that very different social and cultural dynamics might be at work among other parts of the sub-Saharan African population.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to Martinique and Guadeloupe, the *départements d'outre-mer* (DOM) also include French Guyana, la Réunion and much more recently, Mayotte (since March, 31 2011). As all other departments in France, they are represented in the French National Assembly and the French Senate, and are largely governed by the same laws and regulations as the mainland. They are also part of the European Union, and use the Euro as their currency. The *territoires d'outre-mer* (TOM) comprise a number of islands that are less politically and institutionally integrated to the mainland.

<sup>12</sup> Metropolitan France is the part of the country that is geographically located in Europe, i.e. the mainland and Corsica. Antilleans typically refer to it as “the metropole”, and particularly its white population as “metropolitans”.

<sup>13</sup> They also concentrate highly in the Paris Region where three-quarters of French Antilleans are estimated to live (Giraud 2004)



al. 2010b), alongside whom they often grow up. Michel Giraud has warned that the Antillean population in France “has been slipping towards joining the most underprivileged sections of French society” (2004: 627), and similar concerns can certainly be raised regarding many descendants of sub-Saharan African immigrants in France, where school drop-out rates, unemployment rates, and crime rates among young men are higher than other children of immigrants (Brinbaum, Meurs and Primon 2016; Brinbaum, Moguérrou and Primon 2016; Lagrange 2010).

### **Intergenerational Assimilation Patterns**

In recent years, sociologists of immigration have developed valuable theoretical accounts of the various paths along which immigrants are incorporated into their host societies. The segmented assimilation model makes the paths of upward or downward socioeconomic mobility contingent upon immigrants' acculturation patterns and on their position in a segmented labour market and a racialized social structure. Those trapped in the lower and informal sectors of the labour market, especially when racially distinct from the majority population, are at risk of experiencing a downward assimilation into an 'underclass' without prospects for upward mobility. Segmented assimilation theorists suggest that it is through limited acculturation and retention of ties to an ethnic community that racial minorities can avert this process of downward assimilation and increase their chances for upward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). This theory has been very influential on immigration research in the United States, but has still been limited in its application elsewhere despite the many empirical and theoretical benefits that could derive from such efforts.

Studying divergent assimilation patterns in France has proved problematic as no racial or ethnic statistics are collected in the country. The few existing quantitative studies on segmented assimilation in France therefore remain tentative at best (Safi 2006; Silberman, Alba and Fournier 2007), but all invariably conclude that North and sub-Saharan African-origin youth are at risk of downward assimilation. These studies have raised several unanswered questions regarding the specific social mechanisms that may cause

this downward assimilation in France, which are thought to derive less from race and more from the experience of colonialism and/or more salient religious and cultural boundaries (Silberman and Fournier 2008). Efforts to identify the mechanisms that give rise to these outcomes however calls for more process-oriented qualitative work, which can subsequently inform more robust quantitative studies on the topic.<sup>14</sup>

This study will not solely focus on downward trajectories, as respondents have been recruited from a variety of social backgrounds. However, since it aims to identify the key mechanisms behind the assimilation trajectories of culturally diverse racial minorities in France, it provides an opportunity to empirically examine the salience of racial mechanisms alongside the supposedly more potent cultural and religious ones in determining the trajectories they follow.

### **Black Identities and Boundaries**

According to Michèle Lamont, the peculiar secular and civic conception of nationhood in France has created a sharp boundary between citizens who adhere to France's universalistic culture and foreigners who do not, leading to a stronger distinction between French citizens and immigrants. On the other hand, given the nation's refusal to make racial distinctions, boundaries that would highlight Blacks as a group have simultaneously been delegitimized, especially as many Blacks initially hailed from the French Caribbean. However, with increased sub-Saharan African immigration, Lamont argues that this might be changing:

This pattern of weaker boundaries toward blacks and stronger boundaries against immigrants (as compared with the United States) may be in the process of changing, as sub-Saharan African immigration grows... We may also be witnessing an accelerated process of the "blackening" of immigration, as more non-Caucasian immigrants come to France... Moreover, black Africans are joining North Africans at the bottom of the social ladder. Consequently, in the future, French definitions of social membership may come to be associated more explicitly with skin colour. It remains to be seen whether the republican myth and the presence of black French citizens from the Dom-Toms will remain powerful enough to trump the association between blackness and outsider status. (Lamont 2004: 151)

Antilleans have been French for many generations and share a strong civic, cultural and religious common ground with other French people, whereas West African immigrants are commonly perceived as culturally

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<sup>14</sup> Alex Stepick and Carol Dutton Stepick indeed argue that "it is the dialectic between such qualitative studies and the more representative, larger survey samples that will further refine the concept of segmented assimilation and contribute to its value as a typological framework" (2010: 1162)

'other' and stigmatized for cultural practices such as polygamy and female genital mutilation (Fall 2006; Poiret 1996). Antilleans are therefore often claimed to be perceived more favourably than sub-Saharan African immigrants (Gastaut 2000), but their phenotypical proximity to each other, and racial divergence from the majority population, raises the question whether this actually corresponds to their social experience. Comparing two generations of Antilleans and West Africans will allow us to empirically examine the extent to which cultural and religious differences actually eclipse race, or if race actually remains one of the prime factors that shape the social experiences and identities of these populations.

Previous studies have shown how these two groups have crafted distinct African and Antillean identities in France (Beriss 2004; Poiret 1996). But as Michel Giraud has noted, this is less and less the case for many later-generation Antilleans:

While a large proportion of the Antillean immigrant population in France continues to assert its identity by remaining loyal to its own culture, another large and growing fraction (among the young especially) is recasting its system of representation and values at the cost of a crisis in its symbolic framework. Individual groups which no longer fully identify politically or culturally with the migration source countries are beginning to appear. Yet, as minorities, they are still left on the edges of the host society. They increasingly regard this society as their own, but would like to join it on their own terms... France's young Antillean are thus becoming 'blacks' in their own and in other people's eyes (2004: 632).

In a largely assimilationist country where racial discrimination seems widespread and where ethnic identities have little legitimacy beyond the first generation, the children of these two groups may in fact converge into thinking of themselves as a stigmatized racial minority despite the substantially different degree of embeddedness both populations had in the national community in the first generation.

However, given that Antilleans tend to occupy a distinct group position in France, and given the more substantial cultural and religious gap that the sub-Saharan African descendants may have to bridge—especially in light of the strict secularist ideal in French society which may be perceived as especially ill-disposed towards their religion—it is also possible that these expectations of racial convergence may be exaggerated and that distinctions between the Antillean and West African population are maintained to a large extent in the second generation.

## II. Research Questions and Outline

### Research Questions

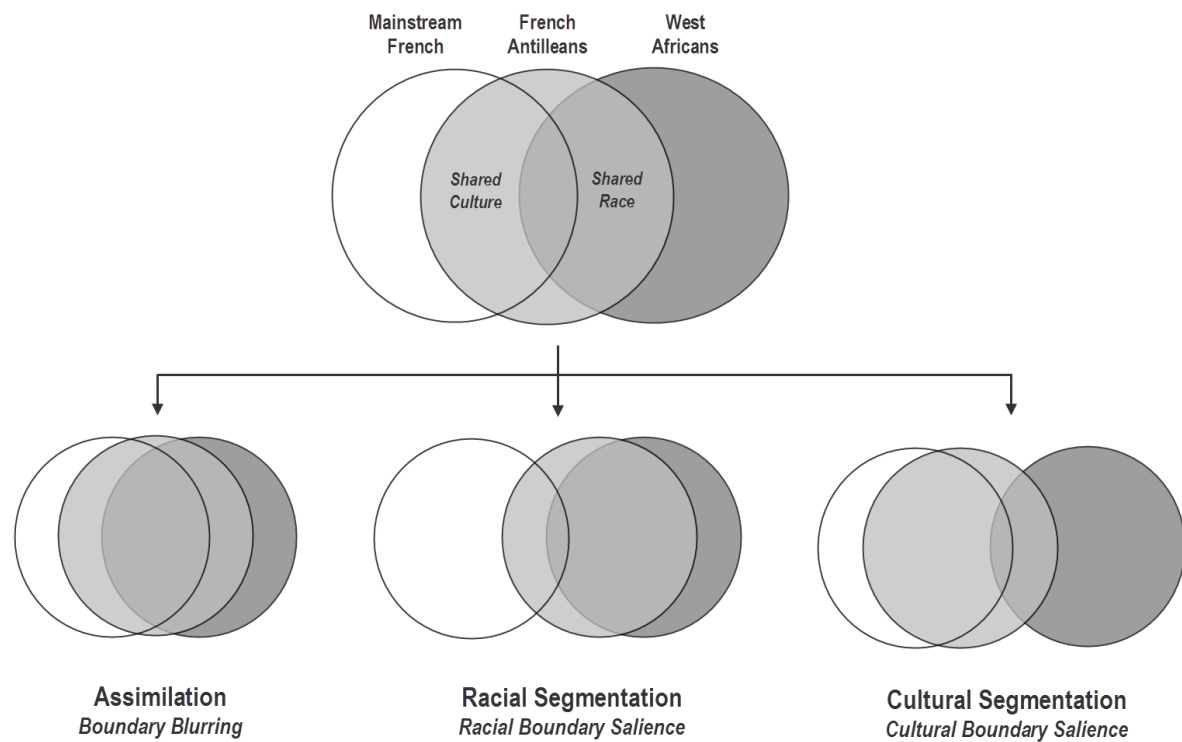
In light of the discussion above, the following research questions will guide the study:

*(1) What social, cultural and racial factors have contributed to shaping the educational and occupational trajectories of second-generation West Africans and Antilleans, and what particular obstacles have they faced in this regard?*

*(2) In what terms do West African and Antillean immigrants and their children conceive of their racial, ethnic, national and religious identities, and what factors primarily underpin these identifications?*

*(3) What boundaries are these two populations confronted with in their relations to each other and to the broader society, and to what extent do they reproduce or challenge them?*

Figure I provides a schematic representation of the most likely intergenerational assimilation outcomes for both groups, whether expressed in their socio-economic mobility, their social identities or their group relations. One possible pattern is that they both substantially converge towards the French mainstream leading to a greater blurring of group boundaries (*Assimilation*). A second possible pattern is that Antilleans gravitate away from the mainstream and towards Africans in the second generation as a result of shared experiences of exclusion from the mainstream (*Racial Segmentation*). A third possible pattern is that Antilleans maintain a cultural and civic distinction from Africans in the second generation, while they move increasingly closer to the mainstream (*Cultural Segmentation*). All three of these intergenerational patterns are likely to appear in various degrees in the data, but the question is to what degree and which social factors are more likely to be conducive to which outcome.



**Figure 1.** Potential intergenerational assimilation and identification outcomes for second-generation French Antilleans and West Africans

## Outline of the study

The study is organized in three distinct parts. The first frames the study, the second explores the respondents' assimilation trajectories, and the third analyzes their identity dynamics and the boundaries they draw.

The first part of the dissertation comprises chapters two through four. Chapter two presents an overview of the history of immigration and assimilation in France, as well as an historical background of the region of West Africa and the Antilles where the populations under study have their roots. Chapter three then lays out the theoretical framework that informs the study. First, it discusses the relevant immigrant assimilation theories that will inform the analysis conducted in part two and explains how the study will seek to contribute to these theories with data from the French context. Second, it presents the theories of social identities and boundaries that underpin the analysis in part three. Chapter four presents

the data used for the study, and how it was collected and analyzed, and discusses some challenges and limitations of the study.

The second part on assimilation trajectories also comprises four chapters. Chapter five details the particularities of the French context of reception and the constraints it puts on assimilation. Chapter six then explores the migration and settlement patterns of the first generation respondents. Chapter seven explores the family dynamics and neighbourhood effects that are influential upon second-generation respondents. Chapter eight then considers the second-generation respondents' experiences and trajectories in school and the labour market, focusing particularly on their experiences of discrimination and differential treatment, but also their marital and partner choices.

Part three concentrates on identity and boundary dynamics, and comprises two chapters. In Chapter nine, I analyze the intergenerational identification patterns, and develop identity typologies for the second-generation African and Antillean respondents. Chapter ten then identifies the social boundaries that African and Antillean immigrants and their children confront in the host society. It explores how both groups seek to turn these boundaries to their advantage, and also how they themselves draw boundaries, not least among each other, and what underpins these symbolic dividing lines.

The final chapter concludes the dissertation and provides a broader discussion of its main findings.

## **PART ONE**

# **FRAMING THE STUDY**

## **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This chapter aims to place Antillean and West African migration to France in its broader historical context. The first section provides a brief outline of France's history of immigration and assimilation, as well as how academic research on assimilation, race, and ethnicity have changed over time. The second section then provides an overview of the history of Martinique and Guadeloupe in the Antilles, and of Mali and Senegal in West Africa, as well as the history of migration from these regions to mainland France. The goal is to highlight the historical ties between these geographical spaces and the experiences they have in common, but also the significant differences between and within them, as well as lay the groundwork for a proper understanding of the migratory processes that have shaped these communities in mainland France.

### **I. Historical Perspective on Immigration and Assimilation in France**

#### **Immigration: From Europeans to Non-Europeans**

Compared to most other European countries, France has a long history of immigration. Large-scale immigration began in the mid-19th century as a result of the inability of internal migration flows from rural to urban areas to fill labour shortages in the expanding industrial sector. From 1851 to 1886, the country's immigrant population rose from 1 to 3 percent of the population, mainly from Belgian and Italian immigration. While many other European countries saw parts of their populations emigrate to America, France continued to receive immigrants from its neighbouring countries. When the United States began restricting immigration in the 1920s, the immigration flows to France began increasing rapidly with new economic migrants from Poland and Czechoslovakia in addition to workers from neighbouring countries.



In 1930, France was the country with the highest rate of foreign population growth in the world, and its share of foreigners was higher than the United States (Noiriel 1996, Weil 2005, Hargreaves 2007).

In the economic crisis of the 1930s, quotas were imposed for immigrant workers in some sectors, but immigration continued to feed the labour needs in other sectors. In addition to refugees from the Armenian genocide, Italians and Germans who fled Mussolini's and Hitler's ascent to power, large numbers of Spaniards migrated to France as soon as the civil war started and continued to do so after the war in increasing numbers. Under pressure from public opinion, the government proceeded to forcibly repatriate unemployed immigrant workers during this period, but also avoided interfering too much with immigration to accommodate the interests of some employers.

It wasn't until 1945 that France introduced an immigration policy which required immigrants to have employment in the country but also facilitated more permanent settlement. The policy didn't formally call for distinguishing immigrants by their origin, but in practice European immigration was favoured. The immigration flows from Spain kept increasing in the post-war period, in addition to a large Portuguese and North African population. Algerian immigration took off after the Second World War when the Algerian Muslims were granted French citizenship and were allowed to circulate freely on French territory. After the referendum granting Algeria self-determination in 1962, more than a million *pieds-noirs* (European colonists in Algeria) immigrated to France. Despite the fact that gradual changes have been made to the immigration policy for Algerians since, they still retain a privileged immigration framework compared to other nationalities. In addition to an influx of Moroccans and Tunisians, the North African population leaped from 2 percent of the foreign population in 1946 to 39 percent in 1982 (Hargreaves 2007; Weil 2005).

In the 1970s, the share of non-Europeans in the immigrant flows gradually increased, mainly coming from post-colonial migration from South-East Asia and Western Africa, but also from Turkey. The economic crisis of the mid-1970s led the French government to formally suspend labour immigration, and even attempt to organize the repatriation of a large share of North African immigrants, who were beginning to be seen as unassimilable. Official restrictions on labour migration notwithstanding, immigration has

continued apace—mainly through family reunification policies, despite initial efforts to discourage family reunification for Asian and African immigrants. About 120,000 to 150,000 immigrants from outside the EU now enter France every year, putting immigration levels at similar levels to what France experienced during the *trente glorieuses*—the three decade post-war economic boom—and a substantially higher level than that period for non-European immigrants (Tribalat 2013; Weil 2005).

It has long been difficult to estimate the number of second and later generation immigrants in France, as the country grants citizenship to second generation immigrants and doesn't allow any collection of ethnic data on its population. A recent survey representative of the French population has sought to circumvent this, showing that 10% of the French population between the ages of 18 and 60 consists of immigrants and 11% of their descendants (Beauchemin, Lhommeau and Simon 2016).<sup>15</sup> As much as a third of the French population under sixty is estimated to be descended from immigrants in the second or third generation (Tribalat 2015). A closer look at the origins and age structure of the children of immigrants show that 45% are from older European migrant waves (mainly from Spain, Portugal and Italy) and 31% have parents from North Africa, 11% from sub-Saharan Africa, and 9% from Asia. However, 88% of children of immigrants above the age of fifty are of European origin, whereas among children of immigrants under the age of twenty-five, 42% are from North Africa and 19% from sub-Saharan Africa. The youngest second generation population is of sub-Saharan origin, where 80% are under the age of 25 (Brutel 2017).

### **Assimilation: From 'Our Ancestors, the Gauls' to Identity Politics**

Despite their similarities in citizenship policies and immigration history, France and the United States differ fundamentally in their conceptions of state and society. While being American or Canadian can cohabitate with ethnic attachments of various kinds, ethnic retention is looked upon with far more suspicion in France, where it frequently qualified as “communitarianism” and seen as threatening to the social and political cohesion of the country (Horowitz 1992). The Jacobinist ideals inherited from the French Revolution

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<sup>15</sup> In the Paris region these figures are substantially higher, as 43% of the population have a link to migration across two generations (Bidoux 2012)

emphasize the direct link between the citizen and the state, and are thus fundamentally inimical towards any communities or entities that might seek to mediate or influence it. As such, the country has historically emphasized cultural homogenization, a feat it has already largely accomplished on its own territory by eliminating regional cultures and languages (Weber 1977). This ideological framework, which strives towards individual equality through the imposition of common cultural and ideological assumptions, has fostered a stringent assimilationist policy towards immigrants and entrenched a perception of the national culture as intrinsically universalistic (Noiriel 1996).

However, the traditional French approach to immigrant incorporation has undergone significant shifts over recent decades. Following a backlash against assimilationism in the 1980s, when pragmatic policies and political clientelism for instance began accommodating specific immigrant community demands (Barou 1994; Kastoryano 2002), assimilationism subsequently reasserted itself again in the 1990s (Brubaker 2001; Favell 1998; Lorcerie 1994). In more recent years, anti-discrimination legislation has toughened, and some experimentation with affirmative action policies has even taken place (Simon and Sala Pala 2009).

Other changes have also led to a decline of assimilationism in France. Numerous ethnic and religious advocacy groups have emerged, ranging from the *Conseil représentatif des associations noires* (CRAN) to the *Comité contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF).<sup>16</sup> The position of Islam in French political life has also changed markedly with the creation of the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (CFCM),<sup>17</sup> as well as controversies centred on the Islamic headscarf, street prayers, and halal food. Additionally, the European Union's more multicultural immigrant incorporation directives, which are automatically integrated into French legislation, have also contributed to erode French assimilationism. Changes in the political sphere have further contributed to this, most notably through the left's turn away from its former working-class constituency which has historically functioned as the normative "melting pot" for newcomers, and its

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<sup>16</sup> The Committee against Islamophobia in France.

<sup>17</sup> The French Council of the Muslim Faith, created by Nicolas Sarkozy following the same principle as the representative organs for Jews and Protestants in France (Laurence and Vaisse 2006).

adoption instead of electoral strategies courting middle-class urbanites and various minority groups (Algalarrondo 2011; Tribalat 2013).

As these developments indicate, France has become less assimilationist and stringently colour-blind in its emphasis over the years. However, these policy shifts have not substantially modified the French population's perception of how immigrants should be incorporated.<sup>18</sup> As such, most of the themes of the assimilationist repertoire dear to the electorate remain largely intact in political discourse, and a certain number of symbolic policies have been enacted along the same lines (see Favell 1998)

### Scholarship: From the Social to the Racial Problem?

Despite its long immigration history, France has thus not considered itself as a country of immigration until very recently. This self-perception has affected immigration scholarship as well. French sociologists who were interested in migration at the end of the 1960's were confronted by an almost empty field. European sociologists were more interested in relations between social classes than in their internal differences during this period, and the strong Durkheimian influence on the field in France left little room for analysis in ethnic terms (Réa and Tripier 2003). The same void could be found in historical research, which Gérard Noiriel (1996) claims is indicative of a "collective amnesia" that erased the country's understanding about the contribution of immigration to the renewal of the French population.

Although immigration research began developing in the 1970s and expanded in the 1980s, the field has remained affected by the French political and intellectual heritage, and most strikingly in its rejection of ethnic and racial variables of analysis (Chapman and Frader 2004; De Rudder 1999; Juteau 2006; Kastoryano 2004; Lagrange 2010). This has gradually changed in recent years, as debates about discrimination began cracking the egalitarian veneer that gave legitimacy to this "refusal of ethnicity" (Schnapper 1998). As such, over the past few years, new theoretical perspectives, concepts, and

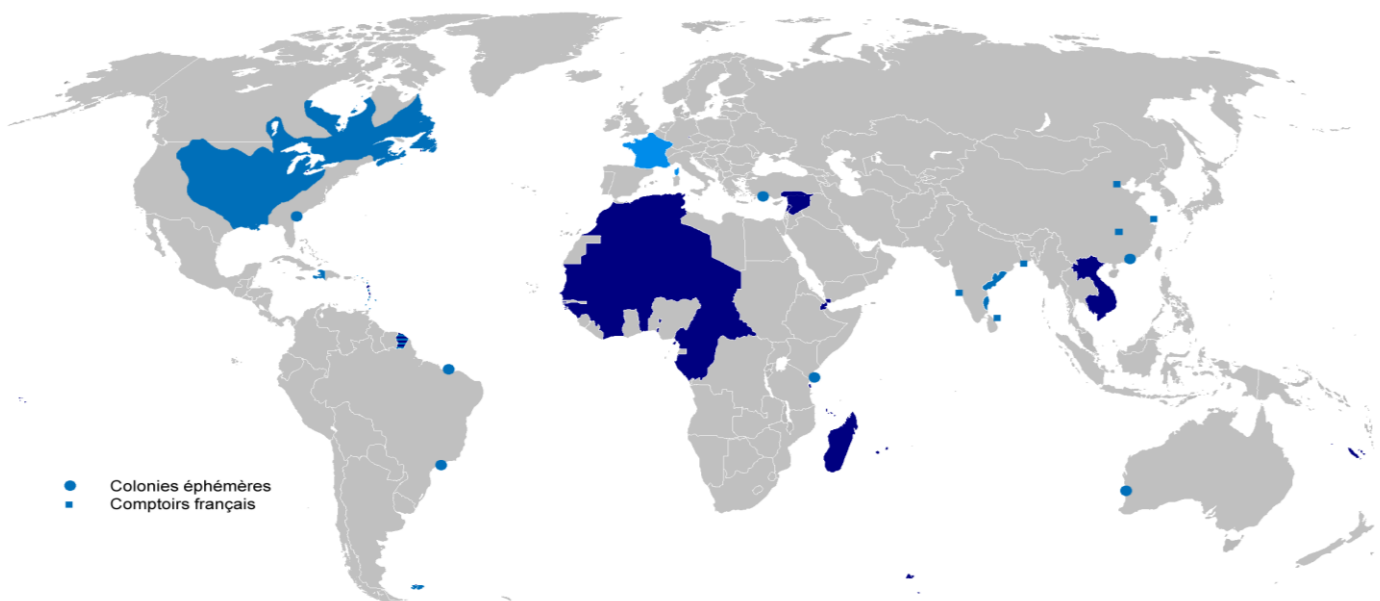
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<sup>18</sup> The 2015 survey of the *Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme* (National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, CNCDH) for instance reported that 87% of respondents considered it essential that foreigners who come live in France adopt French life habits – admittedly slightly less than 2012, when 94% expressed the same sentiment (CHCDH 2015).

terminology have been introduced to the field (e.g. Fassin and Fassin 2006; Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart 1995; Simon and Sala Pala 2009; Simon 2006). Despite these changes, issues pertaining to race and ethnicity are still frequently discussed euphemistically, and the collection of racial and ethnic statistics remain prohibited in the country (for an overview of the debates among social scientists on this issue, see e.g. Badinter 2009; Simon 2008).

## II. Colonial Expansion and the Creation of an African Diaspora in the Americas

French colonial expansion in Africa and the Americas followed similar patterns to that of other European powers, and occurred in two distinct phases: the first was primarily centered on North America and took place between the mid-16th and the early 19th centuries, when France lost all its major colonial possessions. Starting in 1830, a second phase of colonial expansion began, primarily centered on Africa and Indochina, which came to an end in the 1960s (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** French possessions from the first (light blue) and second (dark blue) colonial phases

### From Plantation Colonies to Overseas Departments

Guadeloupe and Martinique were Spanish possessions since 1493, but the islands had not been subjected to any significant settlement until the French seized them in 1635. They were primarily populated at the time by the Caribs (also known as the Kalinagos), a South American-origin population who had displaced the longer-established Arawak population from the lesser Antilles (Hulme 1986). French coexistence with the Caribs rapidly deteriorated as colonization progressed, and after decades of skirmishes, wars and massacres, an agreement was reached in 1660, whereby the French would refrain from settling Dominica and St. Vincent, where the Caribs could retreat.<sup>19</sup> The remaining Caribs in Martinique and Guadeloupe were gradually absorbed in the local population (Butel 2007; Meyer et al. 2016).



**Figure 3.** Martinique and Guadeloupe in the contemporary Caribbean

<sup>19</sup> The French nevertheless gradually settled on Dominica starting in the late 1600s, where they also imported a large slave population. The Island was later ceded to the British, who established a Carib Territory in 1903, which now is home to approximately 3,400 Caribs (Saunders 2005).

During the first decades of French settlement, a variety of exotic agricultural products such as tobacco and cocoa were produced for the domestic market, for which *engagés*<sup>20</sup> from the mainland were primarily recruited. The fall of tobacco prices in the early 17th century led many farmers to turn instead towards sugar cane production, stimulated by the technology and capital of newly settled Sephardic Jews fleeing Brazil as well as the example of neighbouring islands like Barbados, where large and lucrative plantations had been developed using cheaper African slave labour (Alleyne 2002; Butel 2007). Although slavery had been outlawed on French soil since the early 14th century,<sup>21</sup> it was officially authorized in the colonies by 1642,<sup>22</sup> where it was regulated by the *Code noir* from the late 17th century onwards (Meyer et al. 2016).

The French Revolution had a very disparate impact on the French Antilles. In contrast to the largest plantation colony of Saint-Domingue where both the whites and free persons of colour were eventually massacred by a far larger slave population, resulting in its declaration of independence under the name of Haiti in 1804, the Revolution had a more limited impact in the Lesser Antilles. Despite some limited slave uprisings, the white plantation-owning classes (known as *Blanc-Pays* in Guadeloupe and *Béké* in Martinique) continued running the affairs of the islands after the fall of the *Ancien Régime*. The plantation economy thus persisted until slavery was abolished in the mid-19th century,<sup>23</sup> and only fully disappeared through crop diversification and the transition towards the industrialization of sugar production (Butel 2007).

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<sup>20</sup> *Engagisme* was a form of indentured servitude in the Antilles. Plantation owners paid for the trip of the *engagés*, in exchange for which the labourer assented to work under servile conditions for a period of 36 months. After completing this three year period, the *engagé* was awarded a plot of land on which he could himself start a plantation. There were also forced *engagés*, usually convicts and Protestants who were sent to the islands to work off their penalties. The number of *engagés* gradually declined with the development of the sugar industry and the importation of African slave-labour. This quasi-feudal arrangement was abolished after the French Revolution, but similar types of contractual arrangements were reinstated after the abolition of slavery, primarily drawing labourers from South and East Asia to work in the Antillean sugar industry (Alleyne 2002; Butel 2007).

<sup>21</sup> This law for instance was invoked in 1571 in Bordeaux, when a group of captured Africans were liberated by a court that stressed that France—“the mother of liberties”—did not tolerate such practices (Blanchard et al. 2011). This legislation was however curtailed in 1707 and abolished in 1717 (Meyer et al. 2016).

<sup>22</sup> The French began to acquire slaves at St. Christophe and other islands as early as 1635. By 1654, there were about 12,000 slaves distributed across the Islands (Martineau and May 1935, quoted in Palmer 1996).

<sup>23</sup> A law abolishing slavery was passed in 1794 by the National Convention, but only Guadeloupe was concerned as Martinique had temporarily come under British control (Blanchard et al. 2011). Napoleon reinstated slavery in the islands in 1802.

An intermediate caste of free persons of colour and mulattos had grown gradually throughout the years, who were prospering in commerce and the professions. They took on an increasingly prominent role in public life after the introduction of universal suffrage to the islands after 1870, and began replacing the settler class in political and civic institutions. A black political elite subsequently emerged in the 1890s—most notably in Guadeloupe, and largely out of frustration over the mulattos' failure to adequately represent their interests—who eventually found common political ground with the white *Béké* caste.<sup>24</sup>

These upwardly mobile persons of colour, enthused by the egalitarian prospects of the French Revolution, also played a central role in brokering a full political and civic recognition of the islands by the mainland, which consistently took on the form of assimilation. At the onset of the First World War, this for instance expressed itself through requests for conscription and military service, which the islands' status as colonies did not permit, but also through the longstanding ambition to be granted the status of French departments. This was ultimately fulfilled in 1946, which incorporated the islands into the political apparatus of the mainland as any other administrative unit of the Republic (Butel 2007; Dumont 2010).

Following departmentalization, disillusion rapidly set in, as social, political and economic realities failed to meet expectations. Economic transformations in the islands resulting from the definitive move away from the plantation economy and the demographic boom of the post-war years had resulted in severe youth unemployment, which in turn spurred growing social unrest. In a radical attempt to address these problems, a massive migration policy coordinated by the *Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départements d'outre-mer* (Bumidom)<sup>25</sup> was put in place in 1963, which also aimed to fill labour shortages in low-qualified positions in the public service sector of the mainland during the post-war economic boom. Around 160.000 people are estimated to have migrated from the overseas departments through the Bumidom policy, which was terminated in 1982 and replaced by labour market integration policies instead (Dumont 2010; Marie 2014).

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<sup>24</sup> This racial stratification with an intermediary mixed-race class is common in the Caribbean (Alleyne 2002; Hoetink 1985). In the French Antilles, artisanal and commercial activities were monopolized by the mixed-race caste, which benefitted from a more favourable social position than darker blacks, either as slaves, or as 'free persons of colour' (see e.g. Ndiaye 2006: 43-44).

<sup>25</sup> Bureau for the development of migration in the overseas departments.



## **West Africa before European Contact**

Before the arrival of the first European colonists, the African Sahel region<sup>26</sup> was ruled by a succession of kingdoms and vast empires that prospered through trans-Saharan trade. This trade started developing in the 8th century and supplied North Africa with gold, salt and slaves after the Arab conquests. The Arab-Berber influence in the major trade hubs led to the constitution of a literate Muslim class, favouring the emergence of administrative bodies which were necessary for the functioning of such empires (Cuoq 1984).

The first notable political entity of this sort in the region was the Ghana Empire initially established by the Soninke, which expanded as a commercial intermediary between the Berber caravans coming from the north and Malinke traders from the south. The Empire fell following the Almoravid invasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The vast and prosperous Mali Empire emerged as a result of rapid and substantial Malinke conquests during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but declined as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when three of its main trade routes were cut off by the Touaregs to the North, the Songhai to the East, and the Fula to the West. On the Atlantic Coast, Portuguese ships were also beginning to provide coastal populations with goods previously acquired from the north, leading to the emergence of several coastal kingdoms that cut off the Empire's only access to the sea. It was succeeded by the Songhai Empire, centered further to the east around the city of Gao, which began a substantial expansion to the North, South and West before being toppled by a Moroccan invasion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that aimed to rekindle the decline in trans-Saharan trade resulting from the development of European commercial activity on the Atlantic coast (Lugan 2009).

## **French Penetration of West Africa**

Following in the footsteps of the Portuguese and other European nations, the French established their first trading outposts on the Senegambian coast in the early 17th century; the largest and most durable ones in Saint-Louis in 1659, and on the Island of Gorée in 1677. Although Saint-Louis and Gorée were partially used for the slave trade, they never took on the importance of the trade posts further south on the

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<sup>26</sup> The Sahel is a semi-arid region bordering the Sahara desert to the south, stretching 3,300 miles across Africa

Guinean Gulf. The French purchased around one million slaves over the course of their participation in the slave trade, who were primarily deported to work in the sugar plantations in the Caribbean.<sup>27</sup> This trade came to an end after the Revolution of 1848, when the short lived Second Republic definitively abolished slavery and extended political rights to its possessions. The same year, Senegal elected its first member of parliament to the French constitutional assembly (Meyer et al. 2016).

The interior territories of West Africa were only gradually explored and conquered in the second half of the 19th century. What is now Mali became a colony under the name of French Sudan in 1891. To avoid inter-state rivalry, French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française*, AOF) was created in 1895, regrouping all French possessions between Senegal in the West and Niger in the East.

Traditional local authorities—largely religiously defined—retained significant local autonomy in these new territories in exchange for the abandonment of political ambitions and engagement in anticolonial struggle. There were however four communes that were granted the status of French municipalities in the 1870s and 1880s—Gorée, Saint-Louis, Dakar and Rufisque—whose residents became *de jure* French citizens with the same civil rights as their metropolitan peers, electing a municipal councillor and sending a deputy to the French Parliament (Meyer et al. 2016). The policy of *assimilation* introduced in these early Senegalese possessions conceptualized colonial subjects as blank slates which could ‘evolve’ under proper guidance to become full-fledged—albeit dark-skinned—French people. Although examples like Blaise Diagne—who became the first African deputy to France in 1914<sup>28</sup>—certainly testifies to the reality of this policy,<sup>29</sup> it remained limited to a small elite, and its proposed extension to the interior territories was met by local French and Creole<sup>30</sup> resistance, which ultimately resulted in the

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<sup>27</sup> The number of slaves transported by the French themselves is substantially lower however—estimated at 155 000—as they mainly bought slaves transported by other European powers, most notably the Dutch (Meyer et al. 2016)

<sup>28</sup> The first black deputy in the French parliament was Jean-Baptiste Belley, who became deputy of Saint Domingue in 1793.

<sup>29</sup> As in the case of the emergence of the black elite in the Antilles in the 1890s, Blaise Diagne was elected in 1914 by capitalizing on the resentment of the black indigenous population toward a putatively arrogant Creole (mixed-race) oligarchy. However, another important factor was the resentment towards the perceived French reluctance to assimilate the African elite, which was typically marginalized when retaining their so-called “personal status”, i.e. African or Islamic law (Boone 2006).

<sup>30</sup> The Creoles were the descendants of French males in commercial or military positions and their temporary Senegalese wives. Their French ancestry awarded them French citizenship, and they typically distinguished themselves from the black indigenous population by emphasizing their loyalty to French society and culture (Brooks 2003).

aforementioned policy of “association” with local rulers, whose populations retained the “personal status” of traditional or Islamic law, disqualifying them *de facto* from acquiring French citizenship (Crowder 1962; Lambert 1993; Lewis 1962).<sup>31</sup>



**Figure 4.** Contemporary West Africa (in green) and the Sahel region (dotted area)

After the two World Wars—in which Senegalese soldiers participated in significant numbers—the *Union française* was created, which granted citizenship to all colonial subjects. However, in contrast to their Antillean peers who were overwhelmingly pushing for assimilation and departmentalization, African elites

<sup>31</sup> This also shows the limits of the policy of assimilation and of French universalism in general in the colonial context. While French colonialism is often contrasted with British colonialism by invoking the former’s policy of making Frenchmen out of colonial subjects, this policy may have been written about extensively in theory, but was in fact very limited in practice—the most prominent example of it in fact being the four Senegalese communes which were already under French control during the French Revolution. Even in Algeria, which had been *de facto* territorially annexed to France and was thus governed by the same laws, the Muslims population was primarily governed by the *code de l’indigénat* (code of the indigénat) which gave them a separate legal status as French subjects under Muslim rule. This allowed them to retain their religion as aspects of it would be illegal under French law (such as polygamy) but they were unable to vote. If they expressed an interest, they could theoretically become French citizens and be subjected to French law, but in reality only small numbers acquired citizenship (Lacroix 2015).

gradually turned towards nationalism and independence instead. Despite the continued efforts to design federal structures that would keep the empire together, France was gradually pressured to grant self-determination to its African colonies. In contrast to Indochina and Algeria, where long wars of independence broke out, Senegal and Mali obtained their independence peacefully in 1960 (see Figure XX), along with all other French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, despite the frequent maintenance of numerous commercial, military and cultural ties with France (Ageron et al. 2016).

### **After Independence: Labour Migration and Family Reunification**

Sub-Saharan African immigration to France dates back to the colonial era, and first took place through the navy. As rivers were the primary means of entry into the inner territories in Africa, capable individuals from coastal populations were often incited to participate in these expeditions. Many of these were Soninkes and Manjaks who later came to work on transatlantic ships, gradually settled in French port cities like Marseille and Le Havre, where they typically worked as dock workers or handlers in the harbour. They lived in small male communities from the same village who settled in old buildings near the harbours, which also served as resource hubs that assisted newcomers in finding work and new migratory opportunities (Barou 2011).

Although some sub-Saharan African troops had taken up residence in France after the first World War, this African presence remained limited in the first half of the 20th century. The citizenship awarded to all residents of the *Union française* in 1946 in principle allowed for free circulation, but sub-Saharan Africans were overshadowed by the larger number of Muslims from French Algeria, for whom access to the mainland was easier and more affordable. After 1960, when migratory agreements were signed with the new independent states, Mali and Senegal retained existing policies of free circulation until 1963 and 1964 respectively, when entry into the country was made contingent upon an employment contract and a medical certificate. Although free circulation agreements were retained for much longer periods of time with other sub-Saharan countries who tended to send students and more qualified immigrants, the Sahelian

countries of Senegal, Mali and Mauritania primarily sent an illiterate rural population that was raising the concern of authorities (Barou and Rozenkier 2011).

The limited work opportunities in the harbour cities led many Soninkes from Mali and Senegal to move to the Paris region in the early 1960s, where they began assisting young people from their villages of origin to join them by pooling family resources. Given the favourable economic climate during this period, these newcomers could easily find work, while the need for labour power led authorities to overlook their frequent illegal status, choosing instead to grant them amnesty on a regular basis. These migrants gravitated towards low-qualified employment in the automobile industry, construction, and waste collection—an area where they represented 90% of employees in Paris the mid 1970s. Given their improvised settlement in squalid abandoned buildings, the authorities encouraged specialized associations to convert these buildings into worker hostels. Despite these efforts, the traditional structure of community life was largely reproduced in these hostels, where a parallel economy and the first village associations also emerged (Barou 2011; Poiret 1996; Timera and Garnier 2010).

The restrictions placed on labour migration in 1974 represented a major turning point for these migrants, as it heavily restricted the long periods they usually spent in their country of origin to stay with their families. France was also constrained by international treaties to adopt a family reunification policy shortly thereafter, and since many Africans from the Sahel could no longer balance their economic activity in France with their family lives in their home villages, they decided to bring their wives and children to France. The combination of these two policies in the 1970s marks the starting point of a more substantial migration of poor families from the Sahel region, which has proved far more challenging to manage and regulate (Barou and Rozenkier 2011; Timera and Garnier 2010).

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### I. Immigrant Incorporation

As Alejandro Portes has noted: "In the absence of theory, what we have today is mostly an amorphous mass of data on immigration to different countries and a series of concepts whose scope seldom exceeds those of a particular nation-state" (Portes 1997: 819). Studies geared towards theory-building and theory-testing across national boundaries can make significant contributions to developing more comprehensive theoretical frameworks that account for the empirical variations in assimilation outcomes across different countries, which can in turn also encourage more cross-national comparative work within the sociology of immigration. This section will provide a brief overview of the most prominent immigrant assimilation theories, present their most salient claims and limitations, and discuss how they will be made use of in the context of this investigation.

##### From Classical to Segmented Assimilation Theory

Sociological theorizing on assimilation goes back to the Chicago School's studies on European immigrants during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Park 1950; Warner and Srole 1945), but the first substantial contribution to assimilation theory *per se* came from Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964). Gordon identified seven distinct dimensions of assimilation: (1) cultural or behavioural assimilation, i.e. the adoption of the typical cultural and behavioural patterns of the mainstream of the host society; (2) structural assimilation, i.e. the entrance into mainstream group relationships in clubs, associations or institutions; (3) identificational assimilation, i.e. adoption of the mainstream's collective identity and sense of peoplehood; (4) marital assimilation, i.e. large scale intermarriage; (5) attitude receptional assimilation, i.e. absence of prejudice; (6) behaviour receptional assimilation, i.e. absence of discrimination, and (7) civic

assimilation, i.e. absence of value and power conflict across groups. Gordon thought that cultural and behavioural assimilation occurred first, but that it didn't guarantee that other forms of assimilation would follow. When structural assimilation happened on the other hand, he believed that all other dimensions of assimilation followed.

Despite the influence of Gordon's work, it was criticized for assuming a unidirectional incorporation into a monolithic American culture, for not recognizing the distinction between individual and group levels of ethnic change, and for failing to account for larger structural processes. Moreover, it did not address occupational mobility and economic assimilation, despite their key role in the assimilation process. Taking stock of these criticisms, Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003) set out to rehabilitate assimilation theory, by redefining it simply as a gradual "decline of an ethnic distinction" over time, whereby "the occurrences for which it is relevant diminish in number and contract to fewer and fewer domains of social life" (Alba and Nee 2003:11). This definition covers the complex ways in which boundaries blur between majority populations and immigrants, framing it less as a one-way accommodation process and more as a bilateral negotiation. The concept of assimilation as employed throughout this dissertation will be defined as the process of a gradually reduced distance with the mainstream population, both in terms of the salience of cultural and ethnic distinctions and in the gap in economic achievement.<sup>32</sup>

As the second generation of post-1965 immigrants were coming of age, some sociologists began questioning the assumption of a gradual cultural assimilation and upward socio-economic mobility throughout the generations. Herbert Gans (1992) hypothesized a "second generation decline", where the upward mobility aspirations of children of immigrants would be thwarted by limited skills, connections and employment opportunities. He argued that they could acculturate instead into other fractions of American

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<sup>32</sup> I use the term "assimilation" in this study as I primarily build upon the American theoretical literature, where the concept is commonly used to refer to immigrant incorporation. It is therefore not to be confused with the French concept of *assimilation* which typically also implies a loss of ethnic attachment and identity in addition to a convergence with the mainstream. The concept of *intégration*, which has come to replace *assimilation* in contemporary French public policy and debate—and which has no particular requirement regarding the eschewing of ethnic attachment and identity—would thus come far closer to the way "assimilation" is used here.

society that harboured negative attitudes towards mainstream American culture, risking to hamper their upward mobility and trap them in perpetual poverty.

These ideas were extended and modelled by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) in their conceptualization of segmented assimilation. In addition to the traditional assimilation path into the mainstream, this theory predicts two other potential assimilation paths which both assume that cultural assimilation can in fact be detrimental for upward mobility (Rumbaut 1994). One path consists in a downward intergenerational socioeconomic mobility deriving from the cultural assimilation into the adversarial subculture of a domestic underclass. An oft-cited example of this are the children of Black immigrants from the West Indies whose modest socioeconomic backgrounds led them to settle in dilapidated inner-cities where they are more likely to adopt the counterculture of their phenotypically related African-American peers, thus ruining both their aspiration and their disposition for upward mobility (Waters 1999). The other path presumes that the avoidance of intergenerational acculturation can encourage second-generation socio-economic mobility through the social capital and economic opportunities provided by the ethnic group, primarily characteristic of Chinese or Cuban communities in the United States (Zhou and Bankston 1998).

### **New Immigrants, New Circumstances**

Through deindustrialization and the growth of the service sector, segmented assimilation theorists argue that the U.S. economy offers fewer opportunities for upward mobility for the children of post-1965 immigrants, who are confronted today by a three-pronged segmented labour market, with a rewarding primary labour market demanding high educational credentials, a secondary labour market with unqualified and precarious dead-end jobs, and an ethnic economy offering mobility prospects through an ethnic community (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In other words, children of low-skilled immigrants who lack the economic opportunities of a strong ethnic community face the challenge of bridging an educational gap



that took their European predecessors several generations to overcome (Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2005).

These structural changes in the economy have heavily impacted American inner-cities, whose social dislocation has been described in great detail in the urban poverty literature (e.g. Anderson 1990; Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). Substandard schools and employment opportunities, exposure to criminality, violence, drugs, and a subculture that rejects the institutions and norms of 'mainstream' society are thought to put the children of immigrants who settle in impoverished inner-city areas at risk of being more socio-economically disadvantaged than their parents, and find themselves trapped in a stigmatized urban 'underclass' (Zhou 1997).

The racial characteristics of recent immigrants and the structural barriers they confront are also claimed to set new immigrants apart from previous European waves. The racial distinctiveness of these new immigrants exposes them to more discrimination in the housing market, which channels them into problem-ripe inner-city areas and heightens the risk that their children will adopt the reactive subculture of stigmatized and impoverished native minorities, which they risk becoming undistinguishable from when they acculturate (Waters 1999).

### Segmenting Forces

Proponents of the segmented perspective on assimilation further argue that immigrants end up following different assimilation paths depending on their human capital, the context of reception, family structure and acculturation dynamics.

Education, job experience and language knowledge provide a first set of sorting mechanisms for immigrants. Although those with higher levels of human capital are more likely to succeed socio-economically when they arrive in the United States, the context of reception can greatly affect these outcomes. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) distinguish between three different contexts of reception: government policy (where responses to particular groups can be receptive, indifferent, or hostile), public

opinion (which can be prejudiced, or non-prejudiced towards specific groups) and the ethnic community (which can be strong or weak). These various configurations facing different immigrant groups will affect the extent to which they can make effective use of their human capital in the host society.

The composition of the family and whether it includes both biological parents can also be significant for second generation outcomes, as well as the different forms of intergenerational acculturation that can occur: *consonant acculturation*, where both the parents and the children acculturate to the host society at similar degrees, *dissonant acculturation*, where the children acculturate far more to the host society than their parents, and finally *selective acculturation*, where insertion in an ethnic community allows key aspects of the parents' culture to be preserved despite some adaptation to the host society. Portes & Rumbaut (2001) argue that dissonant acculturation puts children at risk of downward assimilation, as it undercuts parental authority and favours a 'role reversal' where the children adopt parental roles *vis-à-vis* their parents, who lack the linguistic and cultural skills to get by. Consonant and selective acculturation, the authors claim, typically allow for a preservation of parental guidance and authority, which may be decisive when the second generation confronts racial discrimination, challenges in school and in the labour market, but also when they are exposed to harmful influences of surrounding youth subcultures and their adversarial stance towards education and the surrounding society.

### Criticisms and Limitations

Since this theory was first formulated, it has been exposed to important criticisms. Reminiscent of the debates surrounding the 'culture of poverty' (for review, see Wilson 1987), the importance of the 'oppositional culture' of a native minority in explaining second generation downward assimilation patterns has been questioned, suggesting class variables in general and the immigrant working-class experience in particular might have more explanatory power (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997). Furthermore, some have argued that oppositional cultures can also be found in the native white population, but that more severe

sanctions for deviant behaviours occur for the minority underclass youth because of racial biases inherent to U.S. society (Stepick and Stepick 2010).

Attempts to empirically evaluate the downward assimilation hypothesis suggest that the case might be overstated, and that reproduction of parents' working-class status, or gradual advancement within the working class or towards the lower-middle-class tends to be the most common outcome for children of immigrants raised in inner-city areas (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Waldinger and Feliciano 2004). A study of second generation immigrants from a variety of backgrounds in New York City has shown that dissonant acculturation is the norm rather than the exception, but also that neither acculturation patterns nor levels of ethnic embeddedness explain the variation in mobility patterns, whether within one generation or from one generation to the next (Waters et al. 2010). Recent work assessing the influence of government policies, societal attitudes and pre-existing immigrant communities on disparate assimilation outcomes shows that a more adequate measuring of these factors eliminate their ability to account for disparate outcomes between groups (Waldinger and Catron 2016).

Regarding the purported benefits of ethnic retention, several studies suggest that it isn't the role of ethnic retention in shielding children from the harmful effects of the surrounding native culture that helps upward mobility, but rather the respect that parents command and the educational expectations they have for their children (Stepick and Stepick 2010). Furthermore the availability of the ethnic-adhesive path for many first-generation low-wage workers has been questioned, as in the absence of significant economic and other resources the community cannot provide opportunities for upward mobility, thus risking to further enhance marginalization from the host society instead (Alba and Foner 2015).

These criticisms do cast doubt upon some aspects of the segmented assimilation model, most importantly regarding how widespread some of its predictions may be or the mechanisms which it hypothesizes. Nevertheless, the general framework of identifying enduring assimilation barriers and cultural segments in the host society that might negatively impact specific immigrant populations more than others, and how this may potentially intensify social segmentation remains a valuable theoretical pursuit. While using this framework in France will consist in evaluating the pertinence of some key mechanisms it

postulates in a different social context, it will also consist in examining more inductively which specific assimilation barriers and cultural segments may be impacting significantly the trajectories of the Antillean and West African populations under study.

### Segmented Assimilation in France?

A handful of studies have also looked at the relevance of the segmented assimilation model outside the United States (e.g. Boyd 2002; Safi 2006; Silberman, Alba and Fournier 2007; Silberman and Fournier 2008; Takenoshita et al. 2014). Those conducted in France have proved problematic as no racial, ethnic or religious statistics are collected in the country (Blum 2002; Simon 2008). The issue is further complicated by the fact that about 130,000 immigrants are naturalized every year (Weil 2005) and second-generation immigrants are automatically granted French citizenship when they reach the age of majority, making them statistically undistinguishable from the rest of the French population. These studies on assimilation trajectories in France nevertheless seem to agree that parts of the North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants are at the very least *at risk* of downward assimilation.

Identifying statistical disparities between groups says very little about their causes however, as Maurice Crul and Jens Schneider point out: "Even if in other countries we find similar segmented outcomes, the mechanisms and institutional settings behind them will most probably be very different from those described by segmented assimilation theory" (2010: 1264). As presently formulated, segmented assimilation theory is indeed intimately linked to structural features unique to U.S. society, such as the presence of a native stigmatized racial minority and a historical experience that has made race a central criterion in social stratification. Although existing quantitative studies on segmented assimilation in France remain largely agnostic regarding the specific mechanisms that produce these outcomes, it has been suggested that they hinge less on 'race' and more on the experience of colonialism or more salient religious and cultural boundaries (Silberman and Fournier 2008).

## An Integrated Theoretical Perspective

Despite the broad set of assimilation outcomes posited by the segmented assimilation model, the question is whether its theoretical usefulness extends beyond a short-term description of divergent assimilation paths—which new assimilation theory suggests will eventually end up converging over time—or if it actually describes more permanent and enduring trends. Although assimilation may turn out to be the master trend over the long run—“bumps” notwithstanding—there is of course also the possibility that more enduring social divisions will remain and substantially affect future immigrant incorporation moving forward. The long-term accuracy of these theories can of course only be a matter of speculation, and what might be of greater importance are the causal factors they put forth for explaining these outcomes *vis-à-vis* the mainstream.

As both theories were developed with different explanatory ambitions in mind, they emphasize very different processes: while segmented assimilation, as we have seen, is more attuned to identifying the contextual, structural, and cultural factors that produce incorporation outcomes that deviate from the mainstream path, assimilation theory focuses on the mechanisms at the individual, network and institutional levels that lead individuals to gradually meld with the mainstream.

Building upon the behavioural assumptions of the new institutionalism in sociology, Alba and Nee see the behaviour of immigrants as deriving from a context-bound rationality that shapes their perception of costs and benefits within the surrounding institutional environment. Their rationality is constrained insofar as their perceptions of self-interest are culturally shaped (by customs, social norms, law, ideology, and religion), and their behaviour derives from rule-of-thumb heuristics based on incomplete information. Immigrants harness their individual human capital and the social capital of their group aiming to take advantage of opportunities in their institutional environments to improve their life chances. Assimilation is simply a by-product of this purposive action, "something that frequently happens to people while they are making other plans" (2003: 282).

Alba and Nee further specify a repertoire of proximate and distal mechanisms that can lead immigrants to blend to varying degrees into the mainstream. The proximate mechanisms, which operate at the individual and social network levels, derive from the forms of capital immigrants can mobilize and the rewards and punishments within close-knit groups that enable them to engage in joint action to achieve collective goals. The distal causes are embedded in the institutional environment which can elicit assimilatory or segregatory behaviours from immigrants depending on its inherent incentive structures.

This perspective has the advantage of providing a genuine conceptualization of human agency and of the structural environment in which it operates, specifying the degrees to which boundaries between immigrants and the mainstream are likely to blur as a result. As far as its modelling of human behaviour is concerned, new assimilation theory seems to provide a far more comprehensive—and perhaps most importantly, exportable—theoretical framework for understanding assimilation processes. Segmented assimilation theory on the other hand, while it hypothesizes very specific processes that are far more static and culturally contingent, suggests that there may be significant structural factors outside the purview of the standard assimilation mechanisms which may represent substantial hindrances to assimilation into the mainstream. The nature of these factors may need to be revised and adapted to new national contexts, but the goal of identifying potential structural and cultural factors that may be conducive to assimilation outcomes that deviate from the mainstream path clearly has a valuable theoretical purpose. Furthermore, the segmented perspective also has the advantage of recognizing more explicitly the cultural segments outside of the mainstream, and the influence these can have upon immigrant assimilation.

Both perspectives will therefore inform the theoretical framework for this study to varying degrees. While the mechanisms that underpin the behaviour of immigrants and their children will be seen as largely consistent with the more “agentic” perspective of the Alba-Nee model, a more explicit theoretical emphasis will be put on the salient structural barriers and cultural segments which might impede or even derail individual assimilation outcomes. Although the relevant factors and mechanisms that may lead individuals to gravitate towards or away from the mainstream will largely be determined in an inductive fashion, the analysis will also seek to assess the pertinence of some of the most salient hypotheses put

forth by segmented assimilation theory, most notably those pertaining to the role of intergenerational acculturation dynamics, of a putative 'oppositional culture', and the specific role of racial mechanisms in the assimilation process.

## **II. Racial and Ethnic Identities and Boundaries**

Racial and ethnic identities and distinctions are pervasive in virtually all human societies. They are constituted through complex social dynamics, involving micro-level processes of identification and ascription, as well as the mobilization of group-specific resources and attributes in the face of a large variety of external social circumstances. But race and ethnicity and their respective dynamics are also informed by hierarchical valuations derived from perceived social, economic and cultural differences, as well as the socially inherited understandings of these differences, the historical legacy of group relations, and the power asymmetries that have driven them.

### **Conceptualizing Race and Ethnicity**

The ambiguity of the concepts of 'race' and 'ethnicity' has often been emphasized. In this study, race will be defined as a set of physiological characteristics that link a person to a broad geographical ancestry, while ethnicity will be understood as a collective identity built around a perceived common descent and history, represented and sustained through a set of symbolic elements and practices (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). As these definitions suggest, race and ethnicity overlap substantially. Racial characteristics can be a central criteria for ethnic group membership just as ethnic groups can have very diverse racial make-up, and there is always a plurality of ethnic affiliations within broad racial categories.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> While religious groups can transcend and aggregate several ethnic and racial groups, religion can also be understood as a subcomponent of ethnicity. Although it may in some cases be less "assigned" than an ethnic belonging, given that individuals may be able to distance themselves more easily from a religious inheritance than an ethnic one, this religious heritage typically plays a

However, ethnicity is always associated to a shared sense of 'groupness', whereas race is a far broader and more obdurate *category* to which differing meaning can be attributed, fundamentally affecting its salience in social life. In light of this, I resolutely distance myself from perspectives that conceptualize racial categories as *a priori* social groups with tangible interests and identities, seeing in it the same "pseudo-scientific operation" that Weber identified in the direct and immediate link that Marx drew between class and class consciousness (Giddens 1980: 43).<sup>34</sup>

While recognizing for analytical purposes that racial and ethnic criteria are fundamentally cognitive constructs that divide up the social world (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004), and that the social significance attributed to these phenomena should be a matter of empirical investigation (Brubaker 2009), I also distance myself from the radical constructivist assumptions that often go hand in hand with these approaches, which put an excessively strong accent on the fluidity and malleability of racial and ethnic phenomena.<sup>35</sup> By recognizing both their fundamentally obdurate nature and the fluidity that can characterize them, I take an intermediary stance between constructivist and primordialist positions, acknowledging the visceral and enduring importance social actors consistently attribute to ethnic and racial attachments.

Beyond these definitions and considerations, my general approach to the complex and multifaceted racial and ethnic phenomena in this study will be resolutely empirical. As such, I seek to situate them within their highly specific socio-historical context, and approach the way they are concretely experienced and expressed by the social actors themselves. While this micro-oriented focus on the concrete relational processes underlying ethnic and racial phenomena subjects a large number of 'givens' to empirical analysis, I simultaneously seek to avoid attributing an excessive autonomy to agents and disregarding broader

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fundamental role in shaping a large part of the cultural practices, customs and behaviours that members of an ethnic group take for granted. As with race or ethnicity, religion can also be assigned from without, be a motive for social stigma, rejection or prejudice, but operates more on cultural, philosophical or metaphysical assumptions than the more obdurate racial or ethnic ones.

<sup>34</sup> I incidentally agree with Bourdieu's assessment that Marx "provided false theoretical solutions—such as the affirmation of the real existence of classes—for a true practical problem: the need for every political action to demand the capability, real or supposed, in any case *credible*, to express the interests of a group" (Bourdieu 1998: 31).

<sup>35</sup> Following for instance Andreas Wimmer, who also attempts to "move away from the constructivist credo that is currently shared by most authors writing on ethnicity" and their "routine assertion that ethnicity is constructed, contextually variable, contested, and contingently eventful", emphasizing that "not all ethnic boundaries are fluid and in motion, not all are cognitively and emotionally unstable, contextually shifting, and continuously contested." (Wimmer 2013: 204)



historical, social structural and cultural forces that these dynamics are inevitably caught up in and deeply shaped by.

### **Ethnic and Racial Identities**

In an attempt to capture the fluidity of ethnic identities, Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann distinguish between “thick” and “thin” ethnic and racial ties, depending on the extent to which they organize social life and action. Racial and ethnic bonds can involve more or less shared interests, institutions and culture, and the more they do, the “thicker” they are. The “thickness” of ethnic and racial identities also varies depending on the nature of the broad social arenas or “construction sites” that these groups confront (ranging from politics, labour markets, residential space, social institutions, to culture and daily experience) and the resources these groups bring to bear upon these contexts (the group's pre-existing identity, its size, internal differentiation, social and human capital, and its symbolic repertoires). Cornell and Hartmann’s framework will be useful for assessing the 'structural' differences and similarities that both groups and generations confront that might affect the salience of their ethnic and racial identities.

Richard Jenkins (2008a; 2008b) attempts to integrate ethnicity into a broader theory of social identity and gives a more micro-sociological and social psychological account of the complex dialectical process linking internal processes of identification and external processes of ascription. At the individual level, drawing on Cooley and Mead's distinction of the “I” and the “Me”, he argues that racial and ethnic identities first emerge in childhood through the delicate interaction between the child's individual needs and the socialized demands largely inculcated by significant others and the cultural framework they operate within. The self-image that results from this process is mobilized in social interactions, and is in turn affected by the public image resulting from others' interpretations of and reactions to the individual's behaviour. Power differentials also allow some groups to categorize others more potently and to impose a public image that can influence other groups’ self-image and the social, educational and professional aspirations open to it—an element that is often missing in many social anthropological theorizations of ethnicity.

Jenkins's conceptualization of social identity formation as "a dialectical synthesis of internal and external definitions" (1994: 19) occurring within the framework of individual cognition, social interaction and institutions, provides a solid theoretical framework for investigating the racialization, ethnicization and nationalization processes at work among the groups under study (Brubaker 2009). This framework accounts not only for the subtle and multi-level interplay of identification and categorization in racial and ethnic identity formation but also for the role of power differentials on these dynamics, and thus provides a potent balance between "an objectivist physics of material structures" and "a constructivist phenomenology of cognitive forms" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 5).

### Psychological Perspectives

Psychological theories of ethnic and racial identity development in early life provide additional insights into the process through which ethnic identities typically develop (Erikson 1968; Marcia 1966; Phinney 1990). The ethnic identity development model suggests that ethnic and racial identities unfold through a variety of distinct stages. According to this perspective, after an initial stage where ethnic identity is unexamined (either by lack of concern or by passive acceptance of others' perspectives through socialization), a period of crisis pushes individuals into a phase of *exploration* where they seek to make sense of the meaning that their ethnicity has for them. This can be followed by a stage of *resolution*, where they come to a sense of clarity about its meaning, which in turn can result in *commitment*, where a sense of belonging and positive feelings about the ethnic group are achieved (Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014). This general model for racial and ethnic identity development, with its focus on the need to come to terms with the meaning that a racial and ethnic identity carries for the individual will provide a useful general frame for conceptualizing the identity dynamics of the Antillean and African respondents of this study.

Although this model does not necessarily preclude that individuals may come to re-examine their identities later in life and revisit earlier stages of the process, other models have sought to address identity changes that are less tied to specific phases of the life course, and are more focused on specific triggering

events. A notable one in the context of this study is Nigrescence theory (Cross 1991) and its related formulations, such as Racial identity theory (Helms 1990), which outline a series of stages (or statuses) identified in the identity development of African Americans. In the pre-encounter stage, the individual adopts a worldview that idealizes whiteness and devalues blackness, before a triggering event such as discrimination pushes the individual into the encounter stage where pro-white views are abandoned. In the immersion-emersion stage, blackness is idealized and whites denigrated, before the individual settles on the internalization stage, where a feeling of inner security is attained and where Blackness is integrated to the sense of self (Schwartz et al. 2014). This identity theory, which is more tailored for Black Americans specifically, puts a greater emphasis on social triggers that make race salient, and is useful in addressing the issue of internalizing the perspective of other racial groups on an individual's self-perception. This will provide a more pointed theorization of identity dynamics that might also be widespread among the Black population in France.

Another research tradition which has been influential on the ethnic identity model described above also merits some closer attention as it sheds light on some of the underlying motivations behind identification and the shifts it can undergo. Social identity theory (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1986) posits that individuals strive to achieve positive and distinct social identities. According to this theory, individuals have multiple social identities that are more or less psychologically salient and that derive from their knowledge of being members of given social groups or categories, as well as the emotional significance they attach to these memberships. After individuals have categorized themselves and others in groups, they assess the intrinsic attractiveness of their ingroup by comparing it to relevant outgroups on a series of valued dimensions. If group comparisons happen to result in unsatisfying social identities, they will either favour alternative social identities (individual mobility), seek more favourable value dimensions or intergroup comparisons (creativity), or openly challenge the status hierarchy (competition). The strategy they adopt will depend on the degree to which they identify with the identity, the perceived permeability of group boundaries, and the perceived stability and legitimacy of the status hierarchy (Ellemers 1993). Individual mobility and creativity are only viable for individuals with low levels of identification with their

ingroup (Mummendey et al. 1999). When individuals identify strongly with a social identity, its negative social evaluation becomes less tied to their self-evaluation, and they are more prone to assert its value or distinctiveness through collective strategies of social competition (Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 2002). This theory intricately nests group identity dynamics within the specific nature of group relations, and will thus be particularly useful for assessing the identity dynamics between African and Antillean respondents, whose group relations are one of the central foci of our analysis.

These strands of research provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework for evaluating the experiences that respondents have of their racial and ethnic identities growing up, and the particular challenges they may face in elaborating a coherent and positive sense of self out of their diverse cultural ties and their racial characteristics.

### **Racial and Ethnic Boundaries**

The boundary metaphor can be traced back to the work of the anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969), who argued that ethnic distinctions do not necessarily derive from substantive cultural differences between groups, but rather from the social boundaries that they erect and maintain between each other.

This boundary approach has been influential on the ethnicity literature over the last two decades (e.g. Bauböck 1998; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Sanders 2002; Wimmer 2008; Wimmer 2009; Zolberg and Long 1999). It has also informed novel theorizations of immigrant incorporation (Alba and Nee 2003) by seeking to explain how "bright" boundaries that starkly distinguish social groups become more "blurred", i.e. more ambiguous and less fraught with social consequences (Alba 2005). More specifically, as Andreas Wimmer points out, the boundary approach has helped to

imagine social landscapes in which ethnic divides are culturally meaningful, consequential for the allocation of resources and the distribution of life chances, and historically continuous, all the way allowing an observer to describe and imagine how they might move across a landscape, become porous and inconsequential, be crisscrossed by other, more meaningful boundaries, or perhaps even dissolve altogether (Wimmer 2013: 4)

A first important point to stress is that the social boundaries that regulate the processes of exclusion and inclusion in any society do not appear *ex nihilo*, and are largely shaped in a path-dependent manner from

historically inherited cultural, legal, and institutional materials (Favell 1998). An example would be the strict secular injunctions and the denunciation of “communitarianism” in France, which have for instance emerged—political opportunism notwithstanding—following a political, cultural, civic and intellectual lineage which largely determines the potential spectrum on which existing religious and ethnic boundaries can shift and what grammar they can usefully employ to that end. Boundaries are thus also subjected to important constraints when seeking to modify them or impose new ones.

Wimmer (2013) furthermore provides a general account for how boundaries are made and unmade through individual action. He argues that the boundary-making strategies that individuals pursue for a variety of reasons may become influential depending on existing institutional incentives and social networks, as well as on the individuals’ position in economic, political and symbolic hierarchies. He claims that when various individual strategies converge on specific categories and boundaries, a consensus is likely to emerge and certain social boundaries might thereby gain in salience.

Massey and Sánchez (2010) concentrate more specifically on how immigrants attempt to negotiate the boundaries that they encounter in the host society. Drawing on Fredrik Barth’s insights, they argue that it is through the complex process of self-definition and ascription by others that boundaries between natives and immigrants are “brokered”. This brokering is undertaken in two distinct ways: first through *framing*, where positive or negative meanings are attributed to one’s own or to another ethnic group, and second through *boundary work*, where an ethnic group engages in practices that either promotes contact and access to resources or inhibits contact and skews access. Through this two-way process, immigrants “broker the boundaries to help define the content of their ethnicity in the host society, embracing some elements ascribed to them and rejecting others, while simultaneously experiencing the constraints and opportunities associated with their social status” (Massey and Sánchez 2010: 15).

A common emphasis in this literature has been placed upon how boundaries serve to maintain processes of ethnic closure that aim to deny outsider groups access to valuable material and symbolic resources. The approach adopted here will more explicitly assume that the object of immigrant boundary brokering also includes social psychological motivations put forth in the theory of ethnic and racial identity

development and social identity theory, i.e. achieving a positive and distinct social identity, where the value of the group is enhanced and where negative attributions and social identity threats are deflected.

Much research on social boundaries has also distanced itself from approaches that give explanatory power to the “cultural stuff” within these boundaries. Despite my interest in how distinctions and categories are drawn, and how boundaries are negotiated and brokered, I will also take a more explicit interest in the “cultural stuff” that these boundaries enclose, as this also plays a determining role in shaping expectations, behaviour patterns, as well as loyalties and demands placed upon individuals. I believe this oscillation between a boundary approach and one more centered on the cultural assumptions of ethnic groups provide a more holistic perspective on the social processes under study.

## 4. METHODS AND DATA

The data used in this study primarily derives from in-depth interviews complemented by quantitative and observational data. This chapter describes the recruitment and sampling procedure, explains how the data was collected and analyzed, and presents the detailed demographic characteristics of the sample. I also discuss some issues pertaining to positionality and reflexivity, the challenges and limitations of the project, as well as the ethical considerations of the research and the precautions these dictate.

### I. Presentation of the Data

#### Recruitment and Sampling Procedure

The main source of data consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 55 Martinican, Guadeloupean, Senegalese and Malian migrants to the Paris region and the metropolitan-born children of these populations. The selection criteria for first-generation respondents was to be born and raised in these geographical areas, and to not have migrated to mainland France before adulthood. Second-generation respondents were recruited when they had at least one parent who was born and raised in these countries or islands, when they were themselves born and raised in the Paris region, and were above the age of 20.

The interviews were conducted between August 2011 and January 2015.<sup>36</sup> The duration ranged between one and five hours, but most lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours.

Respondents were recruited using a variety of means. The first participants were found using personal networks and advertisements disseminated in residential areas, specialized stores, and hairdressing salons, at cultural events and on internet forums. I noticed that individuals who freely

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<sup>36</sup> A complementary interview was also conducted in March 2016.

responded to ads were more likely to have a particular motivation to participate, an “agenda” of sorts where they selected me more than I selected them. One respondent recruited through this channel was for instance a Malian undocumented immigrant who wanted to use the opportunity of the interview to hopefully get a wider hearing for his particular plight. Most respondents who eventually participated in the study were recruited through referrals from other study participants, but I made an explicit point of systematically seeking out a variety of social networks to diversify the respondents as much as possible.

Although qualitative studies are by their very nature non-representative of the broader population, I wanted the samples to be reasonably in keeping with the broad traits of the population, and thus avoided for instance just interviewing Christians among the Senegalese, or just Jehovah’s Witnesses among the Antilleans. I sought to constitute samples that were stratified by gender and class, and that had an even balance between Martinicans and Guadeloupeans as well as Senegalese and Malians. An important selection criteria was also diversity of experience (Trost 1986). If respondents mentioned a family member or an acquaintance that could provide a perspective that seemed novel or deviated from the material I had collected thus far, I prioritized those interview opportunities. In rare cases, this sometimes meant interviewing respondents that only partially fit the selection criteria but could provide unique perspectives on the research questions. Some examples of this are participants who had arrived during childhood instead of being born in France, had grown up moving back and forth between their area of origin and mainland France, some who were of mixed race, or even one who had been adopted. These individuals, who were in a sense both insiders and outsiders to the group were often particularly useful insofar as they not only had acquired a more reflexive relationship to their group identity, but also had a clearer understanding of how group boundaries were drawn and how salient they were (Johnson 1990).

Given the centrality of family dynamics to the study, I also tried as often as possible to interview parents of the second generation respondents, or children of the first-generation respondents. I also interviewed the sibling of a second-generation Antillean respondent and siblings of two second-generation African respondents, which provided precious insights into the inner workings of the family, the relationship between siblings, as well as an alternative perspective on the same family environment.



## Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews were often conducted following the same pattern. I always started with some basic demographic questions (place of birth, marital status, number of siblings, etc.). This information was later added to a spreadsheet which was useful for comparing the participants' characteristics and backgrounds. Starting with these questions also gave opportunities to build rapport with the respondents and transition more naturally into speaking about their family and upbringing, which could be very personal—and in some cases emotionally laden—for some respondents.

The first substantial part of the interviews dealt with the respondents' backgrounds and educational and professional trajectory. I first probed their family background and upbringing, before asking about their neighbourhood and their key peer groups during their development. Depending on the rapport I had been able to develop with respondents, I would explore these issues in different orders and depths. I then gradually transitioned towards their school trajectory, with a specific focus on the educational tracks the respondents chose and what prompted these choices. I then explored their trajectories in the labour market and their experiences with discrimination and differential treatment in general. This part of the interview aimed to map out the socio-economic circumstances and challenges the respondents' faced, and the dynamics underlying their mobility patterns.

I introduced the second part of the interview with a chart to set the basis for a discussion about their social identities. The chart provided a list of racial, ethnic, national and religious identifications (and space for additional identities they might have found important) and asked respondents to rate the importance these had for them on a scale of 0 to 5.<sup>37</sup> The chart allowed me to map out their self-perception and allowed me to ask why they chose to rate some identities as stronger or as weaker than others. In most cases it provided a useful starting point for discussing their attachment to various parts of their social identities, and what may have contributed to giving them that salience. Any life experiences they might

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<sup>37</sup> Antillean respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they identified with being European, French, Antillean, Martinican/Guadeloupean, African, Black, of a particular religious identity (specify) and any other identity that might have been important to them. African respondents were asked to rate their identification with being European, French, African, Malian/Senegalese, with an African ethnic group (specify), with being Black, and with a religious identity (specify) and any other identity they might have wished to add.

have mentioned in the first part of the interview which could have contributed to shaping these identities was also brought up here.

At this stage, I usually shifted the discussion towards group relations. I asked Antilleans about their experiences with Africans, and Africans about their relations with Antilleans. I also asked both groups about their relations with the majority population, and focused upon how they felt perceived and categorized, both by the majority and the other minority group. This line of questioning helped me gather information on the 'cultural repertoires' they draw on to justify the boundaries they draw (Lamont 2000), and I paid particular attention to the salience of racial, ethnic, cultural and religious considerations in these boundaries.

I concluded most interviews by asking about the respondents' views on some general social issues relevant to the themes of the interview, and also asked some additional demographic questions which were more tactful to bring up at the end of the interview, such as their parents' profession.

When the respondents suggested it, the interviews were conducted in their homes. I generally preferred this as it gave an opportunity to collect rich observational data, provided material for additional questions, and gave a better sense of how they lived their lives. Furthermore, the home could often provide us with more privacy for the interview. In some cases family members were present, which could introduce a different dynamic and make some topics more difficult to discuss, but this was often compensated by obtaining multiple points of view on the same topic. In many cases however, the interviewing took place in public spaces: coffee shops, restaurants, or even parks, or semi-public places like African worker hostels, which also provided rich ethnographic material.

I used an interview guide (see Appendix I) with pre-formulated questions that covered all the sections and themes I have just outlined, which I fine-tuned over the course of the first interviews, to add new questions and remove or reformulate those that were less effective. Although I aimed to cover all the themes in the interview guide, the interviews were conducted quite loosely to make the interaction more natural. They were thus given much leeway to explore additional topics that might have been particularly relevant in their own experience.

I took detailed field notes after each interview, which gave a summary of the most salient themes that it explored and allowed me to connect them to the theoretical and substantive issues of the study (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Weiss 1994). The field notes also allowed me to record some of the important information that might otherwise be lost, and also gave me an opportunity to reflect on how the interview was conducted, how I might have affected the interview in a negative way, or simply which parts of it may have worked and which didn't.

I compensated the respondents with €20 for taking the time to participate in the study. This sometimes facilitated the recruitment of respondents, and allowed me to speak to people who may otherwise not have chosen to participate. I thereby avoided only interviewing people who saw their participation as an end in itself, who were perhaps also more comfortable in voluntarily taking on the role as a 'spokesperson' for their community. The interviews where financial compensation played a large part in the respondent's decision to participate were generally of a poorer quality, but it was nevertheless important to use this compensation as it also added more respondents from working-class backgrounds with limited schooling whose perspectives were in many cases valuable for the study.

All the interviews were conducted in French, and were fully transcribed in the original language – only the interview quotes used in the dissertation were translated. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed following the procedures detailed by Strauss and Corbin (1998: 101-142), using the Atlas.ti software package for qualitative data analysis. A first phase of open coding aimed to descriptively categorize the interview material before a second phase of coding which used more analytical codes derived both from the theoretical constructs that informed the study and the underlying social mechanisms emerging from the interview material itself.

Throughout the first phase of coding, I created several memos where I jotted down notes for various patterns that were not adequately covered by existing codes and that did not yet have codes developed to cover them. These memos were subsequently useful for developing theoretical codes. I also created primary document families for each group and generation, which were useful for filtering and comparing the material. A final step of coding consisted in developing code families that thematically

categorized all the codes and memos. This helped structure the data and design the content for the various chapters of the dissertation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I provided all respondents with a consent form (see Appendix 2) that specified the general purpose and themes of the interview. The form guaranteed the respondents full confidentiality and detailed the procedures that ensured this. The form mentioned the approximate duration of the interview and pointed out that the respondent was at liberty to end the interview at any time. In addition to my own contact information, the document also provided the contact information of the UBC Office of Research Services in case participants had any questions or concerns about the study or their rights as a participant. Before every interview, the respondents were asked to carefully read and sign the form before the interview, and were given a copy for their own records. I always walked them through the details of the consent form and asked if they had any questions about the interview or the study before they signed the form.

All the audio files and transcripts were tagged with ID numbers, and pseudonyms are used to refer to the respondents throughout the dissertation. All materials related to the study were kept on a password-protected hard drive, and were not made accessible to anyone else. I have also taken precautions in editing out any potentially identifying information in the dissertation, such as very specific and unusual biographical information.

I also took ethical precautions when recruiting respondents, and was careful to inform people that I could not contact anybody without their prior consent. This sometimes made me highly dependent upon the diligence of prior interviewees in getting in touch with other respondents, but it made sure that their privacy was respected.

I took some additional precautions to minimize any potential harm that could result from participation in this study. Since upbringing, migration experiences, experiences of racism and discrimination can be emotionally laden topics for some respondents, I remained sensitive to the

participants' emotional reactions throughout the interview. In the rare case when a respondent teared up over the course of our conversation, I asked if he or she wanted to change the topic, take a break or even stop the interview. I avoided probing insistently on topics when I sensed that they were making respondents too emotional.

In the few cases where the French language skills of the respondent were insufficient to ensure that full informed consent had been obtained, I relied on other family members of respondents to explain every point mentioned in the consent form. I was careful to avoid violating any cultural norms with the African respondents, but circumstances where I had such concerns were very rare.

I also suggested making the results of the study available in the form of a synopsis in French to those who were interested.

### Complementary Data Sources

In addition to this qualitative data, I use quantitative data drawn from the *Trajectoires et Origines* (TeO) survey (Beauchemin, Hamel and Simon 2016) to identify the broad patterns of intergenerational social mobility, discrimination experiences and social identity dynamics within the Antillean and West African populations in mainland France.

The TeO survey was conducted jointly by the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques* (INSEE) and the *Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques* (INED) between September 2008 and February 2009 on a random sample of 21.000 respondents, and is representative of the French mainland population between the ages of 18 and 50. In addition to respondents from the majority population, the sample thus includes respondents born abroad and in French overseas departments, as well as their descendants born in mainland France. The survey broadly aims to study the access that immigrants and their children have to a variety of social and economic resources in France, and therefore inquires about their educational attainment and their labour market position, their experiences of discrimination in school and in the labour market, as well as other areas of social life. Furthermore, the

survey includes questions about respondents' social identities, their religious observance, the origin of their partner, as well as other questions that are useful for assessing the respondents' socio-economic and cultural integration.

The qualitative approach, well-suited for identifying complex social processes and mechanisms, is often criticized for not being generalizable. Although I consider this methodology to obey to a different scientific logic—capable of generalizing on processes and mechanisms, but not on their distribution or the frequency of their occurrence within a population—this quantitative data will provide a more solid grounding for the study by allowing me to contextualize some of my findings within the general patterns of the population as a whole, and also contrast these with the majority population and other immigrant groups. This data also has the advantage of giving greater validity to some of my findings.

Insufficient sample sizes precluded against isolating specific African nationalities in the survey, meaning that Senegalese and Malian respondents are grouped with the rest of the Sahel region, including Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. However, given the random sampling of the survey and the relative size of the Senegalese and Malian communities in France, these two nationalities nearly constitute three quarters of the respondents in the Sahelian sample (Beauchemin, Lhommeau and Simon 2016).<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, given that these migrants share significant historical, structural, cultural and religious characteristics in common and were part of the earliest wave of sub-Saharan migrants—overwhelmingly low-skilled rural populations hailing from the valley of the Senegal River—this amalgamation is appropriate for our African respondents.<sup>39</sup>

The same issue pertains to the data on Antilleans, who for statistical reasons are aggregated into the broader category of overseas departments (DOM)—including Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana and La Réunion, where Antilleans represent about two thirds of the sample.

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<sup>38</sup> See online appendix: [http://www.ined.fr/Xtradocs/teo/annexes/Annexes\\_Chapitre\\_1.xls](http://www.ined.fr/Xtradocs/teo/annexes/Annexes_Chapitre_1.xls)

<sup>39</sup> Migrants from the Guinean Gulf and Central Africa came to France more recently and are generally more highly skilled than their Sahelian counterparts.

The survey data will only be used as a secondary data source for the study, primarily for descriptive and comparative purposes, and for contextualizing and strengthening the findings from my interviews. It will primarily be used to describe the family structure of the populations under study, their intergenerational social mobility, their experiences with discrimination, their endogamy rates, as well as their social identities.

### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample includes 55 respondents that are evenly divided by region of origin and by generation. The Antillean sample is slightly tilted toward Martinican respondents while Malians predominate slightly in the second generation sub-sample. Table I below summarizes this distribution of respondents.

	African	<i>Mali</i>	<i>Senegal</i>	Antillean	<i>Martinique</i>	<i>Guadeloupe</i>
First Generation	13	6	7	14	9	5
Second Generation	14	9	5	14	8	6

**Table I.** Distribution of respondents by region of origin and generation

The demographic characteristics of the first generation respondents are summarized in Table 2. In the African first generation, a slight majority have their roots in Senegal (57%) and the gender distribution in the sample is balanced (53% male). Most respondents come from a Muslim background (77%) while the rest are Christians. The ethnic backgrounds are varied, but from the most to least frequent, they identified as Bambara, Peul, Soninke, Jola, Manjack, Wolof, Serer, and Malinke. The sample has a sizeable number of both young and older respondents: 46% are under 35, and 38% are over 50. This age distribution also affects the respondents' civil status: 31% are single and have never been married, 38% are married and have never divorced, and the remaining 31% are divorced, whether they have remarried or remained single since. The number of divorcees in the sample is also slightly above the population average, and these are

overwhelmingly women. The average age of arrival in France is 27 years. As I sought to sample for socio-economic diversity, the respondents also vary in their educational attainment: 46% have a secondary school degree or less, while 38% have a university degree.

Most Antillean first generation respondents have their roots in Martinique (64%) and is tilted towards women as three quarters are female respondents. The sample is balanced in age, having both fairly recent arrivals and more established migrants: 42% are under 35, and 42% are over 50. This partly explains why most are unmarried and childless (50%), but a sizeable contingent are nevertheless divorced or separated single parents (29%) whereas only a minority are married or in a stable long-term relationship with children (21%). Even though the age distribution skews the civil status patterns compared to the population averages, the differences between the African and the Antillean sub-sample in this regard remain consistent with the broad matrimonial population patterns. As respondents as a rule came to mainland France at a young age, and two came in late childhood, the average age of arrival in France is only 17.7 years. The educational attainment is varied, albeit slightly skewed towards the well-educated: 36% have a secondary degree or less, while 57% have a university degree. Around a third of the respondents were parents of other respondents.

	Gender	Age Structure				Civil Status			Education	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Age at arrival</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Under 35</i>	<i>Over 50</i>	<i>Never married</i>	<i>Never divorced</i>	<i>Divorced</i>	<i>Secondary or less</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>African</b>	47%	28.8	42.3	46%	38%	31%	38%	31%	46%	38%
<b>Antillean</b>	78%	17.7	44.7	42%	42%	50%	21%	29%	36%	57%

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of first generation Antilleans and Africans

Among the second generation Africans (see Table 3), most respondents have their roots in Mali (64%), and the sample is disproportionately male (85%). The most common ethnic backgrounds were Soninke and Peul, followed by Bambara, Toucouleur, and Malinke. All respondents were either born in France or came during their first years of life, with the exception of one respondent who came at the age of 12. The



ages range from 21 to 42 years, with an average age of 27.8 years across the sub-sample. Only about a fifth have a university degree, the remaining 80% have a secondary degree or less. About a third of respondents had parents who were also interviewed.

	Gender	Age Structure			Education	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Under 25</i>	<i>Over 35</i>	<i>Secondary or less</i>	<i>University</i>
African	15%	27.8	43%	14%	79%	21%
Antillean	57%	31.5	29%	29%	29%	43%

**Table 3.** Demographic characteristics of second generation Antilleans and Africans

In the second-generation Antillean subsample, 43% of respondents had at least a parent from Guadeloupe, but more than half of the Martinican-origin respondents had mixed backgrounds (mostly with a French parent, but one respondent had an African parent). The respondents are almost evenly divided by gender (57% female), and the ages range from 21 to 42, with an average age of 31.5 years. About 29% have a secondary degree or less, while 43% have obtained a university degree.

## II. Challenges and Limitations

### Positionality and Fieldwork Challenges

I anticipated that the study would most likely pose several challenges that were important to reflect upon. The most obvious one perhaps being how my positionality—i.e. my own racial and ethnic characteristics, social class, gender and so on—would impact my ability to build rapport with some of the respondents, gain access to some information or social settings, and to simply be able to collect rich data.

Qualitative researchers that study groups from which they are separated by a considerable social distance have understandably been led to question the quality of the data they collect (e.g. Duneier 2004),

and some have even argued for more or less strict forms of insider epistemology as a result, where 'racial insiders' would have a clear advantage over 'outsiders' in the field (Collins 2000). However, fieldwork experiences of 'racial insiders' do not always lend much support to this view (e.g. Twine 2000), suggesting that these researchers, despite their advantages on some levels, also face other sets of challenges, and that they can even be at a disadvantage on several criteria compared to 'outsiders' (Young 2004). But regardless of whether we are insiders or outsiders to the groups we study, we are never spared a reflexive evaluation of how we are perceived by our respondents, and we need to evaluate to the best of our ability how this may affect the data we collect and how we interpret it.

The issue of how I was perceived was always something I took into consideration, and it was clearly in many cases an obstacle. In some cases this seemed directly attributed to race. In one case an Antillean respondent wanted to refer me to a Malian family who lived next door who she thought would be an interesting case for me, but then added that they wouldn't be willing to talk to me because they "hate whites". Obstacles like these were of course difficult to overcome. Sometimes, my race was simply a matter of surprise given that the theme of the study led respondents to expect a black person. Mostly this led to polite inquiries about why I chose to study this particular topic, but in one instance an Antillean woman who I came to visit for an interview gasped when she opened her apartment door, exclaiming: "but you're white!". Others were more explicitly concerned about my intentions or biases, which would probably not have been an issue if I were a racial insider. When I asked Paul, a 29 year-old Martinican computer engineer if he thought that not being part of the group might constitute an obstacle for studying it, he replied:

Yeah, I think so. Yeah absolutely, because when I asked my mate... to contact you, he said "no, we don't know what he wants to write, maybe his agenda- his political point of view is the complete opposite of ours, and maybe he will use arguments to show that Antilleans isolate themselves, and that they want to remain in their condition or something like that". So yeah—because it's true, there is prejudice against the other...

This particular respondent stood out from the others through his more intense "colour consciousness" and high sensitivity towards group generalizations and stereotyping, which might have made him an unusual case. But his friend's reaction nevertheless suggests that some members of the community believed that

my being white meant that I would be likely to inadequately portray them and therefore dissuaded them from participating in the study.

Large class divides could sometimes complicate the interviews and my ability to read the interviewees. Although most interviews with young people from modest backgrounds with low levels of education went well, in one particular case it seemed clear that I failed to engage the respondent adequately and dispel the tension that I sensed from the beginning. However, it was hard to tell if the standoffish posture, the brief answers to my questions, and the avoidance of eye contact were due to some sort of hostility, to my inability to create rapport, to the unnaturalness of being in an interview situation speaking about his personal life with a stranger, to the fact that he felt compelled to participate because of the person who referred me to him, or if the social distance between us just distorted my perceptions.

The language and culture barrier could also interfere with the interview situation. I conducted one interview with two Malian women who had both been living in France for ten years, Khadija spoke French fluently, whereas her friend Awa barely spoke the language at all. Despite the efforts of Khadija to translate the questions and answers for Awa, she answered very briefly and gave very little material for probing, the whole exchange with her remaining painfully superficial. As this interview occurred fairly early in my fieldwork, it was more difficult for me to ask pointed questions that might perhaps have been more fitting to her specific experience—which in this case clearly illustrates the disadvantage of being an outsider to the group.

Another interview was memorable for the problems created by the language barrier. This respondent, Harouna, brought me to a nearby Malian worker hostel, despite not living there himself, into a cramped two-person bedroom filled with 5 or 6 other young men. This interview was particularly strained because the respondent's French language proficiency was too low to adequately grasp and respond to many of my questions, regardless of how simply and straightforwardly I tried to formulate them. His friends, who were sitting around us throughout the interview (mostly watching a portable television), were either not much more proficient in French or were simply not willing to be of assistance. This experience also suggests another barrier that derived from how I was perceived. After trying to

encourage his friends to participate at the end of the interview—mentioning the 20 euro compensation—he failed to persuade any of them. As Harouna explained to me when we left the room to visit the hostel, they were worried about somebody collecting information about them, as many had entered the country illegally or overstayed their visas, and were concerned about the authorities finding out.

Being male may have made it more difficult to speak to more (and perhaps different) women in the African sample, as I had more difficulty recruiting women from this demographic, while I was turning down interviews with men. This might be due to a variety of factors, but should be kept in mind as one of the limitations of the sample.

Although reactions to my race, gender, and social background could obviously not be helped, I think this was partially counterbalanced by the fact that my social identities could come across as “fudged” to many respondents (Lamont 2004). As a Swede who settled elsewhere in France with his parents at a young age, my accent could not be associated to some familiar local demographic that my respondents might have had feelings about, and my non-French name and affiliation to a foreign academic institution made me less conspicuous and more of an outside observer.

Judging by how forthcoming respondents were about their own lives and experiences, and how potentially tense situations were in general easily diffused, I believe most interviews were handled quite successfully. The social issue I probably struggled with most was in my attempt to find the right balance between formality and casualness when addressing my younger respondents, at least insofar as needing to choose pronouns: either the colloquial “tu” (used among friends, social equals, and most young people) or the more formal “vous” (appropriate for addressing adult strangers and social superiors). When substantial class barriers were present, I was hesitant to use the “tu” form, even if this seemed more natural to me. When I did do so from the start with some younger respondents, this could sometimes be interpreted as impolite. One respondent who was slightly younger than me—whom I had an excellent interview with and who later convinced a close friend of his to talk to me as well—was discussing over the course of the interview how respect was lacking in contemporary France, and illustrated his point by saying that he wouldn’t just say “tu” to people he did not know out on the street, which I took as a disapproval of my

mode of address. In other early interviews, despite accepting my suggestion that we could say “tu” to each other, many continued saying “vous”. I suspect that this unequal form of address was something that many respondents from these backgrounds were not unfamiliar with in circumstances such as these, but it consistently made me uncomfortable and often led me to clumsily veer back to saying “vous”. The tensions surrounding the use of these pronouns only occurred in the context of large class disparities, where I foolishly thought I could bridge such a substantial social divide by attempting to implement an informal mode of interaction (Mauger 1991).

Speaking about racial issues across a racial divide in a society where racial distinctions are illegitimate also led to some peculiar experiences. The middle-class respondents were usually those who seemed most uncomfortable discussing these themes, while those from more ethnically diverse working-class areas in the suburbs were far more used to it and relaxed about it. However, the spontaneous use of explicit racial categories was quite rare. The most common was to use more socially acceptable euphemisms, like the more neutral English word “black” or the slang word “renoi” instead of *Noir*, and the Antillean category of *métropolitain* or *français de souche* for “white”. When somebody used the term *blanc* it was not uncommon that they prefaced it with some apologetic signal, marking its illegitimacy. One Antillean woman used the term very liberally, but did so deliberately to defy what she saw as an unfair double standard in how the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ were used: “When I say ‘white’, the person I’m facing will feel offended because I say ‘you’re white’—but you call me black, why am I not allowed to call you white?”.

There were probably some advantages as well in being an outsider. First of all it was not assumed that I knew, putting me into the role of the “socially acceptable incompetent” (Lofland et al. 2006) which allowed me to ask a broader set of questions and access taken-for-granted information less problematically. Furthermore, since the relationship between Africans and Antilleans was a central aspect of the study, not being part of either group was a better position to be in when asking about their group relations. I was often concerned that I might be seen as a meddling, divisive figure that would seek to ‘divide the black

community' with my line of questioning, but this was not my experience at all. In most cases people seemed fine expounding on this, unless they had no experience with it or had not given it any particular thought.

Social distance between researchers and their respondents is a reality in all empirical research, and even though it clearly varies in degree, its complexity cannot be circumvented by simplistic reifications of the social world. Researcher positionalities provide both opportunities and limitations, and to some extent it is possible to maximize the former and minimize the latter through appropriate reflexivity, self-presentation and relational skills. Some individuals might be at a greater advantage than others for undertaking a given study, but it cannot simply be predetermined by simple reference to abstractions such as race, gender or class, especially when researching in different national and cultural contexts. Indeed, race, class and gender are culturally laden and relational categories that vary in salience and configuration depending on the context, and the fact that a foreign researcher happens to share a number of these 'objective' attributes doesn't necessarily mean they will immediately be accepted by the population they study or have insight into their experiences. In this regard, my familiarity with French society and its cultural codes was perhaps a greater 'advantage' in my research—at least on the second generation—than the 'disadvantage' that may have come from not sharing the same 'racial' attributes as my respondents.

### Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to the study that are important to consider. The most important criticism that can be levelled towards the study is that there is a disequilibrium at the heart of the research design, which largely derived from the nature of my research questions. Given my ambition to study the general identification patterns across both populations and generations, where a variety of class backgrounds were sought, I was led to recruit several childless first-generation participants who were more qualified and had arrived more recently than the parents of most second generation respondents I interviewed. This, in turn, was detrimental to the study of assimilation mechanisms, as it diminished the number of first-generation respondents that could shed light on family patterns that were salient for second generation respondents.

Furthermore, identifying the salient assimilation mechanisms within these communities sometimes necessitated an exploration of some cultural factors that seemed central in the interview data. I ventured into this area with the utmost care, and supported any tentative conclusions in previous research, but being an outsider here might clearly have been a disadvantage as well. Being able to study more respondents within the same family, and/or more first generation respondents that were perhaps more representative of the parents of my second generation respondents would have been more helpful for solidifying these findings.

The broad ambitions of the study may also have come at the price of losing depth in the various subsamples. Studying two diverse geographical areas, broken down into two generations, and also stratified by class and gender provided useful data regarding the general patterns within the population, but obviously made it difficult to go into greater depth into the specific case of say middle-class second-generation Antillean women as the samples become so small. This could of course have been remedied with a larger sample, or with a modified study design.

As mentioned earlier, the second-generation African sample in particular suffers from a greater gender imbalance than the others, due to a greater difficulty in recruiting young French-born African women. Whereas the preponderance of males in this sub-sample might have been useful for understanding mechanisms of downward mobility; it had the disadvantage of putting a lesser emphasis on young women's experiences. Fortunately, the few interviews I did conduct with this demographic were of good quality, and I also often asked male respondents about the trajectories of their sisters.

Another limitation is the absent voice of the mainstream population from these group dynamics, despite it being present in all the experiences of the interviewees. Interviewing white French people could have better helped assess how they conceptualized 'otherness' and 'Frenchness' and what their social inclusion and exclusion of these two population groups hinge upon, which would have been useful for making a more nuanced assessment of how boundaries were drawn. It could also have provided an account of whether the mainstream population feels framed in a particular way in their social interactions with these two populations.

Finally, given that segmented assimilation is notorious for its hypothesized ‘downward assimilation’ path, it is worth pointing out that the study is not designed to empirically ‘test’ the specific modalities that putatively drive ‘downward assimilation’ among these communities. This would essentially have required a male-only sample exclusively drawn from the most socially disadvantaged parts of the African and Antillean populations in France, with a heavy ethnographic focus on the social dynamics of one, or a few specific areas. Several studies with this general type of focus already exist (e.g. Lapeyronnie 2008; Mohammed 2011; Wacquant 2008), although they lack these explicit theoretical ambitions and rarely focus on the specificities of different communities such as those that I am interested in here. By contrast, this study aims to conduct a broader investigation into the assimilation mechanisms, social identities and group relations—across the class spectrum, in two generations, and for both genders—in order to identify the role played by my respondents’ racial, cultural and religious backgrounds in these social processes. Given this interest in social characteristics that contribute to erecting structural barriers, the study will investigate the relevance of some of the key claims of segmented assimilation theory for interpreting the findings, but does not have the ambition to rigorously ‘test’ the mechanisms it hypothesizes for its ‘downward path’.



**PART TWO**

**ASSIMILATION TRAJECTORIES**

## 5. THE FRENCH CONTEXT OF RECEPTION

As a necessary preamble to analyzing the assimilation patterns of my respondents, this section provides an overview of the social, economic and institutional context that immigrants are faced with when they settle and raise their children in the Paris region, with a special focus on the contextual variables emphasized by segmented assimilation theory.

### I. Economic and Social Transformations

#### Economic Restructuring and Social Mobility

The restructuring of the economy and the limited economic growth in France since the 1970s has deeply affected low-skilled workers in France. Between 1980 and 2007, 36% percent of the workforce in manufacturing was eliminated, which amounts to 1,9 million jobs (Demmou 2010). In the Paris region alone, 650 000 manufacturing jobs disappeared between 1975 and 1988 (Mohammed 2011). The democratization of schooling in the 1980s, and the corresponding inflation of degrees has also left young working-class males with limited education much less well-adjusted to the labour market, which has furthermore become dominated by a low-skilled service sector and highly credentialed professionals and managers.

Simultaneously, attempts to reduce unemployment have primarily consisted in multiplying temporary contracts while maintaining the stringent protection that long-term contracts benefit from, producing a two-tiered labour market that overwhelmingly penalizes the young (Le Barbanchon and Malherbet 2013), who are now two and a half times more likely to rely on temporary work than they were 25 years ago (Peugny 2013). Moreover, these shifts in the economy and the labour market have not been accompanied by reforms to the French corporatist welfare state which has increased inequalities by

privileging established occupational and statutory groups over the poor, and has primarily penalized the young as well as immigrants and their descendants by making their access to the labour market more difficult (Smith 2004).

Although social mobility in France was high during the four decades following World War II, most of it occurred between the 1950s and the 1970s, and it has largely stabilized since 1977 (Peugny 2013). Whereas the impact of socio-economic backgrounds on mobility prospects decreased for those born between 1930 and 1960, it has rather increased for following generations (Lefranc 2011). Furthermore, both downward mobility in the intermediary and higher occupational categories and stagnation in the working class has become more widespread compared to the baby-boom generation (Peugny 2007).

The structure of the French educational system has also been shown to contribute to social segmentation by reinforcing the advantages of families with greater economic and cultural capital. In addition to a below OECD-average public spending on primary education, French families also spend the most on private tutoring in Europe, the access to which is of course economically skewed. Additionally, the two-tier higher education system—with an elitist track constituted by the *Grandes Ecoles* and a non-elitist mainstream university system—increases the education gap between a small elite and a middle class seeking higher education, and further hampers social mobility (Ben-Halima, Chusseau and Hellier 2014).

### Urban Decay and Social Marginality

The deleterious impact of these social and economic policies are most visible in working-class neighbourhoods in the periphery of large urban areas—often referred to as *cités*—whose residents were typically employed in large manufacturing industries. Starting in the mid-1980s youth unemployment in particular increased drastically in these areas, and immigrant households were typically hit first and hardest in this process.

In addition to the economic and social impact of deindustrialization, a series of housing policies in the late 1970s also encouraged established residents to move out from these areas. These residents often

played a central role in socializing immigrants into French working-class life, through their activity in trade unions and the communist party, whose sharp declines in membership also hit two important pillars of immigrant integration (Hargreaves 2007). As many moved out, vacant apartments were typically sought out by low-skilled immigrant newcomers, further increasing concentration of ethnic minorities (Masclat 2003). Through a complex and drawn out process on several levels of social life—economically through joblessness and welfare dependency; culturally through ethnic concentration and the loss of social and cultural embeddedness in the French population; socially through the deterioration of schools and increased crime rates but also through the harmful effects of high turnover rates on social capital—these neighbourhoods have gradually developed various forms of social marginality and stigma.

The social problems generated by these developments have largely perpetuated themselves over time despite state intervention and have even worsened after the economic downturns of past decades. Today, the 1296 neighbourhoods in the country that have been singled out for urban renewal policies (which concentrate 4.8 million people, i.e. 7.5% of the country's population) recorded an average unemployment rate of 26% among the population aged between 15 and 64, while it is only 10% in other neighbourhoods. Youth are clearly the most affected group, as 36% of the population of these areas under the age of 30 are NEETs, compared to 17.4% in the rest of the country. Although the least qualified have the highest levels of unemployment, and that their unemployment rates do decrease with education, residents of these areas with over two years of university education nevertheless have unemployment rates that are three times higher than their counterparts in the rest of the population. Furthermore, over two thirds of the inhabitants in these urban areas receive some form of welfare benefits, compared to 45% of the population of metropolitan France, and 64% of welfare-recipient households in these areas are characterized by low incomes, compared to 33% in metropolitan France (ONPV 2016).

Despite the state's continued investment in these urban areas, the fragile mechanisms that previously ensured the incorporation of immigrants into the mainstream working-class have been substantially damaged. In many of these areas, where school drop-out levels and youth unemployment rates are two to three times higher than the national average, a handful of disenfranchised youth without

qualifications and prospects on the labour market turn more or less intensively and durably to criminal activities and drug trafficking, rejecting dominant norms and institutions. Nowhere is this revolt towards the surrounding society more obvious than in their tense relations with the local police, often considered as a rival gang (Mohammed 2011; Sauvadet 2006). In some areas, this often proportionately small group of youth have successfully taken control of public space and largely imposed their norms of collective life on the neighbourhoods they inhabit, and have thereby in effect inverted the social and generational order (Bronner 2010; Lapeyronnie 2008). It might thus not be wholly inappropriate to speak of the existence of an 'oppositional culture' in many of these areas, which could potentially affect the assimilation trajectories of the children of immigrants who are already faced with the many social, economic and institutional disadvantages in these poor urban areas.

Sociological comparisons between the impoverished U.S. inner-cities and the French *cités* have stressed the many deep differences between these two urban formations, despite the many surface similarities they may share. Loïc Wacquant (2008) points out that both have been ravaged by deindustrialization and mass unemployment, have high concentrations of ethnically marked populations, similar age structures and household compositions, and that they both share a similar bleak and oppressive atmosphere and have salient stigmas associated to them. Despite these similarities, Wacquant maintains that the French *cités* can not be compared in sheer size, degrees of poverty, criminality, or ethnic homogeneity to dilapidated U.S. inner-cities. Furthermore, he also points out that in contrast to the United States, the state hasn't completely deserted these working-class areas in France, which are rather the target of ambitious urban renewal programs. Although Wacquant is correct in pointing out the flaws in these frequent comparisons, the experience of poverty, crime and general insecurity is a relative phenomenon, and it is precisely this lived experience and the meaning attributed to it that shapes the prevailing attitudes towards these areas and their inhabitants, not objective differences in degree or in scale compared to other societies.

## Territorial Divides and Segregation

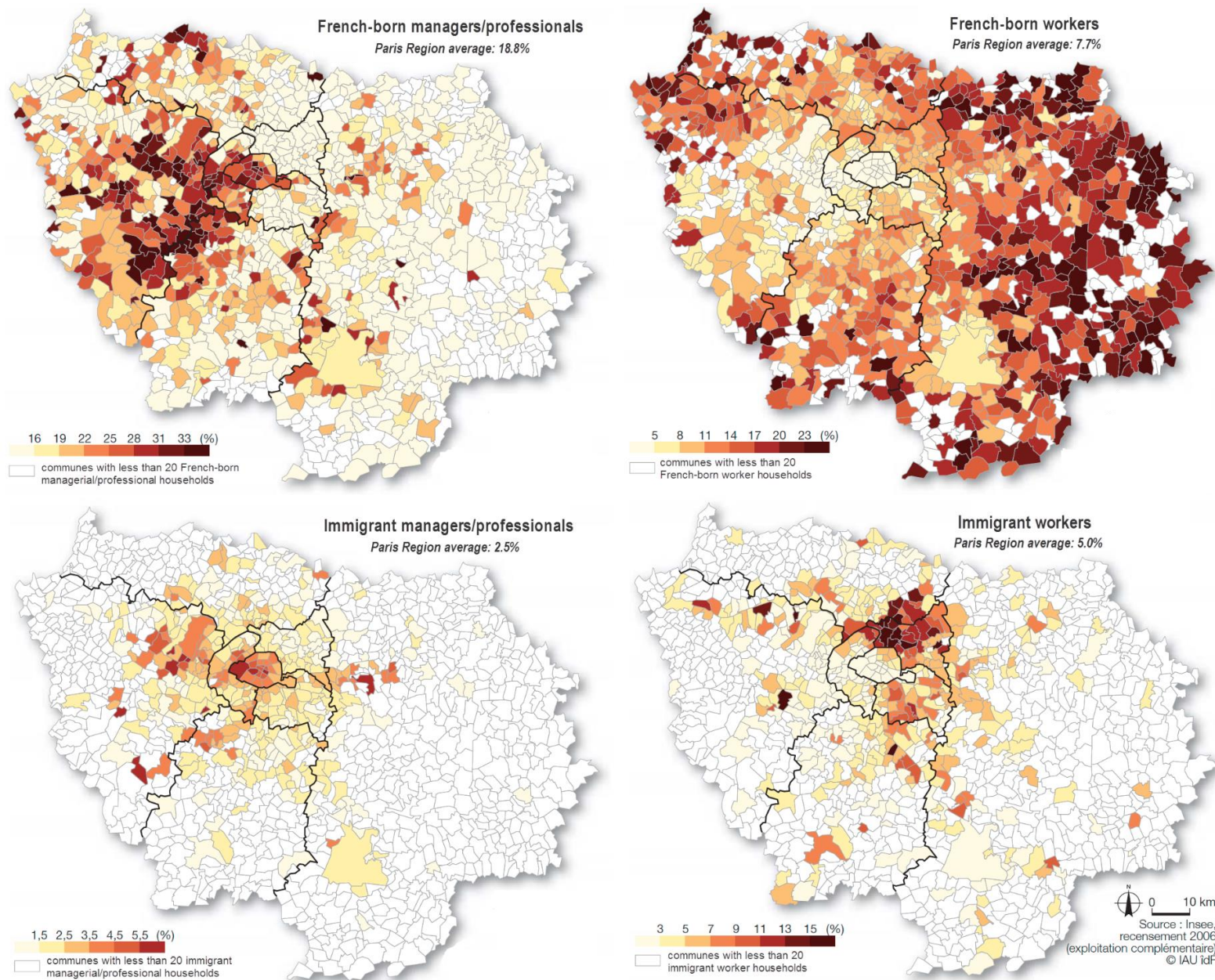
More broadly, at the level of the Paris region as a whole, the formation of these urban entities has been accompanied by other patterns of disaggregation which have generated and increasingly polarized social landscape. A recent report from the *Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme d'Ile-de-France*<sup>40</sup> has shown that over the past thirty years, the increased number of immigrant households has led to an extension of their geographical spread and a diversification of their social backgrounds. In fact, the proportion of immigrant worker households diminished by 10% since 1982, their share among all immigrant households dropping from 44% to 25% in 2006. The geographical distance has decreased between immigrant households from all occupational groups with the exception of immigrant managerial and professional households which have remained about the same. However, by contrast, the geographical divide between occupational categories has increased among French households since 1982, as managers, professionals and business owners are now far more removed from blue-collar and service workers than they were three decades ago. Furthermore, the residential distance between French and immigrant households has increased across all categories over the same period with the exception of immigrant managerial/professional households, who have actually come closer residentially to all French households. The French working class have primarily distanced themselves from immigrant worker households, but this distancing is less stark than it is for other occupational categories in the French population<sup>41</sup> (IAU-IDF 2013).

As Figure 5 illustrates, the pattern we see appearing in the broader Paris region is a clustering of managerial and professional households with little immigrant/French-born differentiation in central Paris and in the inner and outer western suburbs, a clustering of working-class immigrant households in the northern inner suburbs, while French workers largely aggregate in the outer periphery of the metropolis,

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<sup>40</sup> This Institute of Planning and Urbanism of the Paris Region

<sup>41</sup> These patterns have been assessed by calculating 'indexes of dissimilarity' that measure "the proportion of households of a given group (immigrants, occupational category...) that would have to change communes in order to obtain the same geographical distribution as the group taken as a reference (all households in the Paris region, French-born households, etc.)". The highest indexes of dissimilarity in the region are found between native managers/professionals and immigrant workers (0.464), between native managers/professionals and native workers (0.445) as well as between immigrant managers/professionals and native workers (0.444). The index of dissimilarity between native households as a whole and immigrant worker households increased from 0.220 in 1982 to 0.328 in 2006, suggesting an avoidance of stigmatized suburban or social housing areas with large concentrations of immigrants.

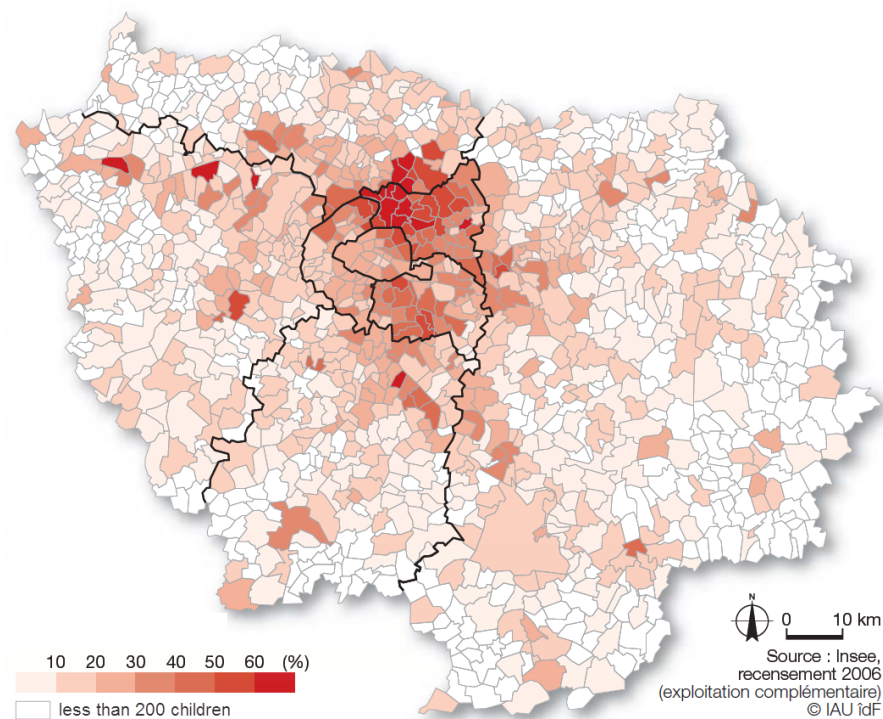


**Figure 5.** Geographical distribution and concentration of French-born and immigrant managerial/professional and worker households in the Paris Region in 2006



primarily in the east. Although this certainly highlights the spatial separation between the highly-skilled French population and the working-class immigrant population, it also shows the limited influence of immigrant status on residential divides within the higher occupational strata and the spatial convergence of immigrant households with high levels of qualification and the rest of the French population. It also points to the increased class polarization within the French population and the greater separation between the French and immigrant working-class compared to higher occupational categories.<sup>42</sup>

Although one should be cautious of making an ethnic reading of these figures—as the native category also includes several second-generation immigrants born with French citizenship—the Institute’s separate mapping of the geographical distribution of children of immigrants (see Figure 6) shows that they are primarily concentrated in the inner suburbs, especially in the north and south.



**Figure 6.** Proportion of children who live in an immigrant household in the Paris Region

<sup>42</sup> These patterns also lend credence to analyses that emphasize the increasing economic, cultural and political divide emerging between large metropolitan areas that concentrate a high-credentialed native population and a low-skilled immigrant-origin population that reap the economic rewards of globalization, and a more peripheral and economically disenfranchised class of low-skilled natives that have been pushed out to more economically stagnant and peripheral small-towns and rural areas (Guilluy 2013).



A closer look at the ethnic disparities among immigrants further nuances the picture. In the Paris region, Turks and sub-Saharan Africans remain the most spatially segregated groups. Although segregation rates of sub-Saharan Africans and Maghrebis decreased slightly between 1975 and 1999 (Safi 2009) they increased between 1999 and 2006 (IAU-IDF 2013).<sup>43</sup> Many studies on the topic unfortunately suffer from not adequately controlling for class backgrounds, but as Prêteceille (2009) has for instance pointed out regarding DOM-TOM migrants, their segregation index as a whole in the Paris region is higher than that of unskilled industrial workers (the most segregated occupational category), despite that fact that only 16.6% of the DOM-TOM population in the metropolis were unskilled industrial workers.<sup>44</sup>

Disfavoured neighbourhoods are typically avoided by all groups—suggesting that there is no uniquely ‘white flight’ from these areas—but when controlling for social and demographic variables, it nevertheless remains much harder for sub-Saharan Africans to leave poor urban areas than other groups, and they are four times more likely to settle in these neighbourhoods than the French mainstream population (Pan Ké Shon 2009). The sub-Saharan African immigrant population in the Paris Region has increasingly spread out geographically over time, but mainly within the most socially disfavoured municipalities, and the growth of the sub-Saharan African population in these municipalities has coincided with a decrease of the French-born population over the same period (IAU-IDF 2013).

Regarding immigrant concentration levels as a whole, the proportion of immigrant-origin populations in some neighbourhoods has grown exponentially, as in Clichy-sous-Bois where it has risen from 22 to 76% between 1968 and 2005.<sup>45</sup> Although only 25% of immigrant-origin youth under the age of 18 in France were of non-European descent in 1968, they represented 75% of this youth in 2005, primarily from North and sub-Saharan African backgrounds (Aubry and Tribalat 2009).

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<sup>43</sup> Lagrange suggests that very different patterns may characterize Sahelian and non-Sahelian Africans, the latter typically being more skilled, and thus probably more geographically mobile than the former.

<sup>44</sup> The explanatory power of class in accounting for these territorial concentrations seem to have decreased over time, as the socio-economic characteristics of immigrant households explained 38% of their ethnic concentration in the Paris region, but only 25% in 2006 (IAU-IDF 2013).

<sup>45</sup> These figures only include the children born of one or two immigrant parents, and therefore don't include third generation immigrants or children born of immigrants who have obtained French citizenship.

## II. Discrimination and Public Attitudes

### Discrimination and Stigma

In addition to these processes of segregation and concentration of ethnic minorities in poor neighbourhoods, many African-origin French citizens are affected by greater socio-economic exclusion than other groups. The odds of unemployment among North African and sub-Saharan African second-generation immigrants is 2 to 4 times higher than the majority population, and this discrepancy remains after accounting for education levels, social background, age and family composition. Second-generation immigrants also experience higher job insecurity and rely greatly on subsidized employment schemes compared to the mainstream population (Meurs, Pailhé and Simon 2008). A "testing" study of discrimination towards children of North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants in low or medium-skilled occupations in France has shown that they are, at similar levels of qualification, about three to four times less likely than their peers of French descent to receive the same number of positive replies from their attempted contacts with employers (Cediey and Foroni 2007).

Even though highly-skilled second generation immigrants typically face lower levels of unemployment than their peers with lower qualifications, they also abandon their studies before obtaining a diploma at 2 times higher rates than their peers from the majority population, and have more precarious forms of employment with lower salaries. They also often occupy positions they are overqualified for, which is especially true for women (AFIJ 2007; Beaud 2003; Brinbaum and Guégnard 2011; Silberman, Alba and Fournier 2007). Self-reported discrimination rates are also high for non-European origin populations. Typically between 20-25% of North and sub-Saharan African immigrants and their children report having been unfairly refused a job in the last 5 years, as opposed to only 5% of the majority population; these levels reach over 30% for individuals of African origin when they have been unemployed in the past 5 years, which is 20% higher than the equivalent figure for the majority population (Lhommeau, Meurs and Primon 2016). For these African-origin groups, the cumulative stigma of class and race is also reflected in the fact

that they are two to three times more likely than other non-European-origin groups to report their place of residence as one of the reasons they are targeted by discrimination (Silberman and Fournier 2008).

Furthermore, many African-origin youth—especially when male and socialized in poor urban areas<sup>46</sup>—are commonly subjected to 'identity checks' by the police based on their physical appearance and their demeanour, and are often exposed to stigmatizing encounters with the surrounding society (see e.g. Lapeyronnie 2008). This daily-life experience of being the carrier of a set of potent stigmas feeds the sense of rejection *from*, as well as the concomitant rejection *of* the surrounding society (see Anderson 2008).

Even though most immigrants in France typically hail from rural and low-skilled backgrounds, and that this has a strong and direct impact on the differences in socio-economic achievement of second generation immigrants in France, racial characteristics and ethnic origin are thus far from irrelevant in their social experiences and their mobility patterns, which is in line with what segmented assimilation theory would predict.

## Public Opinion

As members of the majority population are not part of this study, and their experiences and attitudes play a central role in the assimilation process, the broad trends in public opinion can be useful for assessing the barriers toward boundary blurring between the majority and the groups under study.

The *Commission Consultative des Droits de l'Homme* (National Consultative Commission on Human Rights) produces annual reports for the French government on racism, antisemitism and xenophobia in the country. The surveys draw from representative samples of the mainland population, which may therefore not be able to directly address the views of the population of French descent, but has the advantage of presenting the general climate of ethno-racial relations in the country and how it evolves over time.

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<sup>46</sup> Although both genders are affected by unemployment, lower wages and being overqualified for their jobs, young women are much more likely to succeed in their studies, be employed and be more socially and geographically mobile than their male counterparts (Lhommeau, Meurs and Primon 2016).

In 2013, three quarters of respondents considered that there were too many immigrants in the country (56% in 2015; henceforth, unless otherwise mentioned, all figures in brackets are from 2015),<sup>47</sup> 58% saw immigration as the prime cause of insecurity (42%), and 77% believed that immigrants only came to France to access social benefits (60%). Furthermore, only 22% agreed with the statement “it is primarily French society that doesn’t give people of foreign origin the means to integrate” (24%), whereas 68% agreed that “it is primarily people of foreign origin who don’t give themselves the means to integrate” (49%). With regard to children of immigrants born in France, 35% of respondents considered them as not really being French (26%).

The general sense of group relations and social cohesion is quite strikingly negative, as 83% of respondents considered in 2013 that there were tensions between the populations of different origins that compose French society (55% considering that these populations lived in parallel to each other, and 28% that they lived separately), and 60% agreed with the statement that “one doesn’t feel at home in France as one did before” (50%).

With regard to racism, 84% consider it to be widespread in France (85%) and although 38% consider that nothing can justify racist reactions (40%), 61% maintain that certain behaviours can sometimes justify racist reactions (59%). To the open question of who the primary victims of racism are in the country in 2015, more than half mention either Muslims, Arabs or North Africans, around 19% mention Blacks or Africans, around 23% broadly mention foreigners or immigrants, and 22% mention French people or whites. With regard to self-reported racist sentiments, 39% of respondents declared that they were “not at all racist” in 2013 (53%). This view was most commonly held in the Paris Region, in neighbourhoods with more than 9% foreigners, among managers and professionals as well as the most educated segments of the population. Despite all this, 71% held that one could succeed in France regardless of one’s skin colour (74%).

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<sup>47</sup> The figures from the 2013 report are among the most dismal for the state of ethno-racial relations in the country, whereas the opposite was true for the 2015 report, despite the two terrorist attacks that took place in the capital that year. Even though these trends were foreshadowed in 2014, there are reasons for concern over the reliability of the most recent figures, as the attacks affected the data collection for the report, which was moreover conducted by two different institutes over two different periods. I nevertheless report figures from both years to give a better sense of the spectrum and fluctuation of opinion on these issues.

Regarding the perception of the extent to which immigrant groups cut themselves off from the mainstream, 23% of respondents considered Blacks to be a separate group in society (14%), 31% that it was a group that was open to others (39%), while 46% considered that they didn't particularly form a group (45%). In 2015, the same question was also asked about Antilleans, showing that 9% saw them as a separate group, 41% saw them as a group open to others, and 43% saw them as not particularly forming a group, suggesting that Antilleans are seen as being less distant from the mainstream than Blacks in general.

The attitude towards Muslims seems double-edged, as a large majority sees Muslims as ordinary citizens while simultaneously feeling ambivalent about Islam. Although 76% of respondents agreed that French Muslims were just like any other French citizens, 49% nevertheless saw Islam as a threat to French identity in 2015 (CNCDH 2014; CNCDH 2016). Other poll data on the public perception of Muslims confirm this ambivalence. An IFOP poll from 2012 for instance found that 67% of respondents thought that Muslims and people of Muslim origin were not well-integrated, primarily putting the blame on cultural differences and a refusal on the part of Muslims to adapt (IFOP 2012). In another Le Monde/IPSOS survey from 2013, 74% of respondents described Islam as an intolerant religion which is incompatible with the values of French society, and eight out of ten respondents believed that the religion sought to "impose its mode of functioning on others" (Le Bars 2013).

As this overview suggests, there are deep structural and sociological fault lines in the Parisian metropolitan area which are in line with many of the structural assumptions of segmented assimilation theory regarding barriers to labour market integration, dilapidated residential areas with adversarial cultures, and negative public opinion towards immigration and Islam. These factors are likely to play an important role in the assimilation trajectories of immigrants and their offspring.

## **6. MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT**

Although both Antilleans and West Africans started migrating to mainland France in large numbers in the 1960s and were primarily driven by economic motivations, there are some significant differences in the migration motivations of both groups. These primarily derive from the differences in living standards and local economic opportunities, as well as the differential access they have to mainland France. Antillean respondents were also more typically driven by individual economic aspirations and were more oriented towards the host society, whereas African respondents had more collective aspirations and a greater orientation towards their societies of origin. Many African respondents also settled in France in order to send remittances back home and support their communities of origin. Among respondents who migrated more recently there were several examples of more high-skilled migrants driven by a desire to advance their careers, especially among Antilleans.

Despite the barriers that both groups may face in their settlement experiences, there are nevertheless clear differences in their magnitude. Although both groups lack a formal ethnic economy that they could potentially benefit from in France, they differ significantly in their involvement in ethnic associations and their orientation towards the region of origin, with Antilleans seeming to register lower degrees of social capital.

### **I. Backgrounds and Motivations**

#### **African Backgrounds and Motivations**

In contrast to the Senegalese in New York for instance who mostly come from urban backgrounds seeking adventure and opportunity (Kane 2010), most early-wave Sahelian migrants to France were rural Soninkes

and Peuls from the valley of the Senegal river whose migration was a collective enterprise. They often came to France at a young age, and were only able to pay for their trip through the financial support of their kin. In order to reimburse their debts to their family and to those who looked after them in the worker's hostels where they typically settled, as well as assist their fragile rural communities of origin, they were expected to begin sending funds back to their family as soon as they found employment. Over time, they were expected to regularly return to get married, if possible several times, and father multiple children, with the aim of moving back home in old age, having achieved the desirable status of a wealthy polygamous patriarch who had provided for the well being of their whole community (Barou 2011; Timera 2001). This traditional migration pattern has become more diversified over time however, as the respondents in our sample illustrate. They are led to relocate their lives to France for a variety of reasons, which primarily depend on whether the migration is driven rather by necessity or by opportunity and if it is initiated by the individual or the household.

Moussa provides a typical example of a migration pattern that is household and necessity oriented. He comes from a poor rural area in Mali, has two young children, but was also expected to provide for his five sisters and his mother. He learned various trades in Mali, but these were insufficient to provide for the needs of the family. Several family members—including his own parents—had worked in France and been able to send remittances back home. This led his family to decide that he would try to work in France to help support them. Moussa arrived in France on a temporary tourist visa and had been residing in the country illegally for seven years at the time of the interview. He was hired by a construction company for 8 euros per hour, and tried to send at least half of his earnings back to his village every month: “With five sisters plus my mother, it’s impossible to live well in our country, somebody has to go abroad to show solidarity with the family... even if it is illegal”.

The household and necessity can inform the migration decision at the other end of the socio-economic spectrum as well, as illustrated by the case of Gérald, a 51 year-old who worked as a philosophy teacher in Senegal before moving to France a decade ago. Despite his general satisfaction with his life circumstances in Senegal, his daughter suffered from a rare genetic condition that was impossible to treat

in the country, which led his wife to seek treatment for her in Paris. As her condition requires specialized interventions on a regular basis, Gérald quit his job in Senegal to join them in Paris, where he is now trains employees in a company:

I didn't intend to migrate, but the reality of the medical system—considering the health situation of my child and my family—was such that I was a little compelled to come, because over there the health system isn't developed to the point that it can deal with or at least treat such rare pathologies. So that's what determined that we came here to France, for the health treatment. And then the situation of my wife here, to meet her needs I was compelled to join her here so the family could live in better conditions.

There is also a subset of respondents who have come to France through marriage or through family reunification, such as Fatima, a 60 year old lab assistant from Mali who ended up joining her husband after he had settled in France while she was finishing her degree in biology in the Soviet Union, or Awa, who came to France from Mali as a 17 year-old through an arranged marriage. This migration pattern was most common among female respondents.

There are cases in the sample where migration is far more individual and opportunity-driven, essentially consisting in looking for a better and more appealing life. Ousmane came to France from Senegal as a 22 year old: "I said to myself, like everybody else, like every young person who gets ahead, I said 'why not me?'" Despite staying in France illegally for several years, he has now obtained French citizenship and finished a training program as a plumber. Marietou was working in the health service of the Malian army, and simply saw an opportunity of bettering her life: "I came to France for a month-long leave, and as all Africans, believing France was the Eldorado, I stayed... thinking I would have more comfort. I didn't think about... the difficulties I could run into". She also emphasises how this decision was her own: "as opposed to many people from my country, my decision was personal. My decision to come to France was my own, I wanted it, and the decision to stay was my own too." Patrick, a 32 year-old basketball player from Senegal, was driven to migrate by a desire for professional advancement as well as to travel and see the world:

Our dream, in Africa, is to travel, you know, and go where what you do pays well you know, For instance, for sports in Senegal—football, basketball—as far as training goes it's all good, but financially, the teams don't have any money you know, so our dream is to give all we've got so we can have a contract with either the Arabs—over there they pay well—or in Europe; and so that's our dream... I was competing in Senegal, then I had a contract with a Spanish team, I came, they housed me, fed me, all that, and then they couldn't any more you know. So I couldn't stay there, because I didn't have family there, so I came here.



Some respondents in the sample were also sponsored by their families to study in France. Mamadi, a 50 year-old security manager in a museum, came to Paris from Senegal as a student in his early twenties: “my father could afford to help me to pursue my studies... he saw that I studied well—and he had already travelled, he had been to Europe with his friends—so they talked [about it] and they said ‘you can send him’, so I came.” Another case is Ibrahim, a 33-year old from Mali who had studied economics for four years in Algeria before applying for enrolment in several Master programs in France. He was admitted, and met his wife during his studies. He now works as a neighbourhood planner in Paris.

As these vignettes suggest, the motivation for migration among first generation migrants are quite varied and depend heavily upon the socio-economic circumstances before migration and the perceived opportunities in France and the social networks they can make use of there.

### Antillean Backgrounds and Motivations

Since the departmentalization of Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1946, there is no particular obstacle for Antilleans settling in mainland France. Older respondents in the sample came through economic necessity in the 1960s and 1970s while the younger ones are more driven by a desire to pursue their studies or advance their career.

Marcel is the oldest respondent in the sample. He came to mainland France from Martinique in 1952, where he had struggled to make ends meet as a dock worker before seizing the opportunity to seek employment on the continent: “I had the opportunity to come here, and given the difficulties I was having there, I came. Since I came during the *trente glorieuses*,<sup>48</sup> I found work right away. And I’ve worked all the time, until I retired.” Martine, a 60 year old administrative clerk from Guadeloupe, came to France with her husband to seek employment in the late 1960s. She sets herself apart from those that came during the same period through the Bumidom policy:<sup>49</sup>

...the people that came before benefitted from what they called the Bumidom... to work in certain areas: hospitals, the postal service, the subway, the national railway a little bit, and also in construction, so they knew

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<sup>48</sup> The three-decade post-war economic boom.

<sup>49</sup> The administration that organized the migration of DOM workers to France from 1963 to 1982 (see chapter 2).

what they were coming for, there were no surprises. I wasn't coming in that framework, I chose to come, and chose where I wanted to work, it's completely different. We spoke about it with some people who came during that period, yes, they knew they had come to work in the hospital or in the postal service or in the subway... But it's true that most were also people who hadn't really had very much schooling, so they were looking at working as hospital agent who do the cleaning, or perhaps as nursing aids.

Other respondents came through yet other channels, such as Lucien, a 60 year-old retired woodworker from Guadeloupe who came to mainland France through his military service: "The army was mandatory at that time. So even if you didn't want to, you had to do it... I was lucky to come to the mainland, but there were some that went to Guyana or Martinique... And after the service, you had to fill out an application to stay and work."

Although the gap in living standards has decreased between the islands and the mainland over time, the greater educational and professional opportunities still motivated many of the younger Antillean respondents to move to mainland France. Eugénie came from Martinique as a 20 year-old after discussing her educational options with the administration of her high school: "I was looking for something and they told me 'but they have that program in Créteil.' I said 'but that's 8000 kilometers from here,' and they said 'yes, but with [policy of] territorial continuity, whether it's at Créteil, Valenciennes, or Marseille, it doesn't make any difference.'" Josette had finished a Master degree in biology in Guadeloupe and had done an internship in Canada before she considered moving to mainland France. She was primarily dissatisfied by her labour market opportunities back home, and thought moving to mainland France would be beneficial for her career. She has now found employment in Paris in a completely different field—web traffic management—and is considering staying in her job for at least a couple of years.

When I came here, it derived from a need - the need to change air, the need to find something I'd like to do. I was teaching, I wasn't necessarily happy, well, I didn't see myself doing that for the rest of my life. And I was in a kind of precarious situation, I was mainly working undeclared, so it wasn't really—at some point you want some stability... When you have a certain level of education you expect things to unfold a certain way.

As the experiences of these younger respondents illustrate, their migration decisions are undertaken with the goal of increasing their human capital or furthering their careers. The geographical distance is largely compensated for by the institutional integration of the islands in the national fabric as well as specific perks

like *congés bonifiés*, i.e. fully reimbursed plane tickets every three years for public sector employees and their families, which substantially modify the motivations and attitudes towards migration.

## II. Settlement and Ethnic Communities

### Settlement Experiences

Both Antillean and African first-generation respondents faced many similar challenges and barriers during their settlement process in France, but Antilleans were generally more favoured by their high rates of public service employment, as employers were responsible for providing them with housing.

Both African and Antillean migrants benefit from earlier migration waves insofar as they usually already have friends and family members in the capital which will typically house them for short or long periods while they seek employment and alternative housing opportunities. Given the frequent use of existing networks, they often initially settle in areas where they already have family members before looking for other housing opportunities. Few respondents have experienced overt forms of discrimination when looking for housing, and in the public sector many employees are offered housing as a matter of policy, but many sense that they are treated differently in the open market. Gérald, from Senegal, explains:

...in the private sector we had enormous difficulties finding housing. As soon as we applied, when the person met us they told us 'no, it won't work out' but we would never really know why... I thought that the reason we might have had so much trouble finding housing—because we were rejected several times—could be because of our origin, or because of representations they might have had that we wouldn't be good tenants.

It was much easier for Gérald and his wife to find government-subsidized housing, and his latest experience looking for an apartment after separating from his wife had been better, but he relied on a work colleague who knew the property owner and had recommended Gérald to him.

Ibrahim also had trouble finding housing when he was about to start his Master program. When asked if he had the feeling he had been discriminated against when looking for housing, he responded: "Well that's for sure, it's a secret to nobody here." But just as Gérald it was far easier for Ibrahim to find

housing through government-sponsored student housing rather than in the free market. He thinks Africans are particularly disadvantaged because of cultural differences:

It's much more complicated in the housing market—and especially the rental market—for an African... I found that for many of my friends who were here, who wanted to find an apartment, it wasn't easy... Maybe culturally they consider that we Africans aren't good with upkeep, or aren't very- and there was that other factor that they would blame Africans for generally: that we were too loud, because when one had an apartment everybody would meet up at his place, and we would talk late into the night, we would laugh, we would do all sorts of things, and be very susceptible when somebody would say "be quiet"... or "make less noise". I don't know, maybe it's cultural, but it's also due to the fact that few of us managed to find an apartment where we could get together from time to time...

Antilleans respondents who worked in the public sector were provided housing by their employers. Christophe explains how this process worked for him in the national telecommunications company: "the housing when I started working was all *France Télécom*... you have a service for that... you fill out a form, [you say] where you want to be in Paris... and then you wait until something is free, and generally it frees up pretty fast". By contrast, Martine, who mainly sought to work in the private sector had more difficulties finding suitable housing when she first arrived from Guadeloupe. She thinks it is mostly due to the strong demand for housing rather than pervasive discrimination however, at least in government-subsidized housing: "I think that even with the best of intentions, there isn't enough social housing to absorb the demand for it, so of course... there are a lot of people who cohabit, who are roommates... In the Paris region, it's difficult, very difficult."

Pétronille, a 29 year-old Martinican woman who studied biology with Josette in Guadeloupe, also moved to France after being unable to find work in the Antilles. She remembers that finding housing in Paris was particularly difficult, and that the fact she was Antillean could be an obstacle: "I got a job in an international company... I began looking for housing, and I found out that I was Antillean and that it was a problem—people didn't want to rent to Antilleans because we didn't have any guarantors here." In the end, Pétronille was helped by the *Association des Jeunes Travailleurs* (Association of Young Workers) who eventually helped her find government-subsidized housing in the 15<sup>th</sup> district: "It's really 'relations of stretched out hands' that allowed us to make ourselves a place here, because otherwise it was checkmate, we'd have gone home right away." Pétronille had a similar experience when buying furniture for her

apartment, which she wanted to pay in several installments. After providing the furniture company with her bank identification, she was told that the fact that her bank had its address in the Antilles was going to be a problem. Her bank in Martinique helped her create an account in Paris, and also told her that there were companies that used software to filter bank addresses and would discriminate against Antilleans because they were known as bad payers.

### **Ethnic Communities and Solidarity**

Ethnic economies are thought to play an important role in providing employment opportunities for immigrants and their children when such opportunities are lacking in the mainstream, which can at best provide them with opportunities for socio-economic mobility, and at the very least, give them an adequate means of sustenance that gives structure to their lives and those of their families. Neither Antillean nor African respondents suggested that they had any such resources to lean on in Paris.

Over the past three decades, the French government has sought to create incentives for self-employment through small business creation in the socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods with large immigrant populations. The *Agence pour la création d'entreprise* (Agency for Business Creation – APCE) has recorded a regular increase of business creation among immigrants since the late 20th century, but few of these were initiated by Sahelian Africans. Figures from the TeO survey have shown that immigrants from the Sahel and their children have the lowest rates of self-employment (3%) of all groups from immigrant backgrounds, for instance lagging substantially behind those of Portuguese (9%) or Turkish (16%) origin (Lagrange 2013). As such, Sahelian Africans lack an ethnic economy that is sufficiently dense to create significant opportunities for their members and serve as a buffer in situations of economic adversity.

In addition to direct economic opportunities, a dense ethnic community provides social capital which can also be beneficial for the assimilation of newcomers and their children. The restrictions that forbade foreigners from creating associations were lifted in 1981, which rapidly led to the development of large numbers of immigrant associations. Malian and Senegalese immigrants are no exception in this regard.

Fatima points out that “there are many associations of people who come from the same village, there are many Malian associations”.

Francis, a Senegalese IT worker in his 40s, has recently gotten involved in the association of his rural community of origin by occasionally attending meetings and providing financial aid to them. He explains that the Senegalese have a dense network of associations, which are mainly focused on the interests of very specific ethnic or local groups, and are used to develop infrastructure or community development projects:

...[the Senegalese] are pretty tight-knit, but it's also complex, it's by ethnic groups and regions. There must be a Senegalese association somewhere, but I don't think it's very well attended. But on the other hand there is the association of this region, of that city, and then there are the associations of the ethnic group in that city. For instance you can have the association of the city, and within that association you'll have many other associations. I know that exists as well.

These associations, known as *dahira*, in practice function as prolongations of the family that has remained in the country of origin. They solicit funds for a variety of infrastructural and other community development projects. Among all immigrants in France, Africans from the Sahel region are among the most oriented towards their societies of origin. They are the most likely to have a residence in the country of origin (22%), to provide regular financial aid to a household outside France (39%) and to contribute financially to a project in the country of origin (21%) (Lagrange 2013).

With regard to the general sense of solidarity, Francis thinks it is quite strong among the Senegalese overall, but also points out that Senegalese immigrants who have lived in France longer tend to display less personal investment towards their fellow nationals compared to more recent immigrants, suggesting at the very least that patterns of ethnic solidarity among fellow nationals in France gradually erode over time:

When you see an old Senegalese, who's been in France for 30 years, 40 years—or even 20 years like me—you go to him and you say “Mister, I come from Senegal, but I do not know where to sleep” he will take out his wallet... he'll give you the addresses of social workers, he'll give you addresses for hotels, and then he may give you twenty, fifty euros, and that's that. But on the other hand if you see a young Senegalese and you tell him “Mister, I'm Senegalese, I don't know where to sleep” he'll tell you “come with me, you'll sleep in my home, you'll eat there for a little while”... So the longer people stay here, the more different they become.

Other respondents are more critical about the attitudes and intentions of their fellow nationals in France.

Patrick, a 32 year-old Senegalese basketball player who only arrived in France a year ago believes there is

too much competition and jealousy between Senegalese immigrants and considers that they are primarily driven by their own interests:

They pretend to be tight-knit, but they're not tight-knit. That's why I don't want to get involved in the associations. Because the African is- every time he's just looking out for his interests, you know. They say 'we're going to set up an association for this-and-that', but afterwards there are always problems there... The Senegalese who are here are different from the Senegalese at home... because here people tell themselves 'this is Europe, everybody fends for themselves'. Even the Senegalese that hangs out with you only hangs out with you because he has an interest to do so... Because actually we all have the same objectives, we all came here to look for [opportunities] so jealousy reigns... You can have a good friend back in Senegal, but if he comes here you'll see him change... That's why I sometimes... refrain a little bit from socializing with them.

Given that no migration barriers exist for Antilleans, that their lives in France do not revolve around supporting their communities of origin, and that they don't face the same linguistic, cultural and institutional obstacles as their African counterparts, it is unsurprising that their associative activity doesn't display the same patterns of cooperation and competition, but instead mainly revolves around traditional cultural activities and festivities. Although some respondents reported attending Antillean gatherings with variable frequency, many described the ethnic community as highly fragmented, without any structures that can compare with those of other communities, and were often quite critical towards existing structures. Paul, a 29 year-old computer engineer from Martinique for instance explains:

There isn't really any cohesion, I don't think there is. Two Antilleans will meet, they will get along "we're Antilleans, we understand each other and stuff, it's cool"... if there's a problem, if you're in trouble I'll help you because you're Antillean and stuff, but there's nothing organized, there aren't any structures... that will amplify the phenomenon.

Marcel, who has been retired for many years but who hosts a weekly radio show on current events and who acquired a strong social and political consciousness throughout his working life, is very disillusioned by the tenor of Antillean associative life, which he finds far too focused on food, music and dance, and would like to see it get more involved in cultivating Antilleans and advancing their interests:

Most who got involved in those associations just did so to fill their pockets, saying "we'll do this, we'll do that" but in the end they do nothing. And when the winter holidays begin, then they do balls and stuff like that. That's it... There was one that I supported... that tried to raise the level of the Antillean community, and it lasted for a while, as then it was the same old thing: lack of funds, no venue, and it costed too much... as soon the Antillean community wants to do something good, everything is put into place to stop it from evolving.

In addition to the Antilleans being closer to French individualist norms than their African counterparts, the acculturation processes they are exposed to in mainland France change their patterns of ethnic solidarity even further, especially when compared to other groups. Josiane, a 47 year-old nurse's aid from Guadeloupe thinks Arabs and Africans display much more in-group solidarity than Antilleans, whom she thinks have modelled themselves excessively after the individualistic norms of the mainstream:

The Arabs are much more united. The Africans [pause] they were united at first, I find they're beginning to drift apart. You see, it's each for his own now... The Antilleans have never been united... It's always "mind your business and don't come bother me". I remember, when I was a kid,<sup>50</sup> next to where we lived... there was a whole community [of Antilleans]... the kids would all hang out together, but our parents wouldn't. We would go to each others houses, but the parents would stay at home... In Guadeloupe, we're very neighbour-neighbour, you know, "hey neighbour, give me a hot pepper!"... Here, our parents come here, they see that "oh, so this is what France is like!", so for them, people don't care about other people...

Josiane has also noticed that many Antilleans are now entering retirement homes, whereas traditionally their children would care for them during their old age back in the Antilles: "Africans aren't like that, the Arabs neither. I tell you, I'm a domestic nurse's aid—the Arabs aren't like that, for their fathers or mothers it isn't like that. They take turns: today it's you, tomorrow it's me, the day after it's you".

Vincent—a French-born 25 year-old MBA student whose father comes from Martinique—thinks that the superficial sociability that Antilleans generally display actually hides a jealousy and resentment of others' success which fundamentally hinders any true cooperation. Interestingly, he thinks the second generation is less affected by this:

...if we meet in a social gathering, like at a party, and you're Antillean and I'm Antillean, maybe yes, you'll try to find out "so where are you from?" ... but when it comes to helping each other... no. Because there is this Antillean mentality, which I hate, it's jealousy. They see the other move forward—it's a problem for them. Instead of helping each other, we'll criticize each other more than anything else. If I move ahead, it's all good, but if you move ahead more than me, it's no good... I think that the Antilleans, well, like me, who are born in France, have more- solidarity... there's no jealousy between us.

Jenny—a 30 year-old Martinican who works in a pharmaceutical company—thinks Antilleans can be too insular in their social lives, and only socialize with other Antilleans "I think there are many Antilleans who only hang out with Antilleans here. I think it's a pity". Despite the fact the two thirds of her social circle is

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<sup>50</sup> Josiane came to France at the age of 11 and is speaking here of a neighbourhood in France.



made up of Antilleans, she claims that “I’ve already been called ‘acculturated’ because I didn’t socialize that much with the Antillean community... I don’t reject either my culture or my origin, but do I therefore really have to go to every Antillean party and only socialize with Antilleans?”

As this overview suggests, Antilleans display more individualistic tendencies than their African counterparts, both in their migration patterns, settlement experiences, and in their links to the region of origin. Patterns of in-group solidarity among African migrants are primarily transnational and geared towards their kin group in the first generation, whereas Antilleans’ involvement in associations is more geared towards cultural events and festivities. Neither Antilleans nor Africans have any notable ethnic economy which they can make use of to improve their social mobility as a group in mainland France. As we noted earlier, Antilleans nevertheless have access to many advantages through public sector employment, which such as subsidized housing and travel.

Taking stock of these background characteristics, we now turn towards the influence of familial and neighborhood factors on the assimilation patterns of the second generation of both groups.

## 7. RAISING THE SECOND GENERATION

In a meta-analysis of dozens of studies on the assimilation patterns of a variety of second generation immigrants in the United States, Eva Morawska (2009) identified the shared micro and macro-level structural and agentic circumstances that explained enduring differences in their socioeconomic achievement. She first mentions family characteristics and the home environment: the human capital of parents, the rules of behaviour and expectations children are socialized into, and the tensions around issues of obedience, sexual relations, and parental expectations regarding life achievements. Morawska also points to the characteristics of the neighbourhood—primarily its class and ethnic composition, level of social cohesion, and the behaviours it encourages and discourages—as well as the peer group, which also represents an important reference point for role-models and normatively expected and sanctioned behaviour and aspirations. She emphasizes the key role of the school environment as well, its quality, role models and the expectations it places on students. Race and gender—with their enabling or hindering social implications—and the structure and dynamism of the local labour market as well as the obstacles it erects for advancement also play a determining role in assimilation prospects. Finally, she highlights the agency of second generation individuals: their life orientation, human capital and personal aspirations.

We examine all of these aspects of the assimilation process across in the two chapters that follow, with a particular emphasis on the specific difficulties and obstacles that second generation respondents have faced. The first section of this chapter will deal with their family characteristics and home environment and the second with their neighbourhood and peer groups. The next chapter will focus on their schooling and labour market experiences as well as their marital choices and perspectives. The impact of class background, race and gender will be discussed throughout both chapters.

## I. Family Mechanisms

The family is one of the most significant social arenas for shaping the assimilation prospects of second generation immigrants. The family's human capital will influence their income as well as the residential opportunities and thus the quality of the parenting environments they can provide for their children. The intricacies of the family structure—whether children of immigrants grow up with both parents, but also the number of siblings they have and the size and involvement of their extended families—are also likely to greatly influence social and economic outcomes of the second generation. Furthermore, families transmit some of the most foundational values, beliefs, rules of behaviour, and general expectations to their children, which largely derive from immigrants' cultures of origin. The role that cultural heritage may have in helping children adapt to the host society needs to be determined empirically.

Since the Sahelian and the Antillean samples diverge sharply in their family patterns—both in terms of structure and of culture—we begin by discussing the impact these have had for both groups.

### Hypertrophied Father Figures

One of the most salient aspects of family life that stood out in nearly all interviews with second generation Africans was the overarching authority of the family father. Modibo, a 21 year-old cook of Malian descent explains that he couldn't fathom disobeying his father: "Even if I know he's wrong, I lower my head and say 'yes.' Then I go outside and avoid him, or I go to my room". This behaviour pattern may even lead him to accept demands that he otherwise wouldn't: "he might for instance need something and I don't dare to say 'no' to him, [even] knowing that by doing that thing for him I'll have problems of my own."

This demand placed upon children that they unilaterally subject themselves to paternal injunctions even led some respondents to make very significant life sacrifices. Mamadou, a 28 year-old second-generation Malian who works as an airport security agent, for instance recounts how his father systematically opposed the many opportunities he was given to become a professional football player—a longstanding dream of his—despite the fact that several coaches and agents had visited his father to ask

him to sign professional contracts for Mamadou. As many other respondents, he described his deference to his father's position as a simple matter of respect: "in the end, given that... there's this respect before anything else, I listened to my father". Mamadou elaborated on this, explaining what going against his father's authority would have meant, and why this was a price he was not willing to pay:

...I wanted to be a professional sportsman, but oh well, that's how it is. *[pause]* And yeah, this respect towards the parents—it's very important *[he laughs]*. If I were disrespectful I would already have left a long time ago. I would have had some regrets because to lose contact with your parents frankly, it's like losing everything—honestly, yeah, you can't move forward in life anymore. *[Y]*ou have the advice of your brothers and sisters, but you always need your parents' advice. That's for sure.

Mamadou illustrates the rigidity of the expectations placed upon him and how following his own path would have meant breaking contact with his parents. As we will see throughout the chapter, this absolute paternal authority that is typical of many Sahelian families has significant consequences at several levels of the assimilation experiences of the second generation.

### Destructuring of Sahelian Family Systems

In contrast to modern European family systems, the traditional family structure in Sahelian Africa is patrilineal and patriarchal with strict hierarchies of age and sex. Gender relations are highly codified: polygamy is legal and widespread in Mali and Senegal,<sup>51</sup> and women are typically assigned to a subservient role with very limited autonomy.<sup>52</sup> The extended family, particularly male kin on the father's side, play a significant role in the education of the children. Furthermore, children are assigned to age groups—called

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<sup>51</sup> An analysis of the data from the 2009 Malian census has shown that 30% of men and 42% of women live in polygamous marriages in the country. The practice is less common in urban areas (26% of men and 34% of women) and in the northern regions. The proportion of men in polygamous marriages in Mali have decreased gradually in all age groups above 35 years of age since the 1970s, but have increased sharply among younger age groups since the 1990s (Coulibaly Diamoutene 2015). The 2002 census in Senegal indicated that 23% of men and 50% of women lived in polygamous marriages, also with a higher rate in rural than in urban areas (ANSD 2006). Regarding the perception of the moral acceptability of polygamy in these countries, a recent Pew poll has shown that in Senegal, 8% see the practice as morally wrong, 86% as morally acceptable, while in Mali, 11% think it is morally wrong, and 74% see it as morally acceptable (Pew Research Center 2013).

<sup>52</sup> There are however important differences between the status of women in different ethnic groups. In contrast to Fula or Soninke families where women are usually tightly controlled, solidarity is vertical and loyalties are patrilineal, this is less pronounced in Serer, Wolof, or Manjack families, where the mother maintains important prerogatives in education and the management of family assets (Lagrange 2010).

*fedde*—where the oldest sons vow to protect the young, while the young owe them respect and obedience in return (Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984; Kula-Kim 2010; Nicollet 1992; Wane 1969).

In sharp contrast to the individualistic parenting practices in France, Sahelian parents thus traditionally rely to a much larger degree on the extended family and the broader community for childrearing. Francis, a Senegalese IT worker in his mid-40s fondly describes how children can roam freely outside of parental oversight: “you go out with your kid, but everybody comes to pick him up—he belongs to the society. So you go out, your kid is three years old, or five years old, and you don’t worry about him. It’s not like here.” As much as he loves this aspect of childrearing in his society of origin, he recognizes that it cannot be maintained in the absence of the social structure and culture that underpin it. But he thinks many Sahelian immigrants from poor rural backgrounds who maintain their traditional educational practices without the environmental support-system of their society of origin run into many problems with their children in the far less cohesive and social-capital saturated environments which they inhabit in France:

Back home it’s the society that makes it like that. As I said, when you have a child, it’s the child of everybody, and... you educate him... like everybody else does, and push him to do only good things... But here, what we found here is that it’s a catastrophe for immigrants... but I think it’s because the immigrants who came here didn’t know how to read, they didn’t speak the language, they worked and then they brought their wives here, who could neither read or write, they had children, and then they did their best to give them the education from where they came from. And it perturbs the children. In the end they don’t succeed, they abandon the education. And then it becomes very difficult.

Thomas and Znaniecki (1958) described a similar pattern of destructuring and anomie within the Polish immigrant community in the United States, which resulted from uprooting families and individuals from the communities that ordered their lives and transplanting them in an alien cultural and social environment which they are hard-pressed to adapt to. It is precisely this loss of prior forms of social organization which seems to particularly affect many Sahelian families on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, fundamentally altering and straining their internal dynamics. Hugues Lagrange, who has closely studied the challenges faced by African families in several marginalized urban areas in the periphery of Paris and Nantes (Lagrange 2010; Lagrange 2013) has argued that the higher delinquency and school drop-out rates that have been identified among Sahelian young men partly result from the shattering of the coherent and

cohesive extended family which played such an essential role in socializing the young in the country of origin:

Within Western societies, families of African origin are akin to a moth-eaten cloth. The bonds that structured the relation between the sexes and the generations have been partially destroyed... In Africa, a successful education is guaranteed by the coherence and redundancy of advice and expectations from the male circle of the mature generation towards members of the young generation. But that circle was broken through emigration, and the attempts to restore it using the oldest sons have failed. Accordingly, the crisis owes as much to the alteration of the workings of normative systems as it does to the gap with Western norms. This dismembering primarily weighs on the migrant groups for whom kin plays an important role—those who were, in Africa as well, in the most traditional configurations: rural populations with little or no schooling. (Lagrange 2010: 202-3)

Given the large gap between the family models and norms of the sending and receiving countries, it is particularly difficult for Sahelian families to compensate for this loss of embeddedness in the extended family. Since strengthening the nuclear family unit around the marital bond would require overhauling too many deep seated cultural assumptions, the fundamental family dynamics often remain largely unaltered despite the absence of the social structures that are supposed to underpin them. With often absent working fathers, Lagrange argues that women are often left to their own devices in parenting without being granted the same authority over their children as the father and his male kin. This, he argues, is prone to lead to dysfunction when raising large families with limited resources in adverse social settings.

Furthermore, the large sibling groups characteristic of Sahelian families have been shown repeatedly to be more involved in gang activity and delinquency (Mohammed 2011). Lagrange suggests that the strong internal solidarity and cohesiveness of siblings from Sahelian backgrounds can explain their greater propensity to develop deviant behaviours. Furthermore, the status and authority of the father is threatened at a fundamental level in the host society, given his typically low occupational status, the fact that his children quickly become more familiar than he is with the workings of the surrounding society, and that the power he is used to wielding over his wife is far less secure than in the society of origin. Lagrange argues that these threats to patriarchal authority are often compensated for by increased authoritarianism, which creates problems of its own.

Given the importance of parental authority, many first generation Africans express a strong sense of dispossession of the means of controlling their children (Segalen, Aouici and Gallou 2011). Many respondents complain of not being able to discipline their children as they do in Africa. Patrick, a Senegalese 32 year-old, explains that many parents are wary of pursuing these practices given the very different attitudes towards corporal punishment in France. And given that those from less educated backgrounds are often unable to control their children by other means, they are more likely to slip out of their control:

...their parents were people who didn't go to school, you see, and when they come here they are told "here in France we don't hit children" you see, so therefore they are afraid to educate their children like we educated them in Africa. Because in Africa we hit them... you go to school they hit you so you learn; you go outside, you do something wrong, they hit you even if they're not your parents... That's how we were educated. And our parents when they come here... they let their children do what they want. When the child is young, you can command him, but when he grows up you can't do any more for him. I'm not saying it's everybody, I've seen others who are- who have a good education, because their parents educated them well you see, but others—half almost—their children are something else.

Echoing other respondents, Patrick thinks that many parents are afraid because they know that "if they hit their child, then he will denounce you, and then you'll have problems". Despite the fact that respondents so frequently mentioned the restrictions on corporal punishment, what is probably most significant is the absence of legitimacy granted by some children to the normative framework of their parents, which a combination of limited communication and corporal punishment rarely manages to change. This just leads the father's authority to be seen as tyrannical and unjust, and instead increases a sense of injustice and resentment despite superficial compliance (Mohammed 2011). It is this subtlety that for instance explains the somewhat contradictory positions of Aminata—a 63 year-old Senegalese mother of 10—who despite frequently relying on corporal punishment for raising her children, comments that "people who tell you 'I couldn't educate my child because I didn't hit him', it's not true, you don't educate a child by hitting him, you actually make him a failure by hitting him". She complains however, like many other respondents, that there is not enough dialogue and communication between adults and children in their families: "We Africans... our problem is that there isn't enough dialogue between us and our children". This can pose particular problems when children acculturate to other norms than those that parents seek to enforce as we will see later when we look more closely at acculturation patterns in the second generation.

Although there were several examples of involvement in delinquency among my respondents and their siblings, it was difficult to assess the role that sibling groups and their internal dynamics may have had in this. However, the large sibling groups in Sahelian families often did seem to increase parental acculturation, not only because large numbers of acculturated children rooted the parents far more into the country and the culture, but also because each child gradually pushed parental boundaries further towards the norms of the host society, thereby increasing parental acceptance of some aspects of the surrounding society to which they were otherwise previously opposed. Abdoulaye, a 22 year old computer technician with parents from Mali who was raised in a family of ten children, has noticed that the younger ones have had much more freedom than he did at their age. He doesn't think that this is specific to his family: "I even see that... with many other families actually. I've noticed that the more you move ahead in the generation and the more freedom they have". Other respondents corroborate this, and often see it as a very positive development, sometimes even betraying a slight jealousy over some freedoms their younger siblings can enjoy which they never did. Sané explains that her parents

are much closer to us [now], my brothers take the liberty to say much more things, to free themselves, when we're together we talk... there's a bit more open-mindedness, keeping in mind that we're Muslims after all... even if [my father] knows that my brothers have girlfriends, he lets them be for the most part I'd say... even if the religion forbids it... But there's no guarantee that he'll still speak to us if we convert to Christianity, on that level there is still reluctance.

Abdoulaye believes these changes in parenting derive from the parents growing softer as they age, but also thinks that some cultural factors may also be at play:

...often in African families what happens is that they take good care of the first child so that he can take care of the others. You see? So that's what was supposed to happen. But the problem is that my brother's not supposed to do my parents' job. With us it worked because we were very close—around the same age—but when they began going to school, he already had his first child. So he didn't have time, he couldn't take care of two families.

The space that this freedom opens up can be double edged however. In fact, Abdoulaye claims that the more hands-off attitude of his parents' towards his younger siblings directly explains why some of them have gotten into trouble over recent years. He takes the example of his younger brother who dropped out of school at an early age and has been condemned for repeated offenses:



...as a result of the acquaintances they made, it went a little bit off the tracks, but it's strange because they didn't discipline them in the same way as us, in the sense that we got straightened out right away. But [with them] they were a lot more easy-going, they—well they talked, which is a good thing, but they talked too much! *[he laughs]* In the sense that I don't know, I talk once, twice, three times, if I see that you don't get it I discipline you right away—with them it's 5, 6, 10 times! And up to this day they haven't done anything. But I was like: "now we really have to do something!" you know? *[he laughs]* and in the end after doing nothing it all derailed. That's how it is, it's that simple.

Regarding Lagrange's claim regarding a putative lack of maternal authority, mothers certainly seemed to exert less direct authority over their children, and were often presented as being much easier to talk to—and often serving as an essential intermediary between the children and the father in this regard—but several mothers who had largely raised their children by themselves provided striking counterexamples to this pattern.

### The Case of Sahelian Single Mothers

Most respondents who struggled with the exacerbated authority of their fathers often spoke of their mothers as more flexible and accommodating, but the respondents who were raised by single mothers clearly did not seem to suffer from an authority deficit. Aminata—a headstrong Senegalese woman who decided to move to France with her youngest son at the age of 50 when her husband's parents had pressured him to take a second wife—is emblematic of this. She raised her son all by herself in very precarious circumstances, but has always been very involved in his life and has always been a strong authority figure for him, almost to the point of depriving him of agency. When a bank clerk recently asked if her 22 year-old son was over the age of legal majority, she replied "as long as I'm alive, he will not be over the age of majority".

Soraya—a 40 year-old real-estate agent born in France of Malian parents—remembers how careful her mother was to make sure nothing happened to her children: "As a woman who lives alone, she was very careful with her children... so it was especially important that we daughters didn't get pregnant... and the boys should above all avoid stealing, doing drugs or stuff like that". Soraya's mother for instance still walks her daughter to the bus every morning despite her protestations (she is in her late teens) and doesn't leave her until she is in the company of somebody she trusts.

This degree of parental control could potentially be seen as hampering children's adjustment to the surrounding society. Lagrange for instance argues that it is in fact an excess rather than a lack of authority that causes many of the negative outcomes among Sahelian-origin youth. However, it is often a necessary measure for many parents to keep their children out of harm's way, especially in the case of single mothers who raise their children in difficult neighbourhoods. In the communities that he studied, Lagrange found that single-parenthood was only of limited or no significance for school achievement, but that it was on the other hand associated with higher delinquency rates in adolescence. However, this link between single parenthood and delinquency only characterized European, North African and Antillean youth, but hardly had any incidence on Sahelian African youth.<sup>53</sup>

Single-mother households are thus by no means all comparable, and single-parenthood shouldn't be seen as an explanatory variable in itself. As Aminata's story illustrates, Sahelian single-mother households are shaped through mechanisms of their own, resulting in very different configurations. Given the stigma that generally accompanies female celibacy in the Sahel, which several cultural practices—such as polygamy, levirat,<sup>54</sup> or the use of “pretend” husbands for social occasions—are meant to avoid, single-mother households are often the product of particularly resilient women who have challenged and escaped patriarchal control. Furthermore, while French single-parenthood rates are typically higher in ZUS areas<sup>55</sup> than in the rest of the country, the reverse seems to be true for Sahelian Africans, as Lagrange found in his study that only 15.7% of Sahelian households in ZUS areas were single parent headed, while 22.5% of them were in the rest of France. He also points out that the operations of *Aide Sociale à l'Enfance*,<sup>56</sup> a social program that helps destructured families and children in distress, indicate that Sahelian families are far less often the subjects of interventions compared to French-origin families, who are more prone to experiencing social problems like alcoholism, domestic violence, or psychiatric disorders with the

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<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, children of Sahelian immigrants from traditional households were more than three times as likely as children from mainstream French and European families—and almost twice as likely as children from North African families—to engage in delinquent behaviour, suggesting that other factors other than single motherhood are at play (Lagrange 2010)

<sup>54</sup> An Islamic tradition whereby the younger brother of a deceased male is supposed to marry his widowed wife.

<sup>55</sup> *Zones Urbaines Sensibles*—literally “sensitive urban zones”—are neighbourhoods earmarked by the government for specific urban renewal policy interventions.

<sup>56</sup> Social Assistance to Children

deleterious impact these have on children's safety and well-being. Sahelian female-headed families do thus not seem to be as widespread, nor as closely associated to poverty or social pathologies as French and Antillean families are.

### A Matrifocal Caribbean Model

In contrast to the traditional structure of Sahelian African families, a far more common pattern in Antillean families are households centered on the mother and her children, where often absent men play a more marginal role (Smith 1996). As Pétronille—a 29 year-old Martinican—points out: “back home women are at the center of everything” whereas she thinks the exact opposite is true in African families. Despite the intense debates over the origins of these family patterns<sup>57</sup> and the multiple preconceptions regarding them (Condon and Byron 2008) their widespread nature and consistency over time is well-established (Mulot 2013). According to the TeO survey, around 40% of DOM mothers in metropolitan France raise their children as single mothers, compared to only 18% of the majority population. Furthermore, second-generation Antilleans in mainland France have almost the same levels of single motherhood as their parents (Lagrange 2013).<sup>58</sup> Among my own respondents, 91% of second-generation Africans grew up with both parents, but this was only the case for about half of the second generation Antilleans, including those who were raised with stepfathers. As Marie-Ange—a 41 year-old cashier from Guadeloupe—bluntly phrases it: “the fathers are never there you know, Antillean fathers are never there”.

Josiane—a Guadeloupean nurse's aid who raised her son largely by herself in a *cité* in the northern outskirts of Paris—ties the low school performance of many young Antilleans that live in her area to the

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<sup>57</sup> The links between these family patterns and the heritage of slavery have often been stressed in the literature, emphasizing the fact that marriage between slaves was discouraged or directly opposed because of the undesired regulations that this imposed on plantation owners. However, many other causes have been shown to be influential, such as the decline of religiosity in the islands, the refusal among slaves themselves to get married, as well as the preservation of matrimonial patterns common in the West African areas of origin (Gautier 2000; see also Giraud 1999).

<sup>58</sup> These rates do not seem to have been affected in a major way by the migratory experience, nor have they changed markedly over time, as 30% of Guadeloupean heads of household were women in 1900, and about one third of households with children in Guadeloupe were reported as growing up with an absent father between 1954 and 1982 (Gautier 2000). Furthermore, these families are typically overrepresented in the socio-economically challenged segments of the Antillean population. In Martinique in 2010, 83% of children whose parents were unemployed lived in a single-parent households (Marie and Breton 2015). While single-parenthood rates are around 35% in Guadeloupe as a whole, they represent half of households in urban areas targeted for urban renewal, twice the rate of similar areas in metropolitan France (ONPV 2016).

fact that they were raised by single mothers who can't attend to their children as much as they would want to—a phenomenon she thinks is very widespread within the Antillean community:

I failed at everything in school. And when I got my son... I told him: "I'm not asking for much: a high school diploma". A high school diploma – he hasn't even been able to bring me a trade school certificate! He messed up- he wasn't fit for school. But many are like that, you know. If you look closely, many are – many young Antilleans. I don't know many who have a high school diploma... They drop out of school when they're sixteen. As soon as school isn't mandatory any more, they stop going. What are you supposed to do? You can't force them to go, you can't be behind them all the time – I work at night, I work during the day... I was alone with [my son]. It's not easy, I think that's why I only had one child. Because it's not easy raising a boy by yourself. And many Antillean women are alone with their children... Antilleans don't get married. In my mother's generation, there aren't many who are married... My two grand mothers weren't married, nor was my mother.

In contrast to her mother and grandmothers, Josiane decided to get married, but her experience dramatically illustrates the downward trajectory that can open up for children from broken households. She met her first husband—a white Frenchman—when she was already pregnant with her son from a previous relationship with an Antillean man who “didn't want to take his responsibilities”. She stayed married with him for ten years before they divorced. She then remarried with an Antillean man who has been incarcerated for the past 15 years. She tried to educate her son less harshly than how she had been raised herself, but this did not work:

We Antilleans have a pretty strict education you see... I didn't want that education for my son, so I trusted him. I trusted him, but I always had an eye on him because I know how young people are. And I put him in boarding school, so he wouldn't [hang out] in the *cit *, pff... It didn't help at all. He began not going to school—I work, I can't watch over him! And people say “it's the parents' fault, it's the parents' fault”, it's not the fault of parents, I know it's my son's fault, I warned him. So he began smoking drugs, then he began dealing drugs, then he began assaulting people, and there—all that, little by little. He was 19 when he went to jail. He had his 20th birthday in prison. And now he's turning 21 and he's still in prison.

Although Josiane's experience is certainly unique in the Antillean sample, her story depicts quite starkly how socio-economic and residential conditions can negatively intersect with family formation patterns and educational challenges in the disruption caused by migration. Lagrange claims that relevant parallels can be drawn between Antillean households in situations of poverty in metropolitan France and the harmful dynamics identified in the “culture of poverty” thesis (cf. Small, Harding and Lamont 2010):

Such an interpretation can... account for essential traits of how the most marginalized fraction of Antillean families operate in metropolitan France. In these families, who are a minority component of the ZUS population, single-parenthood is inscribed in the continuity of the matrifocal household, which translates the prevalence of the mother-child filiation over partner bonds. This family situation, when combined with low

resources, creates educational problems no less important than those that derive from Sahelian authoritarianism, but more similar to those experienced by certain European families. (Lagrange 2010: 230-1)

Some respondents mention similar themes in their upbringing as their West African counterparts, especially regarding parental authority, lack of communication, as well as the traditional reliance on the broader community for childrearing, which is disrupted by migration and requires parents to adapt to the far more individualistic lifestyles in metropolitan France. Echoing this theme, Ingrid—a Guadeloupean-origin 37 year-old secretary for the ministry of foreign affairs—points out that her parents weren't able to reproduce the education they themselves received back in the Antilles because of cultural differences between the islands and the mainland, which led them to have to devise new methods of childrearing that would be better suited to the new environment, which led them to be more restrictive and controlling than back home:

...in the Antilles, there is this notion that everybody knows everybody, so in a sense, even if children play outside, the neighbours keep an eye out, watch over them, and so on, but in the metropole, it's a lot more 'every man for himself'. So they have to be more careful you know, and be harsher... I had the impression that we had the strictest parents of the neighbourhood, it was crazy, we couldn't do anything, but it's actually true that when they were kids they could do more things because everybody knew where they were... if there was the slightest problem, they could go see the neighbour, who could take them home, you know, and so it wasn't easy for them to have been the first to arrive in the Paris region, to put in place a way to raise the children... but they never talked to us about it.

Another common trait many Antilleans share with their African counterparts is the relationship that the young have to parental authority and to adults in general. As Josiane explains, echoing many of the practices identified among African respondents: "I was educated by my grandmother, where you're not supposed to talk back to adults. When an adult speaks to you, you had to bow your head down and do as he said... even if they're not family – as long as the person knows you, if an adult speaks to you, you're not allowed to complain, you're not supposed to speak". As Pétronille explains, this is also reflected in more cohesive families, which put more emphasis on solidarity than on autonomy:

We have a family environment that is much stronger. So we have the bad side where we have everybody on our backs, and at the same time the good side where you're also supported paradoxically, by this same family community. It's super important... Then there's this sort of- in fact, we're very harsh in the way we're supposed to behave in our families. We find that people here are very free with regard to their families actually, that there sometimes is a certain lack of respect of the family hierarchy, whereas over there, each and every one has his place. You're not supposed to move.

Alice, a 30 year old math teacher with a French mother and a Martinican father, who was born and raised in Paris thinks the difference between her parents is instructive in this regard, where she feels her father has much more in common with friends from immigrant backgrounds:

When we talk with friends, whether they are Arab or black, they say that it's really a cultural difference, it's not the same relation to parents... I can allow myself to talk back to my mother, we talk, there's an egalitarian relation when we argue you know, but my father—well, now I begin to do it because I'm a little older, but when I was a child I would never have talked back to my father, it's impossible, while I've already argued with my mother on equal standing if you will, and I think that's cultural. My aunts also on my father's side—impossible that I talk back to them, I can't even imagine it, and I call them "auntie", while on my mother's side I call them by their first names.

Just as among the Sahelian respondents, it was not uncommon for first generation Antilleans to complain about the restrictions placed on disciplining children in France, arguing that it gave their offspring too much power, and that it led them to lose respect for parental authority. Josiane thinks this is changing in later generations however: "the young Antillean mothers now—I can see it, I have several of them around me—it's not like before, like in the generation of my mother". Several second-generation respondents pointed out that they didn't perpetuate the practice—neither Ingrid nor her siblings have for instance perpetuated this practice despite its prevalence growing up: "It's something that wouldn't even have crossed our minds".

As this section has shown, several cultural differences between Antillean and Africans play a determining role in the assimilation process of their children. These cultural backgrounds are associated with different family structures and dynamics which are influential in many ways upon second generation outcomes. The turmoil that migration can cause in the internal dynamics of these family systems—particularly for West Africans given their stark gender and age hierarchies as well as their reliance upon the extended family for childrearing—can also moderate or exacerbate typical risk factors for second generation adjustment. As such, while segmented assimilation theorists would for instance underline the comparative disadvantages that children from single-parent households may face (e.g. Zhou 1997), the specific cultural characteristics of West Africans—ranging from their large families to their practice of polygamy and their tight control of women—are not only correlated with higher rates of delinquency in

'intact' families, but also with single-mother households that produce far less deleterious outcomes than Antillean families for instance.

However, a more nuanced appraisal of these family dynamics requires an analysis of how they interact with the local environment, which is why we now turn to the impact of neighborhoods, peer groups, and the acculturation patterns of the second generation.

## **II. Neighbourhood Effects and Acculturation**

Neighbourhoods that concentrate poverty and social problems have been shown to impact individual outcomes negatively (Wilson 1987; for a review see Edin and Kissane 2010). These neighbourhood effects can exert considerable influence on the assimilation patterns of many Antillean and African second generation respondents, but the extent to which they do also depend on the family mechanisms discussed earlier. As we will see these can offer some unusual coping mechanisms for dealing with children who become insubordinate or turn to delinquency.

The prevalence of these patterns would seem to depend on acculturation to a large extent. Acculturation almost inevitably generates a symbolic rupture between the generations, and the intergenerational conflict it leads to has been a central theme in the immigration and assimilation literature as far back as Warner and Srole (1945) and Thomas and Znaniecki (1958). Segmented assimilation theory suggests that such conflict can be conducive to downward assimilation. The negative environment that some neighbourhoods provide, and the oppositional culture of influential peer groups within it, can certainly affect assimilation trajectories. These acculturation patterns differ between Antilleans and Africans, and lead to different types of vulnerabilities and protective effects for both groups.

## Neighbourhoods with Concentrated Social Pathologies

Many respondents raised their children, or were raised themselves, in relatively difficult areas. We have previously described some of the most salient socio-economic processes that have given rise to the housing estates where endemic problems of precarious employment, chronic joblessness and welfare dependency coincide with high crime rates and incivilities. Although some second generation respondents have fond childhood memories from the *cités* where they grew up, and wish to emphasize the positive aspects of their neighbourhoods—especially in light of the overwhelmingly negative stigma attributed to them—many parents complain about the feeling of insecurity they experience there. Marie-Ange, who was born and raised in Guadeloupe, has noticed changes in street crime that she’s witnessed over the past few years:

It’s changed a lot in 6 years, 7 years. It’s just... little youths that we see every day, and we don’t know why the municipality lets this happen... this kind of gratuitous violence – no, I experience it, they’re right in front of us, they do it, it’s unbearable... [N]ow it’s calmed down a little, but you know, they just go somewhere else anyway. But no, even if it’s happening everywhere, still, in Saint Denis it’s really something special... We just let it all go on. I mean, when the mayor says “but you know, those poor youngsters”—that kind of talk really has to stop now, it’s enough now, it’s enough.

Marie-Ange acknowledges the complexity of the problem, and thinks it derives from many factors: the social and economic circumstances some parents face, the shortcomings of parents themselves, a greater sense of entitlement among the young, as well as the deviant incentive-structures in the neighbourhood and broader society:

...those young people want things made easy for them, they want everything... without making any efforts, without working. There really are those who deal drugs, or they’ll be lookouts all day... I don’t condemn all parents, because there are parents who work in the evenings, who don’t have a choice, who raise their children by themselves – where it sometimes also works out just fine – and then there are others who can’t handle it anymore, who’ve thrown in the towel, who’ve completely given up... I don’t know their lives. I know cleaning ladies who have three jobs, and to get by they have to leave their children at home alone, and when they’re not there, the children get bored – I’m talking about children who are 10 years old, 9-10 years old – they get bored, so they go out with friends, and in the mean time the mother is working and doesn’t know what her kid is doing. But that’s how it is.

Other respondents are more uncompromising regarding the responsibility of parents for the development of these social problems, emphasizing their lack of investment in or authority over their children, while also pointing to the negative incentive-structures of the host society, that encourage children to be impolite, materialistic and ungrateful. Aminata raised her son in a neighbourhood that has seen repeated



instances of rioting, and is earmarked for a substantial urban renewal program, but was proud that she had managed to protect him from the negative influence of this neighbourhood:

We had one bed, we slept in it, when he woke up in the morning he went to school, I went to work, in the evening we saw each other again, and he was there in front of his TV or his computer. No, it's not the [fault of the] system... Do you think I'll leave my children, or my child of 10 or 11 in the street until 11pm? And that I'll sleep peacefully? No. No. Idriss [her son] is 22 years old and I don't sleep before he has come home... When you hear that a 22 year old woman was killed, another youngster of 21 was found dead, you can't. You can't sleep knowing that your children are in the street.

Ethnographic studies in these neighbourhoods have shown the role that local cliques of young men play in providing their members—who have often failed in school and only have dismal employment prospects—with an alternative means of self-valuation through a status system that rewards aggressive, transgressive and fearless behaviour, allowing them to exert greater power on their surroundings and gain access to symbolic rewards (Mohammed 2011; Sauvadet 2006). These groups are frequently highly anchored in their neighbourhoods, and often occupy a prominent and influential position in public space, which they in many cases come to dominate and regulate (Lapeyronnie 2008).

Aminata's son Idriss confronted precisely such a normative system when arriving in France at the age of 12, where individuals were pressured to partake in all sorts of more or less serious transgressions to acquire approval and esteem from local peer groups. At first he remembers being afraid: "when you saw guys throw rocks at the police and everything... you were scared" because in his home country "you can't even think of doing that" given the lower tolerance within the population for such behaviour and the harsher policing practices. He explains how he got used to it over time, however: "it was always like that there, you threw rocks at the police, you went with your buddies to burn cars and everything. But all that is just to be accepted in the group. You have to go through that, otherwise they'll think you're a pussy and all that... It's afterwards that you understand that it's actually useless. Those aren't real friends".

Aminata nevertheless recognizes the importance of the fact that her son spent his childhood in Africa: "I was lucky to bring my son here with a basic education. And when he came... I didn't let Idriss lose himself. I didn't let him lose his basic education either. And I also taught him not to be ungrateful." It is likely that the education her son received in Africa helped his mother to raise him in France the way she

did. Had Idriss grown up in the same neighbourhood where they first settled when moving to France, the local environment and his peer groups would most likely have been able to have more influence upon him. Patrick, a recent Senegalese migrant, also thinks being socialized abroad largely protects people from getting involved in this particular subculture:

If you take me to a dangerous area, and I don't know, all children sell drugs or whatever... I'm an adult, I know what is good and what is not good you know, and I know where I'm from, and I know what I want you know, I won't follow those youths, because we don't have the same mentalities... but if you have a child that is 8 or 7 years old or whatever, you put him in those neighbourhoods, you'll see, one day he'll hang out with them and you never know.

This is precisely what happened to Djibril—a 23 year old professional rugby player with roots in Mali—in his final year in high school. He had always been a good student and had never been into any particular trouble but started spending time with some other young men in his neighbourhood who had dropped out of school and had followed different trajectories. This gradually led him to begin selling drugs, until he failed his Baccalaureate and decided to put a stop to it:

*And do you think [your parents] were worried about you at some point? Were they concerned about bad influences?*

At one point, yeah, the year that I failed my Baccalaureate... that year they were worried. I skipped a lot of classes, got warnings from the school, got bad marks... that year they were pretty worried... Then I took charge of myself, and told myself that if I continue like this it will end up nowhere, so-

*And was this just related to your studies or was it your acquaintances?*

My acquaintances, that's for sure. My acquaintances, yeah. At one point, well, we decided that we needed money... and gradually, that's how it happened. [T]hey had quit school for the most part when they were 15-16 years old, I was 18 and I was in high school. I told myself "the Baccalaureate is no big deal, it'll be fine, you'll get it", so you see them hang out, you hang out with them, they're well dressed, they have brands and you don't, so little by little it's—you don't even notice it—you're told "if you know someone... you can give him this and sell it to him" so he gives it to me, I sell it and at the same time I add a little bit to the price... and little by little, there you have it. And then you think, you think about the day they'll kick your door in at 6am, and knowing my parents I thought "wow, no, now it's getting—now it's too much" so you sort yourself out, you tell yourself "this isn't for me".

David, a 32 year-old administrative assistant with a Martinican father and a French mother, had similar experiences that lasted longer and only ceased after a religious conversion. He describes in great detail the cultural environment of the difficult *cit  * he was raised in outside of Paris. Given the widespread contempt for the police in the area where he was raised, having a police officer as a father was probably the most challenging aspect for being accepted when growing up:

...I was despised, that's for sure. In that type of situation, when you don't have enough distance, you want to show people that you're not like your father, since in the end, in the common way of thinking at my age, a good police officer just didn't exist. The police is the enemy, so you obviously want to set yourself apart and say in a sense: "my father is a police officer, but I'm something else". So I flirted with delinquency, but without really being a full-blown delinquent. But I've been around a few.

David provides a compelling account of the pressure he sensed from his surroundings growing up, that led him to be influenced by the oppositional culture of his neighbourhood without ever fully surrendering to it. As he explains, it simply generated too much cognitive dissonance to go any further:

I grew up in a universe where I quickly understood, as early as middle school, or maybe even earlier, that there were two sides: the side of victims, and the side of oppressors. And it was hard to stay between the two. Difficult not to be an oppressor, while still being respected by the true oppressors. So it was difficult. I have been many times a victim of delinquency. So at one point I began shifting – but given the education I had, I didn't feel at ease. My conscience was still strong enough to bring me back to my senses.

David's account seems to frame the education he received from his parents as a sort of mediating force between himself and a hostile environment which he would otherwise be tempted to give in to simply to spare himself from being on the receiving end of its harshness.

Many other respondents echo this view, like Vincent, whose father is from Martinique and whose mother is from a mixed Arab and African background.<sup>59</sup> His father decided to move the family out of the neighbourhood where Vincent had lived until the age of nine, in the northern suburbs of Paris: "since it was a little heated there... my father wanted something more calm, and wanted us to grow up in a nice surrounding" Vincent thus grew up in a small town in western France, but returned as an adult to visit the *cité* where he grew up:

The first year when I came to Paris I went back to where I had lived before, to see how it had changed, and we ran into people we had been to school with, but I didn't remember them. And my buddy told me "well that guy's a junkie, that guy is this, that guy is that". They do nothing with their lives. So the people around me with whom I've stayed in touch have more or less succeeded, but the people with whom I was in school, they haven't really succeeded, they've become junkies, drug dealers, stuff like that. So honestly I don't know... but I think I wouldn't have turned out so bad if I had stayed in Paris because there was that framework... there was that education, there was that framework that said: "that's not what life is about, my son" [he laughs]... there's that respect and that education that I think ensures that I wouldn't have deviated. I don't think I would have deviated.

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<sup>59</sup> Despite being mixed, Vincent primarily thinks of himself as Antillean. He only grew up around his Antillean family as his mother has broken off all contact with her African family members.

As many other respondents, Vincent also points to the importance of the education he received, but also his parents authority in enforcing it, and says he is immensely grateful for how his parents educated him and his siblings. His experience also points to the important role of the peer groups that people associate with in the neighbourhood, given that those with whom Vincent socialized growing up—whom he stayed in touch with during his years outside of the Paris region—have all done well for themselves. The reasons why individuals get involved in specific groups can't solely be explained with sociological factors, given for instance the large differences one finds within the same sibling groups. Individual personality most certainly matters, as well as ability to succeed in school or other arenas that favour social mobility, but it also derives from the quality of family relationships. Regardless of which factors are most influential, the prominence of such adversarial peer groups creates a very challenging parenting environment.

### **Sahelian Responses to Deviance**

Instances of family destructuring in France can sometimes lead Sahelian family fathers to change their migratory strategies. As we have seen, the labour migration restrictions and family reunification policies of the 1970s led many Sahelian immigrants to choose to relocate their families to France. But the development of insubordinate behaviours among their children as well as the greater tendency of women to gain autonomy and file for divorce have led some Sahelian family heads to grow increasingly dissatisfied with their migratory arrangements. According to Jacques Barou (2001), new strategies have been developed that allow men to sustain their villages of origin while making sure their children will later continue providing financial support for the village. Barou explains that they overcome the restrictions on immigration by marrying their first wife in Mali, bringing her to France, fathering a child with her and sending her back to Mali shortly thereafter. In subsequent marriages, they follow the same procedure. As French-born infants, these children will be given French citizenship at the age of 18 despite having lived their whole lives in Africa. They will thus be given a traditional education that protects them from youth insubordination

and female emancipation, while at the same time allowing them to settle in France at a later age and thus continue providing for their villages back home.

A common occurrence for dealing with the insubordination of children is to simply send them to live with family members in Africa for an unspecified period of time. Patrick has noted that there are numerous Sahelian families in his area who have sent children back after they developed behavioural problems which the parents simply couldn't manage or stand anymore:

There are lots of them here. I've seen lots and lots of them here. They're sent back to Africa, for instance to Senegal and Mali, to show them how things work over there. As soon as parents bring them there, they give them nothing, they let them get by all by themselves, you know. They leave them there for 5 years, or six years, or seven years, and if they come back here they'll understand you know. Automatically they'll change. To show them that what they went through here isn't life, you know. It isn't life. So we need to talk to them every time, but you can't talk to them because they think they're more intelligent than we are, because we live in Africa. But they're wrong, because we see how they lead their lives, what they're doing isn't good, it's not something that will build their future. Then they'll end up in jail, and then they can't do anything you know.

Several respondents had children or siblings who were sent back to Africa during their childhood, or had even been sent back themselves. A good example of how such a decision can be taken is the case of Fatou and her oldest son Hamady. Fatou remembers how worried she was about some local men who were taking an active interest in her son, on whom she thought they were having a very negative influence in the neighbourhood in a south eastern *banlieue* where they lived at the time:

I simply wanted to preserve my children from everything that was going on. I wasn't blind after all; I saw the drug problem and other things, the crime that was increasing in the neighbourhood... I didn't hesitate to put myself on medical leave to look after my children. I saw there were too many new friends around... they didn't seem interesting to me, the way they spoke... I didn't find it was valuable for my children... I always tried to keep my children away from those kinds of people... I didn't hesitate to go confront one of their ringleaders outside... when he was taking my eldest son around with him everywhere—he must have been 32 or 35 that guy, and my son was only sixteen.

Seeing her son develop these suspicious relationships led her to eventually move further outside of Paris to a small town in a rural area. Unfortunately, these individuals stayed in contact with her son, and regularly sought him out to do favours for them despite the geographical distance. Fatou explains how this led her to opt for more radical measures at that point:

It didn't stop there, so I sent him to one of his half-brothers that I had raised, and so he was very well informed about the situation and he took care of him, and he put him to work with him, since school was really "I go today, tomorrow I don't"... and finally he sent him back to me because it was just impossible. Well I didn't

overly complicate things: I put him in the first plane and I sent him to Mali to stay with my big sister. So there was a part of the family... that took care of his well-being: food and stuff, and I sent money for his pocket money and to pay for his school. It was a private school in partnership with France. Well, he came back with a fiancée and then: married, family father, computer programmer—not bad! *[she laughs]* Well, no I mean I really fought. You can't have children and just leave them like that, and then go to parties here, parties there... that's not how I was raised.

The experiences of these respondents who were sent back to Africa seem mixed. Some have experiences in their surroundings that have gone remarkably well, truly offering children a “second chance” (Blaedsoe and Sow 2011), while others seem much less successful. Malik, a 33 year-old second-generation Malian who works in an auto-parts company says “I know parents who have done it. Generally, there are some who have come back and who are worse—some became well-educated, it depends. It depends on the person”. He thinks this practice was something that was common for his generation, but that it has largely been curtailed since: “now you have laws that protect [children]—you know, you can't send away a child like that”.

### Dissonant Sahelian Acculturation Challenges

The substantial cultural differences between Sahelian African parents and their French-born children make patterns of dissonant acculturation the norm. Whereas there is evidence for this leading to negative outcomes in some instances in the second generation, parental expectations and authority could also successfully minimize these outcomes.

Many parents complain about their children becoming rude and disrespectful compared to how they turn out when educated in Africa. Mamadi—a 50 year-old Senegalese man who has raised his children in France—explains that many parents feel a profound sense of loss when their children turn out so different from what they expected: “It happens that parents say to themselves that it's a little bit like they've lost their children... I know quite a lot of families who can have disputes with their children: the way they talk back to them, the way they speak, the vulgarity... there are children who are very rude... It isn't easy. The parents say to themselves ‘but we haven't educated them like that’”.

Fatima—a 60 year-old Malian woman who has raised several children in France—underlines the many difficulties that parents' low social status generates for acquiring the respect of the second generation when the latter are highly acculturated to French norms:

We aren't able to educate our children here as we do in Africa. The child obeys his parents in Africa. And the teacher—the child respected the teachers, even more than his own parents. It's what I told my own children, you have to respect your teachers, they give you knowledge... but some of them don't understand, and go scream at the teachers in school. [O]ur children don't have that respect towards us or towards their teachers... the children even see that they speak better French than [their parents], in the end they don't respect them... [H]ere as soon as [the child] sees that the parents go cleaning outdoors, do manual labour while he goes to school, he won't have any respect for his parents, that's also why they aren't able to channel their children. Sometimes those Malians who are here, they speak to them, but they don't listen... they aren't able to impose themselves on their children. And the children as well, they see that they haven't gone far in school, they don't respect them at all.

The social norms of the host society, which second-generation immigrants largely take for granted growing up, will inevitably constitute the prism through which they evaluate their parents' status and thus the legitimacy of their authority. Many of these parents often occupy the lowest rungs on the occupational ladder and often lack the cultural and social capital that would allow them to impose their cultural framework on their children efficiently, and that which their children are taught to value in school further distances them from the cultural framework of their parents and can lead them to lose esteem for their authority and see it as illegitimate instead of axiomatic.

As a first-generation migrant, Patrick illustrates this loss of esteem through the many negative experiences he has had with French-born second-generation Africans in his neighbourhood: “even we have problems with them because they call us ‘*blédards*’”—a disparaging characterization of rural African immigrants who haven't yet acculturated to urban life in the West—“I've been with Africans, whites, and all that, I've never seen anybody who said '*blédard*' to me before”. Patrick thinks that if they knew more about their parents' lives and experiences, they would be more humble and less disrespectful: “[their parents] were back in villages where there was no electricity, no water, all that... if you knew the history of your parents, I think you'd behave properly towards all those people”. In addition to the possible lack of awareness of parental experiences, these behaviours clearly seem to derive from deeply internalizing key values of the host society, arguably through the remnants of a colonial hierarchy, but perhaps more

importantly through the valuation of conformity to urban lifestyles, behaviours and attitudes, which end up in a cultural devaluation of parents.

This suggests that there are patterns of dislocation that result from a dissonant acculturation in Sahelian families, in accordance with the predictions of the segmented assimilation literature. However, as a result of parents' ties to their societies of origin, the expectations they placed on their children and the authority with which they enforced these expectations, many second generation respondents retained significant ties to their culture of origin despite also acculturating to the host society. This could lead to friction and tough compromises, but not necessarily to the dislocation described above.

Many respondents nevertheless insisted on conflicting values, desires and ambitions between them and their parents. Sané for instance remembers how frustrated she was during her teenage years because of the many restrictions she was subjected to compared to her peers:

...my friends... were allowed to go out a little bit more than my mother would [allow] me... they don't let us girls in Africa do that much, you can't just allow yourself to say "after school I'll go out for a stroll", there's always an ulterior motive... I didn't understand why my mother told me "no, you aren't allowed to go out", so I just skipped class, so during a certain period instead of going to school I went and had fun and then I went home as if nothing had happened... I signed all my papers myself when I had detention. So at times my father didn't see anything. It was only when [the school] phoned him, but otherwise he wasn't aware of everything that was going on...

Sané's brothers were too young to intervene at the time, which they otherwise might have been likely to do. So as Sané's experience suggests, dissonant acculturation can in fact contribute to subverting parental authority in some specific contexts. Here for instance, where there are significant cultural differences between the family and the mainstream, some key expectations that parents place on their children may simply not be accepted by the children as legitimate when their acculturation has led them to evaluate those expectations negatively. Dissonant acculturation may lead children who don't have any significant authority figures among their siblings to avoid or circumvent these expectations, given that parents lack the cultural competence both to make culturally appropriate interpretations of their children's aspirations and behaviour, but also to perceive and appropriately remedy their attempts to subvert these expectations.



However, the hypertrophied authority in Sahelian families, and the strength of some of the cultural norms and expectations that derive from it, nevertheless make such sidesteps fairly unusual among our respondents, as a frontal challenge of parental norms often seems unthinkable given the serious consequences it is fraught with. Interestingly, there are patterns in Sané's experience that tell a very different side of the story, where she instead sought significant compromises that satisfied both her desires and those of her parents. In the following passage, she remembers her frustration over her mother's constant attempts to control her in her early teens, which gradually set off a process that led her to get married through her own volition at the age of fifteen:

When I began in high school, me and my mother hated each other... she thought I was in a downward slide, but I wasn't... I was looking for boundaries... and they weren't able to set any... When I went out—even dressed properly—for her there was an ulterior motive: boys... but no, really, I went out to have fun with my female friends... And when I met my boyfriend—my husband actually... we were together and it was going really well... and since we have religious beliefs and that I'm a Muslim, we knew we couldn't be with each other outside of marriage. Of course, we asked the right questions, and I spoke to my father about it... and of course he wasn't happy that we were together... [but] my father asked the right questions, and I was afraid to get married because I wasn't ready in any case to take responsibility for a household, and I was lucky in a way because my husband was undocumented, so he didn't have an apartment, he didn't have a job, and I knew I wouldn't live with him... so from then on, I got married, and there, we were married, I could do what I wanted! *[she laughs]*... I didn't tell my friends I was married, it was just my boyfriend... I knew we wouldn't live together, and that it would be like my "boyfriend"—and I won't hide that I thought "if it doesn't work out I'll divorce"... But today it's a choice I don't regret... I got married at the right period in my life, it allowed me to get closer to my parents, to my family.

Sané's experience illustrates how children of West African immigrants can find compromises with the cultural values and expectations of their parents, where an excessive acculturation would risk profoundly harming or even rupturing ties between parents and children. These compromises can require children to make concessions that can seem quite significant, but they seem attractive because they allow them to resolve some of the tensions that build up from acculturation and a distancing from parental norms. Sané remembers how her parents reacted when she discussed getting married with them:

My mother looked at me—she was doing her prayer, I still remember—she gave me one of those looks... because for her I was getting married just to have fun... I was getting married to have sex—I'll say the word—for her I was getting married for that. I wasn't getting married for that. I was getting married because I knew [my fiancé] was giving me something, and that I wasn't allowed to be with him if I wasn't married religiously, and that I needed that so I could feel freer. Because as soon as I got married I felt free and my father told me "you do what you want".

She realizes deep down that this choice was a compromise however. When I later asked her to fill out an identity chart to rate the salience of her social identities, she spontaneously added “free” to the identity list, suggesting she felt a sense of emancipation from rigid family norms. She rated this emancipation a 3 out of 5. When asked why, she replied: “You can’t do anything you like, you know. Five would be a lie”.

Many respondents nevertheless complained about what they saw as unreasonable demands that their parents placed upon them. Given the centrality of the home village, parents often expect that children will share – at least partly – this fundamental orientation towards the society of origin. Modibo, a young French-born cook with Malian roots, has travelled a few times to Mali with his parents, but he feels like his father “hasn’t understood that we and him aren’t the same” and complains that “he expects too much” from him and his siblings: “I think he just wants us to build a castle for him so he can take it easy.” His father sends remittances on a regular basis to his family back home, and Modibo suspects that he wants him and his siblings to begin doing so as well: “He’s never said so to me, but I think he [expects me to]”. Most of the tension between Djibril and his father tends to revolve around the expectation that he should perpetuate this practice:

He considers that... he has, during his whole life... cut his arm off every month to send [money] over there, to look after... his brothers who are back home sleeping, who have three wives, pray all the time and are just taking it easy. Since his father said “the family shouldn’t get poorer after I’m gone, or end up in the street, you have to take care of them” his whole life has been a sacrifice, and he thinks I’ll do the same thing... he thinks I should cut my arm off as well, and I consider that it isn’t my duty, but he thinks it is. And he doesn’t even thank me, even when I make an effort. For him it’s normal, it’s really- there’s nothing unusual in me giving away half of my pay check, it’s just normal. It’s my role basically.

Despite the difficulty that some respondents may have of making these financial sacrifices, some do give part of their pay on a regular basis and find it relatively natural, as Mamadou for instance does: “frankly I don’t forget where I come from, because I already send—‘already’, it’s almost all the time—we send money to our family, we’ve built houses, it means that it’s not for nothing”.

As these examples show, the negative effects of dissonant acculturation patterns can in many cases also be attenuated when parents succeed in inculcating the legitimacy of their expectations and authority in their children, especially when both generations are willing to make some compromises.

## Consonant Antillean Acculturation Challenges

Because of the more limited cultural differences between the French Antilles and the mainland, differential intergenerational acculturation patterns do not play as dramatic a role in the families of Antillean respondents as they do in African families. Antillean parents also have less expectations of cultural retention vis-à-vis their children. This can often facilitate their assimilation into the mainstream, but can also make some second-generation Antilleans more receptive towards other cultural norms that can for instance be widespread in their neighbourhood.

In a sense, Antillean parents and children are closer to a form of consonant acculturation, where they both largely internalize mainstream French norms. As Ingrid explains, her parents were always very keen on making sure their children didn't stand out, and were well-adjusted to the surrounding society:

...they are very much into appearances. You have to appear—normal... So that's really super important in the family actually, and I'm worried that I may have transmitted that to my daughter... because it's been drilled in since childhood... there shouldn't be anything that can be reproached to you when seeing you or when listening to you—or reading you... It prevents us from being natural. Because the natural scares us... So what's wrong with us when we're being natural? What happens? What's the problem? Are we going to do or say something that will show everybody that we're Antillean and not French?

Even though she concedes that this effort to fit in can stem from a concern over one's reputation in the tight-knit Caribbean communities of origin, she also thinks it is indicative of an insecurity over not being seen as fully French. Although this strong accentuation of mainstream French norms can have a favourable effect on the assimilation of the second generation into the host society, it can also promote a sense of anomie, and when raised in suburban housing estates in the Paris region, can make them more prone to identify with cultural elements from their local environment.

Josette for instance explains that many second-generation Antilleans from modest backgrounds who are born and raised in disadvantaged Parisian suburbs acculturate more into the cultural ferment of their neighbourhoods than they preserve an attachment to their culture of origin: "They don't necessarily have all these little things... from the culture... so they're a little bit... they often call themselves

*banlieusards*,<sup>60</sup> it's the *banlieusard* mentality you know... rather than 'we're Antillean, children of Antilleans'... they don't manage to define themselves in that way".

This probably also explains that many second-generation Antilleans who grew up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods seemed prone to convert to Islam. Three of Lucien's sons have for instance converted to the religion, and he thinks this is frequent among young Antilleans in the area: "I don't know why they went into Islam. Suddenly they all went into it... it's someone in the neighbourhood that filled their head with that stuff". David—who also grew up in a neighbourhood with a large Muslim population—makes the same assessment: "I have Muslim friends who have grown up in Catholic families, who are Antillean and who have become Muslim—superficially sometimes". He thinks this is mainly due to the social environment in which they grow up, as a result of "their acquaintances, or maybe sometimes also the fact of going out with a Muslim girl". Josiane's son has for instance been dating a Muslim girl from his neighbourhood and has ceased eating pork, but as far as she knows he hasn't yet converted to Islam. She thinks it has become a trend: "now it's become fashionable among young black Antilleans—they're all Muslims". She believes part of this comes from their ambivalence towards their own culture: "in the end, I have the impression that young Antilleans in Paris, in France, they want to deny their own culture to put themselves in another culture". Eugénie argues that "there are perhaps people who at some point need more landmarks, and a religion with more structure". Josette echoes this by pointing to the strong religiosity in the Antilles that is not adequately fulfilled by the Catholic Church in mainland France which leads second generation Antilleans to be more drawn more easily to Islam, but also to evangelistic churches as they provide a stronger sense of community: "there are also many who convert to evangelism, so there are these two—these movements are very strong, where... you have this sense of fraternity".

Jean-Louis, who was born in Seine-Saint-Denis of two Guadeloupean parents, provides an example of an Antillean convert. He grew up in a *cité* predominantly populated by Arabs with a substantial African minority, but hardly any Antilleans. Although he visited Guadeloupe when he was eight years old, he has

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<sup>60</sup> I.e. "from the *banlieue*", where *banlieue* (suburb) is used as a euphemism for stigmatized suburban housing estates with high concentrations of immigrants.

no memory of it at all. He converted to Islam at the age of 17. Despite seeing himself as French and Antillean, he primarily thinks of himself as a Muslim, and his religious affiliation serves as the prime structuring force for his social and cultural life. He follows all the dietary restrictions, has ceased drinking alcohol, fasts every year and regularly attends the mosque, and also aspires to marry a Muslim woman and transmit his faith to his children. He has no particular involvement in his culture of origin, which many of his religious practices would in any case impede, but his mother has largely come to terms with it despite being very upset at first:

When [she saw] in the long term that my behaviour didn't worsen, and that on the contrary it got better, and that it was making me into a good person, you know, and then she sees the evolution, I got my diploma and so on. I minded my own business, nobody influenced me, I haven't changed my behaviour, nor my acquaintances—I mean I didn't bring home any bearded men or veiled women, you know what I mean, which means that currently it's working out quite well.

Even though Lucien has accepted his sons' conversion and that he doesn't feel personally distanced from them as a result, it has made some religious discussions more tense, and he also feels it has cut them off from their culture of origin to a large extent, not least because of dietary restrictions: "I have to make separate meals for them... if my children don't eat pork I respect it... [but] if there's not a little piece of salted pork in a good Antillean meal, it's not a meal. This is our culture".

David thinks many Antilleans who display these peculiar acculturation patterns convert to Islam because they grow up alongside sub-Saharan Africans with whom they identify with as young blacks: "most Africans who are in France and who have French citizenship... are Muslim... So the Antilleans who socialize with Africans here—after all, I know a few—well, birds of a feather flock together, and at some point you want to intensify the communion you have with your friends, and in the end, you get on board".

Conversion to Islam seems to be a fairly common occurrence among second generation Antilleans who grow up in neighbourhoods with substantial Muslim populations. As a result of sustained migration—particularly from North Africa—in some areas and neighbourhoods around Paris Islamic culture can take on the role of a majority culture into which other populations acculturate. This does by no means only affect Antilleans. Lucien's sons were for instance all married to white converts, suggesting that it affects

other residents of these urban areas.<sup>61</sup> Although these patterns only seem to affect the second-generation Antillean respondents who grew up in poor suburbs with high concentrations of immigrants, it is an unusual instance of dissonant acculturation which is likely to impact their social mobility. While one might suspect a greater exposure to discrimination or stigma as a result, it also often seems to provide structure and purpose to their personal and public lives, which suggests that it may also potentially have positive effects on their life chances.

### III. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has highlighted some of the most salient differences between the structure of Antillean and African families and their internal dynamics. Despite some evidence of ethnic retention having protective effects on second-generation Africans—even in contexts of single-parenthood—there are also signs of it creating adaptation difficulties that can have deleterious effects on second generation assimilation. Although Antilleans may be favoured in some ways through their greater cultural proximity with the mainstream population, there is also evidence that this cultural proximity, combined with higher levels of single parenthood can put them in a greater position of fragility and lead to unfavourable social outcomes for their children.

Respondents who were raised in difficult neighbourhoods were often faced with high rates of delinquency and peer groups with an oppositional culture in public space. This could serve as an attractive outlet for respondents with limited educational achievement and poor prospects on the labour market. However, it also often put significant pressure on parents to avoid that their children would develop insubordinate and non-adaptive behaviors or be caught up in illegal activities through these peer groups.

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<sup>61</sup> Given the limited sample size it was unfortunately difficult to ascertain whether there were any gendered patterns here—if conversion for instance was more appealing for young men in these areas than it was for young women, and if it was correlated in any way with their school or labour market trajectories.

Several respondents described experiences of second generation Africans who had been sent back to Africa by their parents as a result, and despite the debatable regulating effects that these methods may have had, sometimes the mere threat of them could serve as a buffer for these negative outcomes.

The acculturation patterns between parents and children were different in both groups. African respondents experienced greater dissonant acculturation given the larger cultural differences between their country of origin and the host society, whereas Antillean respondents generally experienced a more consonant acculturation. The dissonant acculturation patterns between the generations among African respondents often seemed to be attenuated to a large extent by culturally salient expectations and strict patriarchal authority. Antilleans could in some cases also experience dissonant acculturation when they adopted local cultural segments that set them apart culturally both from the mainstream and from their islands of origin. The interview data does not clearly suggest that dissonant acculturation patterns *per se* have a negative impact on second-generation outcomes. If anything, it is rather the loss of parental control in a context where children risk getting involved in delinquency and crime. Dissonant acculturation did not necessarily mean a loss of respect for parental wishes and concerns. Similarly, there was little evidence from the interview data that consonant acculturation in itself had a clear protective effect on second generation Antilleans.

Taking stock of these family mechanisms and neighbourhood effects, we now turn to the trajectories and experiences of our respondents in school and in the labour market.

## 8. SCHOOL, WORK, AND MARRIAGE

The first section of this chapter compares the trajectories of Antilleans and Africans in school and in the labour market. It draws from our qualitative data to highlight the experiences of our respondents in the educational system and on the job market, with a particular focus upon the obstacles they have faced. The second section explores another important aspect of their assimilation patterns, namely their partner choices and marital aspirations.

### I. The Second Generation in School and in the Labour Market

A 2010 report from the Court of Auditors points out that France is the OECD country with the highest level of educational underachievement at the age of 15, where the disparities in results between students have increased the most, and where the impact of social backgrounds on school results is the most elevated (Kepel 2012a). Since 2003, the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has registered a stable number of highly performing students, but a sharp increase in the number of underperforming children in France. Furthermore, the 10% of students who performed least well saw their results decline by 23 points between 2003 and 2012. Children from immigrant backgrounds in France are 2.3 times more likely to be among the least performing compared to those without migrant backgrounds (1.7 on average in the OECD), and the disparity between the performance of children from immigrant backgrounds and their peers from the majority population in the sciences is 87 points (53 on average in the OECD)—while this disparity decreases to 50 points among second generation immigrants, it is substantially higher than the 31 point difference of the OECD average. (OECD 2012; OECD 2015)



## Divergent School Trajectories

Brinbaum, Moguérrou and Primon (2016) have shown that more than 40% of second-generation Sahelian children repeat at least one class in elementary school, while this only affects a third of DOM children, and a quarter of the majority population. In the case of the majority population and DOM children, the gender disparity is only slightly more favourable for girls, but in the case of Sahelian children, the gender gap spans more than ten percentage points, as only 30% of Sahelian girls repeat a class in elementary school. However, when social background, parental education level, family structure and language proficiency are controlled for, these differences are considerably reduced for all these groups.

After successfully passing an exam at the end of middle-school, children are faced by decisive orientation choices in the French school system.<sup>62</sup> For children from the majority population, and those from Sahelian or DOM backgrounds, males tend to be quite evenly divided between those who choose academic tracks and those who choose vocational tracks (although there is a marginally stronger bias towards vocational tracks among Sahelian and DOM children), while girls tend to favour academic tracks, especially in the case of girls from DOM backgrounds, where 63% choose this orientation.

However, among those who fail the middle-school exam or who fail to obtain any additional diploma, there are larger gaps between second-generation school children and their peers from the majority population. In fact, among the 18-35 year population, while 17% of males and 13% of females from the majority population acquire no further diploma (and 9% and 8% respectively without any diploma), this was the case for 18% of males and 10% of females from DOM backgrounds (13% and 2% without any diploma), and for 29% for males and 17% for females from Sahelian backgrounds (19% and 6% respectively without any diploma). These rates reveal how school drop-out rates are higher for males and for Sahelian-origin students relative to DOM-origin students.

When controlling for social background and family structure, the disparities between DOM children and the majority population disappear, but they remain for young males from most other

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<sup>62</sup> Around 20% of an age group always leaves the educational system without a diploma, which represents around 150 000 people (Kepel 2012a).

immigrant backgrounds. After controlling for the educational trajectory, the concentration of children of immigrants in the school, private tutoring efforts, and orientation choices the disparity for children from sub-Saharan backgrounds remain,<sup>63</sup> which suggests other causes for explaining these patterns. These could range from characteristics pertaining to the youths themselves, to unwanted orientations, or even discriminatory treatment in school.<sup>64</sup>

## Schooling Experiences

All respondents were asked about their school experiences and trajectories, which can help shed some light on these disparities and other variables that might not transpire in quantitative studies.

As most others in his class, Malik didn't know what he wanted to do after middle-school. He thought he would try doing something similar to his father, so he settled on a diploma in automatized system maintenance. Looking back, he regrets this:

I remember that we generally didn't know what to do... And then, well, we chose things, things that didn't suit us. Over time we realized that we could have done better, something different... [W]hen you want to choose the academic track, it's as if they want to stop you... "No, you're not suited for the academic track, you don't have the qualities". You're not smart enough basically. They say something like that, and well, everybody believes it, so we all chose the vocational track.

After obtaining his diploma, Malik wanted to pursue a program where he could study while doing an apprenticeship, but no high school would accept him, which he thinks results from the bad reputation of his former school. So he went to several temporary work agencies and began working instead.

Ismaël—an unemployed 23 year-old with parents from Mali—says that a school career counsellor explicitly pushed him towards a vocational class in the final year of middle school, despite the fact that he had sufficiently good grades to continue on the academic track: "I don't know why they put me there—they said it's either that or you repeat a class. I didn't want to repeat a class since I had already done that

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<sup>63</sup> They also remain for children of North African and Turkish immigrants.

<sup>64</sup> Some evidence suggests that the occupational position of the father in the country of origin can explain part of this variation in school outcomes between groups (Ichou 2013). Neighbourhoods have also been shown to affect school performance. Goux and Maurin (2007) showed that repeating a grade at the end of junior high-school increased markedly when the other adolescents living in the same neighbourhood had also been held back a grade, and that adolescents' educational advancement is negatively impacted by the proportion of families with limited educational credentials living in the area.

in elementary school”. After they put him in the vocational class it was impossible for him to return to the academic track, despite having good grades.

Souleymane—a 31 year-old audio-visual technician with roots in Mali—spent a large part of his youth in a rural area outside of Paris after his mother Fatou had relocated the family there to provide her children with a safer environment. Being the only black child in almost every class in middle-school was a negative experience for him, especially since he had attended a much more multi-ethnic elementary school in his former neighbourhood and never gave much thought to his race. His recollection shows how perceived discriminatory treatments can impact school trajectories: "in middle-school it was a difficult period for me because there was of course prejudice on the part of teachers and school personnel... In class as soon as there was a problem I was the one who was blamed, even though I had nothing to do with it". As he tired of being disproportionately singled out, and felt unjustly treated, he claims that he purposefully became more disruptive in class and only did the strict minimum to not be held back. It was at the end of middle-school, when it was time to choose his orientation that Souleymane believes he was specifically targeted by a member of the school staff. One day he was supposed to defend his choice of orientation in front of the school board, and an administrator was supposed to pick him up in class and escort him to the meeting room when the board was ready to receive him, but the administrator came to escort all the other children in the school except Souleymane. He knew that this administrator personally disliked him and “really was a racist”. Given that he didn’t show up, the school board arbitrarily put him on a professional accounting track. Souleymane was furious, but decided “I’ll go into accounting, and I’ll show them that I can do better than end up in a professional accounting track”. He successfully finished his two years, obtained good grades on his professional high school diploma, allowing him to attend a preparatory class to integrate an academic track. He succeeded, and ended up obtaining the baccalaureate he originally intended to do. He feels a profound sense of injustice as a result of this experience, and wanted to send a copy of his diploma to the school to mark his sense of revenge, but eventually decided against it. He later pursued university studies in cinema for several years.

These experiences are not limited to Africans. Some Antilleans also mentioned feeling that they were sometimes pushed into sub-standard tracks as a result of a certain prejudice. Esmeralda—a 39 year-old communications officer with parents from Martinique—spent her first years of schooling in a predominantly white area in central Paris before her parents moved to Saint-Denis, an inner suburb to the north of Paris with a large immigrant population, where she went from first in her class to below average, despite her sense that the level was lower in Saint-Denis: “I didn't adapt” she claims, but also explains that “people began stigmatizing there too--that's the great paradox: it's here [in Saint-Denis] even though there's a very varied population that people began stigmatizing”. At the end of middle school, since she was slightly below average, the school advised her mother to put her on a track to become a nurse's aid instead of an academic track, as they were convinced that she would fail her middle school exam. Her mother decided to oppose the official stance of the school, and insisted that they wait for her result on the exam: “and there they tell her ‘no, you can dream, but she won't get [her middle school exam], that's for sure’ It was completely crazy, when my mother told me all this it just fills me with rage”. She succeeded at the test, followed an academic track, and went on to obtain a four-year university degree in fine arts. Esmeralda thinks she was treated as she was because of her race, but also suggests that it was specific to her schooling experience in Saint-Denis.

Some respondents, like Calixte—a 42 year-old kitchen chef with parents from Guadeloupe—suggested that there was frequent discrimination in grading as well: “in school, when there are exams, there is a difference in grading you know—but of course, you can't prove that most of the time”.

Some educational obstacles also derived from culturally specific family dynamics which were often observed among second-generation African respondents. The education of Baïdy—a 26 year-old traffic warden with roots in Mali—was for instance affected by a strong sense of duty towards his family. Despite having successfully completed two years in a five-year sound engineer program at a technological university in eastern France, Baïdy began questioning his emphasis on his studies in light of his family situation: “I said to myself—especially thinking about my father, who was getting old: ‘well, should I continue, or should I quit?’... since I'm the oldest son, I asked myself ‘what am I supposed to do’ you know”. Baïdy eventually

quit his studies and returned to Paris to look for work. This suggests that family duties and expectations can lead some respondents to choose short vocational tracks or otherwise end their studies prematurely.

The more specific expectations that parents would have towards some second-generation African respondents could particularly affect girls given the very stark gender roles in Sahelian families. Soraya for instance explains how her schooling was affected by the household chores she was expected to do:

...I lived with a single mother and was the oldest of the girls [and] in African families, you lean very much on the children—especially my mother. So often I would help her with the cleaning, the ironing, all that, so sometimes the classes took the back seat... so at times, yes, I repeated a class, but not because I felt that I wasn't capable, it's just because I didn't have time to study or concentrate on my work like a girl of my age.

Another example of a culturally specific influence on second generational educational chances comes from children who were sent back to Africa during their childhood. As the oldest siblings, Djibril and his sister were sent back to Mali during their childhood at the initiative of their grandfather, who wanted them to retain their culture and get to know their family—the idea being that they would thereby follow in the footsteps of their father by continuing to financially support the village back home, and hopefully also serve as examples to their younger siblings. Djibril was sent back to France after three years when he contracted an eye allergy that could not be adequately treated in his village, but his older sister stayed in Mali for a few additional years. Djibril feels he has turned out alright despite those years in Mali as he both came at a younger age and left the country earlier, but his sister was also affected by the substantially different circumstances she faced as a result of her gender: “She’s a girl, I’m a boy... we didn’t have the same daily life. She had to go get water at the well, do the cleaning, and then there’s especially the gender mutilation that she experienced there”.<sup>65</sup> In light of these experiences and “those long years outside of school... you don’t have the same future perspectives afterwards”. Although she managed to obtain a professional degree when she came back to France, Djibril believes that her experience in Mali “has closed doors for her”.

Some Antilleans and Africans also commented on the content of the school curriculum. Older Antillean respondents who had grown up in the Antilles or done part of their schooling there pointed out

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<sup>65</sup> Djibril claims that the genital mutilation that his sister experienced in Mali was done at the initiative of his grandparents there, and that his parents in France were not informed.

that they hadn't been adequately taught the history of their islands in school. Sabrina—a 40 year-old market analyst who grew up in Martinique—remembers that in her elementary school history book, there was hardly anything about colonization and slavery... Before, you were taught the history of France, not of the Antilles". However, the issue about the place given to colonial history and the history of slavery in school programs was a far more recurrent theme for second generation African respondents. Ismaël has a strong feeling of historical injustice that he feels isn't being addressed, resulting in a psychological distancing or even disaffiliation with school: "in elementary school they spoke about everything... but they never spoke about what France did to Africa, well, we already know, they did 400 years of slavery".

Another important aspect of the schooling experience of several respondents from both groups is their avoidance of negative schooling environments for their children. The mother of Iba—a 33 year old data analyst with roots in Senegal—decided to pull her children out of the local public school after they moved from a small apartment in a comfortable suburb in the Western outskirts of Paris to a larger house in a more multicultural area in the northern suburbs:

My mother didn't appreciate the middle school where we went, I know my brother went three months to the school and... after that it was just private schools... Because she found that... the teachers didn't pull the best students upward... the teachers concentrated more on the students with problems, rather than those who didn't have any, and my mother didn't want us to fall behind compared to others, so she put us in a school where we'd be in a more structured setting.

Choices such as these are of course not accessible to everyone, but some parents are prepared to make financial sacrifices to provide better educational settings for their children. Marie-Ange—a Guadeloupean woman who raised her children in mainland France—for instance recounts how her son was concerned about the quality of the middle school he began attending, which led her to send him to a remote private school despite their limited financial resources:

...when he came home from his first day at school he told me "listen mom, if you want me to make it, come see what's in my classroom, I don't want to stay there". Ok, so I went, I saw, and I said 'ok, we'll put you in another school'. So we put him in another school, and it's working out just fine... Financially... it's a little difficult, but we don't regret it at all.

Many of these experiences suggest that a substantial part of the difficulties faced by respondents of both groups derived from their class background and the area in which they were raised. However, there also

seemed to be a widespread experience of differential treatment based on their ethnic origin and/or racial background, which could affect how their school work or their future career prospects were assessed. This seemed to be generally more severe among second generation African respondents than their Antillean peers. Also, second generation Africans could experience educational obstacles as a result of the cultural specificities of their families, which was not the case for Antilleans.

### Labour Market Inequalities

Previous studies have consistently shown the higher prevalence of unemployment among immigrants and their descendants compared to the majority population. Men from the majority population have an average unemployment rate of 8%, but the rates are much higher for sub-Saharan Africans,<sup>66</sup> who have unemployment rates of 15% in the first generation, and 27% in the second generation. Women from the majority population have a 9% unemployment rate, while for sub-Saharan African women rates are the opposite of those found among men, as 21% are unemployed in the first generation, but only 12% in the second.<sup>67</sup>

By contrast, the rates of employment among Antilleans are even higher than in the general population, at 75% for men and 71% for women, compared to 68% of men and 60% of women in the general metropolitan population (Brinbaum, Meurs and Primon 2016). Part of this derives from the presence of a young high-skilled Antillean population that diverges markedly from the socio-economic background of those who came to France during the BUMIDOM. Among 20-34 year-old Antillean-born Guadeloupeans with a university degree, 53% thus resided in mainland France in 2010, and 49% of that

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<sup>66</sup> As well as for Algerians and Turks.

<sup>67</sup> These unemployment figures can be explained by traditional gender roles in both generations. In the first generation women are more likely to be married and care for children and the household. But as is often the case in migrant families with traditional gender norms, these norms also affect the school and labour market outcomes in the opposite way in the second generation. As Nancy Foner has for instance pointed out, in these families the "gender inequalities that tie girls to the home and reward female obedience and passivity, end up helping them to succeed academically" given that they spend more time at home on school work, whereas boys are encouraged to be more independent, and are more likely to end up spending time on the streets and neglecting their studies. These gender disparities are also reflected in the labour market, as "second-generation women... not only have better educational qualifications than their brothers, but they are often preferred for... white-collar service jobs" (Foner 2000: 237, quoted in Morawska 2009)

same age group who were employed that year were employed in metropolitan France. As such, the Antillean-born population in that age group who resides in mainland France have roughly the same levels of qualification as the rest of the population, whereas those who reside in the Antilles are twice as likely not to be university educated and over twice as likely to have no diploma beyond middle-school (Marie 2013). The first generation overall remains overrepresented in public sector employment where they are more prone to occupy lower levels of responsibility than the majority population (Recoules 2012).

When controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, children of DOM migrants have similar chances of being employed as the majority population, both in the case of men and women. Female children of DOM migrants however experience difficulties finding stable employment after their studies, a phenomenon that controlling for social and familial characteristics doesn't fully account for (Brinbaum, Meurs and Primon 2016). Self-reported experiences of discrimination in employment are high among many first and second generation immigrants, and Antilleans are no exception: in the last 5 years, 30% of DOM migrants and 40% of their children report having experienced some form of discrimination. This is also the case for nearly half of sub-Saharan Africans and their children (Beauchemin et al. 2010a).

Intergenerational social mobility patterns show that occupationally, children of immigrants find themselves in an intermediary position between that of their parents and that of the majority population. Whereas 75% of sub-Saharan African immigrants were industrial workers, this is the case of less than 8% for the second generation. While 15% of sub-Saharans were service workers in the first generation, they are 40% in the second. Also, the proportion of those who occupy higher and intermediary positions in the occupational structure increase from less than 10% in the first generation to more than 30% in the second. In the case of DOM migrants their distribution in the occupational structure remains roughly similar across both generations, with the exception of the shift from industrial activity to the service sector. Whereas there are minimal disparities in salaries between the second generation and the majority population, the greatest disparity is in gaining access to employment or a promotion (Meurs, Lhommeau and Okba 2016).



By examining the experiences of our respondents in the labour market, we will be able to get a clearer picture of how they have perceived their difficulties accessing employment, getting promoted, and their experiences with various forms of discrimination.

### Experiences in the Labour Market

Although the children of immigrants may on average occupy more favoured positions on the labour market than their parents, the disparity between the generations is stark when it comes to simply being able to find work. The migrants who came to France during the *trente glorieuses* generally found it very easy to find work. Martine remembers how easy it was to find employment when she came to metropolitan France from Guadeloupe in the early 70s: “Until 75, I mean you found work very easily. I could have left my job today and found work the next day or the day after. And when I say that, I mean in all sectors”. For Martine, experiences of discrimination primarily occurred in specific areas:

When I was almost sure, anonymously, that it would work out fine, as soon as I had the face-to-face interview, I knew right away that I wouldn't be retained. Because they called my name—my name didn't have any foreign ring to it... but as soon as I was there—oh, suddenly things were different. So I've felt that... But that was in quite particular areas... [f]or instance when I wanted to work in a bank... I'd say in all the “shop window” positions, in reception, where you're in contact with the public. Very much so.

Among the African first generation respondents, the labour market experiences of the respondents who do not reside in France legally are naturally in a very particular position on the labour market, where strict necessity primes over other considerations. Moussa, who has been doing demolition work for a few years now, explains that “as I don't have any other better work possibilities, I accepted to work in these conditions to pay my rent, to eat”.

Mamadi came from Senegal as a student in the early 80s, finished a degree in mathematics, but didn't manage to successfully pass his teaching exam, which left him in a precarious position as a substitute teacher, which was difficult to sustain after he got married and had children. He eventually found work in the national museum consortium, where he gradually specialized in security work. He does feel that his ethnic background has harmed his career, especially with regard to promotions, but thinks the scarcity of

work and the intense competition this generates goes a long way in explaining the difficulties he has had, pointing out that even other Africans discriminate in the workplace.

During his graduate studies in a smaller city outside of Paris, Ibrahim—who came from Mali to France as a student—had difficulty finding the mandatory internship to finish his degree. Even though he was never directly brushed off because of his background, it was nevertheless striking to him that he was treated differently from his peers: “I did job interviews alongside other students from the same university, and I had better grades... I had more motivation... but I wasn’t chosen, so that was very, very strange”. He eventually had to find an internship in Paris, which allowed him to finish his degree. Although his experiences with discrimination when he studied in Algeria were far more significant, they were also more overt, and he was surprised that it was so prevalent in France:

Before being confronted by reality... I wouldn’t have believed it, I wouldn’t have said it was possible, but after having met... some Africans or students of African origin that I found here, the common stance really was: “you’re African, you can obtain your diploma without doing an internship because everybody knows you won’t get an internship.” They’ll say “we’ll find a sort of internship where there are companies that we know are aware of the difficulties that African students can face, so they accept to take them as interns, but not as real interns, you basically just come to consult some files and you’ll put them in your [thesis].

Gérald who was a former teacher in philosophy in Senegal, couldn’t rely on his African diplomas to find work, so he finished a Master degree in adult education and now designs training programs for adults. However, although people are very kind and considerate with him, he doesn’t feel recognized at the level of his qualifications and experience: “I’ve seen people where I work who have more responsibilities, but I have more diplomas... I tell myself that maybe it’s because I’m African... I think that with my experience and also my diplomas I could have had far more responsibilities”. Fatima—a Malian woman who obtained her biology diploma in the former USSR—has also confronted many difficulties finding work that fit her qualifications, but she thinks this also derives from there being many people with similar training from Eastern European EU-countries whose diplomas are recognized in France, which puts her at a significant disadvantage.

The difficulty of finding suitable employment mainly seems to affect the first generation respondents with high qualifications or those who aspire to upward mobility. Many African first generation

respondents with less qualifications had a much easier experience on the labour market. Khadija is a 32 year-old who worked in the healthcare system of the Malian army before she came to France at the age of 22. She hasn't had any difficulty finding work: "I've had to struggle for all sorts of things, but I haven't had any trouble at all finding work". Marietou, a 26 year-old from Senegal who works as a nanny says the same thing: "I haven't really struggled since I came here... I stayed about 2 months without work, generally I've found easily".

The second generation respondents have a distinct experience from the generation of their parents. The greater scarcity of employment, their higher levels of education, aspiration to equal treatment and upward mobility, their acculturation which may at times not be conducive to finding employment, but also the fact that they cannot attribute differential treatment to anything else than overt discrimination or racism probably all contribute to this difference.

Experiences of discrimination were mentioned by many respondents, and these could take many forms. Echoing Ibrahim's experience at university, Malik for instance remembers what he was told when he looked for an internship in high school: "the teacher said 'be careful, we see discrimination every year, if you say your name is Mr. Cissé or Mr. Traoré—oh no, we have no more openings'. In high school they already warn you". Some respondents even mentioned overt and explicit experiences of discrimination. Hamady recalls: "one employer even told me clearly... at least it has the merit of being honest: 'no, I'll never take any blacks in my company. Maybe you're hard-working, maybe you aren't, I don't care, I won't take any blacks'". Usually, experiences of discrimination in hiring or in the workplace are more subtle, and more difficult to prove unambiguously. In any case, Malik often feels that he is treated differently in the workplace:

In the workplace you notice it. When you're of foreign origin people are suspicious. When you do a task, they are always checking on you. There are those who don't even say hello. I saw it at [a large auto manufacturing plant] when the higher-ups come they say hello to people, but when they see you they don't. Well, I just say "I come to do my work whether he comes and says hello or not"... I think it's gotten worse. That's what I feel. Especially since the riots of 2005, it's gotten worse.

Many respondents reported having difficulties gaining access to the labour market. Souleymane has always had difficulties finding employment, after finding small and undeclared jobs he began noticing he was treated differently: “when I went to look for work with a friend of mine who was white of course, they took him right away and they refused me, for the same job—even though there was no difference, equal competence and all that”. Souleymane worked for temporary work agencies for a while before seeking alternative employment options during his studies, and was eventually accepted in a small fast-food restaurant owned by North Africans. It was only later that he found out why he had been employed:

I got along well with the director of the fast-food in question, and one day when nobody was there he admitted that at the beginning he didn't want to employ me. And he took me on a trial run because I was a Muslim... he said to himself “oh well, he's a Muslim, I'll take him on for a test after all and we'll see”. And then he found out that I was a good worker... so that's where he said “that's what made me change my mind actually, and that's why I gave you a long-term contract”

Like Souleymane, many respondents fell back on temporary work agencies where they are more likely to find employment. Keita explains how finding work there was pretty straightforward: “I was given the names of two temporary work agencies, I went there with a CV and a motivation letter, and then you call them, that way they see you're motivated. And in the beginning its missions for a day or two—a week, two weeks, then they see you're serious and they call you”.

Many second-generation African respondents in particular claim to have had difficulties finding work through traditional channels, especially when looking for small temporary jobs. Djibril, who has mainly worked during short periods in parallel to his studies, explains that his social capital was determining in every case where he was able to find work: “I've worked a lot since the age of seventeen... and it's always been through people I knew”. Hamady also explains how he always has had to rely on his social networks to find work in the rural area outside of Paris where he spent a part of his youth: “every time I've worked it's been during the summer or just small jobs, I've worked with parents and my friends acquaintances, I mean, you could say that I've never been able to find a proper job by myself”.

Respondents with professional degrees in fields of high demand reported having lesser difficulties, like Modibo, who has been working in a restaurant for two years: “if I have a hole in my CV it's difficult

sometimes, but if [the jobs] follow [each other] directly it isn't". Sané, who has trained both as a childcare worker and a nurse's aide reports never having any trouble finding work, and even remembers how she kept getting solicited with employment opportunities after her maternity leave was over.

Idriss thinks the difficulty finding work largely derives from people's attitudes to employment and inability to exert themselves. After finishing a trade certificate in construction, he decided to obtain a trade certificate in public park maintenance after seeing some friends do the same thing. He then wanted to try out different things and worked in a fishery, a bakery, on construction sites and a few supermarkets. When asked if he changed out of boredom, he replied:

No, I didn't get bored. Actually I wanted to see how it went, because I had a lot of colleagues who said "we never find any work" and all that, and I wanted—it's not that I wanted to show them that you could find work easily, it's just that I wanted to check out what the guys said... so in not even a year I did three or four different trades, but it was really super easy to find work, you just had to be serious and punctual and you had a job. I didn't even have a CV, nothing. I went to see the boss right away, I explained and he said "sure no problem, come do a try-out for a week". I went over there for a week, polite and all, on time and everything, and he took me on.

Iba—whose parents were born in Senegal and works as a data analyst in a bank—doesn't think discrimination or racism has played any significant role in his trajectory, but mainly attributes this to his high level of specialization, which basically eliminates any significant competition that could perhaps put him at a disadvantage:

My work experiences—I knock on wood—I've never really had any problems, I've actually had a lot of opportunities actually. Maybe it's my character. Very quickly I knew what I wanted to do, so that has been an advantage, and I've never felt that being black for instance has been a handicap. Because when you rise to a certain level of competence, your colour doesn't matter... I'm a data miner, I'm a statistician, I'm in a niche, you see, we all know each other... and today with the explosion of the web, with the explosion of mega databases, I do a fashionable job... so when I show up what they'll ask me is what techniques I master, and in what areas I've put them in practice.

Iba thinks that the fact that he decided to combine the brief Senegalese last name of his father with the last name of his French stepfather by whom he was raised may perhaps have preserved him from some potential instances of discrimination in recruitment. Since "95% of people will tell you that it's not a Senegalese-origin name", he speculates that that might have given him job interview opportunities that he might otherwise have been filtered out from.

As we have already seen, French-sounding family names was something that set the experience of Antilleans apart. Several second-generation Antilleans had experiences of noticing employers' surprise when they would be called for a job interview. Vincent recalls one time when he was called for an interview after having communicated with the company by email:

I show up on the day of the interview: "hello, we communicated by email, and I'm here for the interview". First reaction: "Oh. It's you." And right then I understand that I won't get the internship, because basically he wasn't expecting a black person... I don't have a African-sounding name or whatever, so- and I speak French well because it's my native language, and yeah, no, I quickly understand I won't get the internship, but I don't fight, I do the interview, but I know very well I won't get it, but I give it my best anyway. I mean the guy received me very well, but judging by his first impression, I knew that it wouldn't work.

Despite this experience, Vincent points out that "for me, leaving aside that first reaction, I haven't had a problem with regard to my colour to find a job—ever. I've never had a problem". Many respondents echoed this sentiment. Ingrid explains that "I've never felt different from other job seekers... I've never had any problems at that level." At one point she removed her picture from her CV but didn't notice any differences in the response rates she would get. For Jean-Louis, finding a job has never been much of a challenge either: "I apply, I send my CV, they call me: interview, I successfully pass the interview", and he can't recall ever being discriminated against: "frankly I can't complain. If I had ever been a victim of that I wouldn't have to think about it". He thinks his Antillean background makes a huge difference: "I'm lucky—quote, unquote—I'm lucky to be Antillean, so even when I come to an interview I'm black but I'm chocolate, you know what I mean? I'm milk chocolate, it passes". When asked if it makes a big difference, he replies: "Absolutely, and I know it. You can see it. People are welcoming... they'll take you with a smile or they'll even tell you... 'oh, I've been to Guadeloupe' which happened to me once in a job interview". He sums his view up by saying: "In France... we don't have too much of that problem. I've rarely heard about discrimination problems with Antilleans".

Mélanie—a 30 year old administrative assistant with roots in Martinique—has had a similar feeling about her own experiences on the labour market, but links it to her fair skin tone: "For me it's always been an advantage, because I have- I have the exotic side without the drawbacks, by which I mean the skin colour. That's not my interpretation. It's not what I feel, I think it's what they feel." Mélanie has a white

father and a black mother, which makes her fair-skinned but still unmistakably Antillean. She suggests this makes a significant difference in the labour market, as “darker people have to make twice the effort to get accepted, and even in their studies they have to go twice as far to stand out from the others”.

These experiences shouldn’t overshadow the significant barriers some respondents can face when they seek entry into specific professional fields. Calixte had wanted to be a pastry chef ever since she was in playschool, but simply wasn’t able to find anybody who would take her as an apprentice: “we don’t take women; we don’t take blacks’—it was hard. During four years I tried to find a pastry chef who would take a black woman. It wasn’t easy... And as far as finding work, I didn’t find any permanent positions, I only found replacements, so I changed to cooking instead, because it’s more open to women”. She now works as a chef in the kitchen of a large institution and constantly faces problems with her staff and her supervisor:

I’m the head of the kitchen, but I can’t fully exercise my responsibilities because I’m hindered from above, because the supervisor considers that as long as you’re black, you’re here to do the cleaning, so it really bothers her that I’m the kitchen head—and the staff as well, even though they come from- the majority are from the islands—the Antilles—they don’t accept that it’s an Antillean that decides either.

In addition to the barriers that she faced because of her racial background it seems clear that being a woman in a position of authority in a working-class male-dominated field has been a central part of Calixte’s experience. There are thus large discrepancies between Antillean experiences that seem largely contingent upon the specific professional domain into which they seek entry, but also the position to which they aspire within it. As Martine puts it: “I feel that as long as you stay in the position that’s been assigned to you, there’s no problem. There won’t be any at all... But as soon as you show that you’re an individual with something up here [*points to her head*], then there’s a problem”.

As this overview suggests, both Antilleans and Africans are exposed to discrimination in the workplace, but it is generally more common and severe for Africans. b, whom survey data show have much worse outcomes overall.

## II. Partners, Marital Options and Aspirations

Intermarriage rates provide important insights into assimilation patterns, as they are indicative of a blurring of cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries (Gordon 1964). One of the most explicit indicators of boundary blurring between majority and minority populations are the patterns of intermarriage between the mainstream French population and second-generation immigrants. The entry into intimate relationships with the majority population also helps shed light on the specific challenges that these relationships may confront, highlighting the areas where the most difficult barriers for acceptance may lie on both sides.

### **African Partner Choice: From Kin to Common Culture**

According to Hamel et al. (2016), 31% of male and 47% of female immigrants in France as well as two thirds of children of immigrants (and 78% of those with only one immigrant parent) reported being married or cohabiting with members of the majority population. These rates are not very different for first-generation sub-Saharanans who enter unions with members of the majority population (35% for men and 39% for women), while 57% enter relationships with immigrants from the same region. A closer examination however shows that endogamy rates for Sahelians are higher than other Africans. As such, among adult immigrants who formed unions after migrating to France, 71% of men remain endogamous (48% for other Africans) while only 22% form unions with the majority population (45% for other Africans).

The second generation shows greater rates of mixed relationships, but the differences remain strong depending on gender and the parents' region of origin in Africa. Among men, 38% of French-born children of Sahelian African parents go on to form unions with immigrants from their home countries, whereas this is only the case for 9% of male children of other African parents. For women on the other hand, these rates are considerably higher: half of second-generation Sahelian women form unions with immigrants from their region of origin, compared to 30% of children from other African backgrounds. The union-formation rates between Sahelian children and the majority population also increase in the second generation, but a substantial gender imbalance remains, as it concerns 48% of male second-generation



Sahelians and 26% of female second-generation Sahelians (whereas there is a gender balance among the children of other sub-Saharan backgrounds, who enter unions with the majority population in two thirds of cases—i.e. at the average rate for second generation immigrants).<sup>68</sup> These gender differentials in the first generation are less surprising, as men usually come to France unmarried, whereas women more typically come to France through family reunification by marrying a partner who resides in France. But the second generation rates reflect the importance that the family plays in selecting partners—especially in the case of young women. This has the triple advantage of perpetuating the kin-group, reinforcing its transnational linkages, and introducing new breadwinners that will help pursue the community's sustenance through remittances into the second generation.

The second-generation respondents' perspectives on their marital options, or the choice of partner they themselves or their siblings have made are very instructive about the cultural boundaries that their families erect and how they change from one generation to the next. Djibril explains that in his immediate surroundings, there are all kinds of examples:

there are cousins who are married with cousins from back home, who are here, who have 2-3 children, 28 years old, who have settled down... they are the ideal for my parents and my uncles... same language, same religion, same culture, it's all good, we're with each other, among ourselves, the community, so it's perfect. And others who are married with French girls, with Arabs: they are looked at disapprovingly... we know very well that there's talk behind our backs: "it's not going to last, it won't work out, we aren't the same, we don't share the same values, we don't have the same religion"... It's always the same thing you know.

Djibril's parents want him to get married in Mali next time they visit, but he is far less enthusiastic: "it's out of the question, I really don't want to. I even have uncles who have sent pictures of their dressed-up daughters, saying 'here, have a look, begin making your choice' and so on – I told them I'm not interested at all." Even though he thinks his mother understands his position, and that he won't get in trouble if he continues to refuse, his father will nevertheless continue exerting pressure: "my father will try, it's his ideal... even my mother, she would be very proud."

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<sup>68</sup> The remainder of female descendants of Sahelian Africans entered unions with second-generation Sahelians (24%), which was more uncommon for men (8%).

Several other African-origin respondents commented on the stringency of parental requirements regarding marriage partners. Baïdy points out that there are clear limits to whom his parents would allow him to get married to:

The parents don't really accept that we marry with say French, Maghrebi, Italian girls... they are strict with that. It's true that there are others who accept, but it's accepted reluctantly... It has to be a woman who is almost- who comes from their village, who they know, or from the same family. And religion matters a lot too, she has to be a Muslim – she can't be Christian... They mentioned a girl in Mali when I was 22... but at the time I said 'no, I don't want to get married now, I want us to wait, and besides I want to marry a girl from here.' They didn't say anything... It's true that they've left me the choice, they haven't forced me to get married with a girl from there yet. If it's my destiny to marry a girl from here, if it's a girl from Mali, or Senegal, maybe, just maybe... I can't tell them 'I'm getting married with a French girl,' they would never accept that.

Keita, a 27 year-old second-generation Malian taxi driver, thinks that the restrictions placed on marriage in his specific ethnic community are particularly harsh, and also mentions the pressure that is exerted on people beyond the nuclear family, which makes it particularly difficult to opt out:

Among us, the Soninke, there are too many- we have too many castes. For instance there are families you can't marry... tomorrow, if I'm with a Malian woman for instance and we're not from the same caste, I can't marry her. And then it goes beyond the parents, there's the family, the uncles, that's how it is. So it's tough... Because of this many don't get married.

Several respondents I interviewed had followed parental wishes and gotten married with people from back home. Malik for instance eventually married a Malian-born woman: "I met her on the phone through my cousin, and then we found out we were from the same family... and after about a year we were asked if we wanted to give it a try, something like that, so I spoke about it to the family through the cousins... and they said if everything's going fine then no problem."

Women clearly face very different circumstances with regard to marriage, not only because they are traditionally granted less autonomy in these matters, but also because Sahelian men tend to see them as less valuable partners when raised in the West (Kane 2010). Sané explains that women in her country of origin are very drawn to second generation men, but men back home are less interested in women who were raised in France: "for them we'll never be a good woman, we will not know how to cook, we don't know how to take care of a man, we really don't know how to do anything at all".

This lesser interest in second-generation women can seem surprising given that Sahelian women marry first-generation immigrants from the same region at higher rates than do second-generation men as we saw earlier. Part of this can first of all derive from the opportunities of migration and citizenship that second-generation women can offer potential African suitors. Furthermore, the lesser interest in westernized daughters, may also provide fathers with a higher incentive to marry them off in priority, especially if they also wish that their daughters retain the traditional gender roles of their societies of origin to some extent.<sup>69</sup>

Djibril's sister provides an illustration of the limited autonomy second generation women have in this regard. As we mentioned earlier, she was sent back to Mali with Djibril for several years during their childhood. After Djibril had returned to France to treat his allergy and she had reached her early teens, she was introduced to her husband, and had little room to object—Djibril explains: “at a certain age it was decided that she would get married with such and such: ‘do you accept?’—even if you don’t necessarily, you know, with the pressure you say ‘yes’”. She has since returned to France with her husband, and thus provides an example of how some second-generation women can end up marrying first-generation immigrants.

Whereas the parents’ generation will still tend to emphasize the importance of traditional marriage within the kin group in the country of origin—thereby preserving significant ties with their home communities whom many Sahelian families see as their duty to keep supporting—the second generation raised in multi-ethnic circumstances in France often has other aspirations and expectations. This has led to conflicts within many families. Three of Abdoulaye’s siblings are married: the oldest brother with an Algerian woman, the second brother with a Martinican woman, and an older sister with a Frenchman. Abdoulaye—a 22 year-old computer technician of Malian origin—explains that “it was pretty complicated

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<sup>69</sup> It is also interesting to relate this back to the strikingly high single-motherhood rate among second generation Sahelian women (50%), especially when compared to the first generation. This could possibly also be a consequence of many of these marriages with first generation immigrants being unsuccessful.

to get them into the family” as his parents wanted them to marry Africans. This especially caused problems for his oldest brother, who was the first child to get married ten years earlier:

It caused problems with my father. My mother... even if she would have preferred a black girl she basically respected his choice, you know. But it's easier for mothers than it is for fathers. I know he really had a hard time with it, even with my nephew, in the beginning he didn't take him in his arms... they came by to visit, but it was lukewarm. It's really I'd say recently that it's gotten better, because both of them were actually in conflict, they basically didn't speak anymore... I'd say it lasted about 7-8 years this thing. But afterwards, with time, by the force of things, he accepted it.

The subsequent marriages of his siblings show how this parental norm can be challenged, especially when the tone has already been set by an older sibling. Djibril has nevertheless noticed that the stringency of the parental endogamic requirement has softened slightly in the Sahelian community over time, and that the acceptable marital boundaries have gradually shifted to other markers, despite the unease this can sometimes still elicit:

Now, the first criteria, beyond ethnicity – before it was ethnicity... now it's religion. We have to have the same religion... [S]o let's say a Manjack marries a Camerooneuse, since they have the same religion, that's alright, it's accepted, but when it's not the same religion, it's difficult. I have a cousin who married a Frenchman, but he converted [to Islam]... it's true that we see her less, there are fewer phone calls, so there's a rejection there, not a total rejection, but we can feel we're a little bit in the periphery... When there's a baptism for instance, and there are just Malians there – you see a White person: “well, yes, he's part of the family, he's the brother-in-law, he's this-and-that” you can feel that it's hard... you can sense that it's forced, that it's a little hypocritical. Deep down people don't really agree, they don't accept it, but it's not their decision... Maybe they're beginning to understand... that we don't have the same culture. That which is normal for them, and has always been obvious to them maybe isn't that obvious to us, and I think they are becoming aware of that.

This pattern has also been underlined by Emmanuelle Santelli and Beate Collet in other immigrant communities with endogamic cultures focused on the kin group. Rather than simply reproducing the parental norm, the second generations from these communities now instead justify their choice of partner through cultural and religious commonalities:

...in the Maghreb, in Turkey or in Sahelian Africa, the arranged marriage within the extended family admittedly remains a widespread practice, but the matrimonial system is also experiencing undeniable transformations. However, in the post-migratory context, immigrant parents still draw from the references of this matrimonial system. Yet the marital choices of their children reveal a system that confronts the contemporary practices of the society in which their children grew up and the expectations of the family group. The latter is likely to maintain social pressure to ensure that a union will occur with a partner from the same lineage group, thus favouring transnational marriages between young people who haven't even grown up in the same social contexts. These marriages derive from a preoccupation with belonging – which is particularly sensitive in the migratory context – aiming to guarantee cultural identity and intergenerational transmission. But progressively, one notices that some unions occur outside of the lineage and rely more upon considerations that value a similar ethno-cultural or religious origin, because the migratory context has contributed to modify norms and

practices both in the country of origin and in emigration. So both from parents' and children's perspective, the relation to the endogamic norm is reinterpreted: it now designates the project of marrying a person who shares a supposed common culture. (Santelli and Collet 2011: 333-4)

Djibril's parents may eventually accept his refusal of a traditional marriage, but this does not mean they would accept any partner he might wish to marry. When he wanted his parents to meet a non-Muslim partner he was dating, his parents refused: "if there's a risk I'll be excluded from the family it will be because of that. If I bring a non-Muslim in the family, my father won't be happy, I really won't be fun at all... people will say 'he's a Bounty'<sup>70</sup> you know, black on the outside, white on the inside... they'll say 'that guy's a traitor'".

Many African second-generation respondents emphasized the importance of having Muslim partners, sometimes simply religious partners, but they generally assumed in that case that their children would be raised Muslim. Malik explains that for him "the main criteria is religion. Because it's for the descendants. They have to be comfortable, people who feel comfortable in their lives. If you choose somebody who doesn't share the same things it will risk causing conflicts". Abdoulaye strongly echoes this sentiment as well. Although he would be allowed to marry a practicing Christian or a Jew, he wants his children to grow up Muslim, and marriage partners from other religions would make this complicated in practice:

I once was with a Christian girl, and in a sense, even if it's authorized, it actually brings with it a lot of education problems later on. Because even when we talked about it, she told me 'yes, but I'd like – listen, at least let me raise one of them as a Christian' you see? [he laughs] But I can't do that, you see? So she says "well ok, but at least we celebrate Christmas then" you see? But I don't celebrate Christmas. We were laughing about this. Because even though it's somebody I appreciate, in the end we said to each other "listen, it's impossible" you see, it's impossible. Because she would also be the only Christian, she said "maybe my parents also would like to have Christian descendants"... I'm intransigent on this. I can discuss just about everything, there's no problem, but on the points where God doesn't leave me the choice, I don't leave the choice.

This sentiment was widespread among the second generation Africans who were religious, but also the Antillean converts to Islam. When I asked the second generation Africans how they would react if they had to choose between a Catholic from Mali or Senegal or a French person converted to Islam, they

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<sup>70</sup> In reference to the coconut and chocolate candy bar: 'white on the inside black on the outside'. In American English, the equivalent consumer product used as a metaphor for this would be 'Oreo'.

typically responded that they would choose the latter, and the same was generally true when they were asked how their parents would feel about it, even if they were often reticent about exogamy.

In spite of the relatively high rates of intermarriage in France, religious endogamy remains very high across all major faiths (Tribalat 2013). If the question of the place of Islam in French society remains as salient as it now is—which seems highly likely—this religious dividing line is likely to become increasingly important. The second generation respondents who were asked about their preferences regarding the partner choices of their own children were often clear on this point as well – as Baïdy for instance explains: “the only condition I will pose is simply that the person is Muslim, that’s all. That’s the condition. If it’s an Antillean, or a Malagasy, there’s no problem, but the sine qua non condition is that the person is Muslim”.

#### **Antillean Partner Choice: Widened Exogamy**

Antilleans do not share the same cultural and religious distance with the majority population as the African population, which partly explains why there were fewer barriers to intermarriage with the majority population among the Antillean respondents. The racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the Caribbean may also explain why there may be far fewer barriers in this regard. It could nevertheless be expected that racial differences would affect rates of intermarriage, at least on the part of the French majority population, but in fact Antilleans intermarry at very high rates with the French mainstream, and many Antillean respondents had a white partner, parent or stepparent. This could partly derive from the explicit ideological downplaying or even discrediting of the significance of race in French social life.<sup>71</sup>

When probing the Antillean respondents on their marital choices or aspirations, religion and culture were sometimes mentioned as salient criteria when contemplating marriage or partnership. Paul’s experience dating a Maghrebi woman made him aware of the difficulties that cultural differences can elicit in a relationship – especially when considering child-rearing – and therefore admits that as far as future partners are concerned “culturally it would be easier to have somebody who has the same references, the

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<sup>71</sup> However, this is also common in other Antillean populations in Western Europe. As Alba and Foner (2015) for instance point out, about 70% of Antilleans in the Netherlands have a Dutch partner.

same culture”, so “ideally it would be an Antillean girl” but given that he lives in Paris, he thinks it might also be likely that he ends up in a relationship with a white girl, which he isn’t opposed to in principle.

Endogamic justifications on strict religious lines was also brought up by some respondents as being important. Eugénie clearly states that “I wouldn’t want my children to be anything else than Catholic” and adds laughingly that she “wouldn’t be able to do anything with somebody who doesn’t eat pork... we eat so much pork in Martinique”. Pierrette, who was raised as a Jehovah’s Witness, thinks finding a similarly minded partner is essential: “I’ve tried others, and it doesn’t work out... the lifestyle is different, but the issue of respect is as well. Because I don’t know many men willing to get married with somebody pious if they haven’t themselves had a religious education. That concept is almost archaic to them. Especially since you shouldn’t consummate before marriage, and that doesn’t please at all!” She points out however that “as far as choosing somebody with a different ethnicity, but who has the same religion, yes, I’m fine doing that.” Indicating that the religious requirement take precedence over any ethnic considerations.

Other respondents emphasize both religious and cultural requirements. Cécile, a 24-year old with an Antillean mother and a French-origin father, emphasizes the importance of finding a Catholic partner, doubting she could even marry a protestant. But she doesn’t think she could enter into a relationship with a second-generation African either, even if he is Catholic, pointing out that “I’m convinced that the differences in lifestyle, religion, and culture will be felt at one point or another, whatever one says about it”. Considering her parents’ reaction, she added: “my God, it really wouldn’t work out at all”.

Several respondents expressed no particular ethnic or religious preference in their choice of partner. Mélanie, who also has an Antillean mother and a French father, was baptised but doesn’t consider herself religious, and doesn’t care about ethnicity when considering future partners or children: “I’ve had boyfriends from all kinds of backgrounds. Africans, Maghrebis, Antilleans, and even Ch’ti [northern French]. No, it’s never been a criteria for me.”

Antillean respondents who had converted to Islam also considered religion paramount in their choice of partner, emphasizing again the religious identity of their children. Jean-Louis, who is of Guadeloupean descent but who converted to Islam in 2005, points out that “the ideal would be to find a

Muslim girl... it's not for me, it's for the children if I have any. You don't know what tomorrow is made of, if I die I have to make sure they are in the religion, you see, that I instill it in them. If you have a wife that isn't a Muslim, she won't do it." Jean-Louis' experience shows how conversion to Islam deeply affects matrimonial considerations and educational priorities.

Although first-generation Antilleans tend to intermarry to a large extent with the broader French population, they nevertheless seem to marry more with other Antilleans than their children do, as only 15% of the latter choose a first or a second-generation Antillean as a partner, whereas nearly half choose partners from the mainland population (Santelli and Collet 2011). There seem to be several salient factors that explain the sharp intergenerational decline of Antillean endogamy and ethnic retention in mainland France. One is the strong spontaneous affiliation with Frenchness in the first generation, which expresses itself through largely seeking to conform to French behaviours and norms, but also to the dominant strains of French republicanism, whose *de facto* colour-blind credo is an ideological asset for their acceptance in French society. A vigorous assimilation results from their adherence to this creed, but a palpable loss of ethnic identity does as well.

### III. Concluding Remarks

As the statistical data reviewed in this chapter suggests, many educational and labour-market disparities remain for sub-Saharan African children after controlling for a series of social variables that eliminate these same disparities for Antilleans. The elevated school drop-out rates and unemployment rates among second-generation Sahelians in particular suggest that this population contains a larger vulnerable subgroup which is poorly adapted to the labour market, and is likely to experience unfavourable social outcomes in general.

The school experiences of our respondents suggest that respondents from both groups have faced discriminatory treatment, particularly when they had to choose an educational track. These experiences



were more commonly reported by African than by Antillean respondents however. Second generation Africans also faced greater obstacles resulting from specific demands placed upon them in the household, particularly in the case of young women. Survey data nevertheless show much more favourable school and labour market outcomes for Sahelian second-generation women, which paradoxically also derives in part from the more traditional gender norms in African families, which protect them more from the deleterious influence of the local environment.

Experiences in the labour market also suggest that instances of discrimination vary depending on respondents' educational background and the jobs into which they seek entry. Although experiences of discrimination were reported in both groups, it was largely the rule among African respondents, but less common among Antilleans despite some very salient examples to the contrary.

Antilleans and Africans exhibited different partner choices. Whereas first generation Africans were highly endogamous and first generation Antilleans intermarried to a large extent with the majority population, in the second generation endogamy rates declined for both groups. While second generation Africans would widen their partner choice to culturally and religiously proximate partners, Antilleans would exhibit decreased rates of endogamy while maintaining a substantial proportion who chose partners from the majority population. Respondents suggested that unions between Africans and Antilleans remained relatively rare.

### **PART THREE**

## **IDENTITY DYNAMICS AND GROUP BOUNDARIES**

## 9. IDENTITY DYNAMICS

This chapter explores the question of how our respondents self-identify, what aspects of these identifications are most salient to them, and the variety of factors that have helped shape those identifications.

Data from the TeO survey (Simon and Tiberj 2016a) shows that in contrast to the majority population, which is more prone to identify with social class, the identity of immigrants and their children tends to build more heavily on their ancestry. The second generation more often emphasizes their ancestry than the first, and DOM children and descendants of East Asian migrants are more likely than other groups to emphasize their ethnic background. Moreover, "skin colour" stands out as an important identifier for a third of the DOM population, and half of the sub-Saharan population in both generations.<sup>72</sup>

Surprisingly, socio-economic background and education levels do not decrease the likelihood of immigrants and their children mentioning their ethnic origin as one of the primary characteristics that define them, nor does the unemployment rate or the concentration of immigrants in the neighbourhood. What matters most alongside personal history is feeling that their ethnic identity is assigned to them by others in daily life and that they are not seen as being French.

A large proportion of children of immigrants nevertheless claim to feel French (93%) compared to the generation of their parents (66%). These figures are slightly higher for DOM descendants (96%) and a little lower for second-generation sub-Saharanans (88%), but there are also great variations in the intensity of this affiliation. While 81% of DOM children "fully agree" that they feel French, this is only the case for 58% of sub-Saharan children (and 51% of Sahelian children).

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<sup>72</sup> Respondents were presented with a list of 15 characteristics ranging including age, gender, class background, religion, skin colour etc. and asked "among the following characteristics, which ones define you the best?" They could choose up to four characteristics.

Beyond the influence of personal history, part of these differences are explained by the experience of having one's ethnic background emphasized in daily life, and of not being seen as French by others. While the proportion of Sahelians who feel that their ethnic origin is assigned to them in daily life remains relatively unchanged from the first to the second generation (51% and 50%, respectively), it increases slightly between DOM migrants (32%) and their children's generation (38%). There is also substantial variation in how these groups think they are perceived by others, with 65% of first-generation Sahelians and 56% of their children claiming that they do not feel perceived as French, compared to 37% of DOM migrants and 26% of their children. While the sense of being accepted as French increases by a comparative amount from one generation to the next in both populations, twice as many second-generation Sahelians as second-generation DOM migrants feel that they are not seen as French. As such, while about the same proportion of Sahelian and DOM migrants claim to feel French while not feeling seen as French (31 and 30% respectively) there is a sharp divergence in the generation of their children: while only 24% of DOM descendants have this experience, 45% of second-generation Sahelians report feeling French but not being perceived as such.

There are also significant differences in religiosity between groups. Sahelian Africans have the strongest levels of religiosity of all immigrant groups in France, and they transmit it at very high levels from one generation to the next. In the first generation, 78% claim to be strongly religious while only 6% report being non-religious, compared to 54% and 19% respectively in the immigrant population as a whole. Among second generation Sahelians, strong religiosity remains nearly as high as in the first generation (72%) while those who report being non-religious—while still a small minority—increases to 18%. This indicates a greater secularization in the second generation, but also a greater religious polarization as the proportion of those who claim to be moderately religious decrease by a third between the generations.

The highest predictor for religious transmission across the generations is religious endogamy, but transmission is especially high among Sahelians compared to other immigrant groups. This is well illustrated by comparing the religiosity of children with two Sahelian parents and those with one French and one Sahelian parent. Among the former, 80% are strongly religious, 10% moderately, and 10% non-religious.

Among children with one Sahelian and one French parent, only 46% are strongly religious, 11% moderately, and 43% non-religious. This contrasts sharply with the second generation as a whole, where 50% claim to be strongly, 27% moderately, and 23% non-religious when they have two immigrants as parents, while those who only have one immigrant parent converge far more with the majority population in this regard, as only 18% report being strongly religious, 34% moderately, and 48% non-religious.

DOM migrants have lower levels of religiosity than the immigrant population as a whole, as 43% claim to be strongly religious, 32% only moderately, and 25% to be non-religious. The decrease in religiosity is also starker in the second generation compared to other groups, as strong religiosity falls to 30% and non-religiosity increases to 36% among DOM children. They thus converge more sharply with the majority population, where only 12% report strong religiosity and 49% are non-religious (Simon and Tiberj 2016b).

	<i>Strongly Religious</i>	<i>Moderately Religious</i>	<i>Non-Religious</i>
Sahelian First Generation	78	16	6
Sahelian Second Generation	72	10	18
- Two Sahelian Parents	80	10	10
- Sahelian and French Parent	46	11	43
DOM First Generation	43	32	25
DOM Second Generation	30	34	36
All Immigrants	54	27	19
All Second Generation Immigrants	50	27	23
Majority population	12	39	49

**Table 4.** Religiosity of Sahelian and DOM migrants across two generations (source: TeO)

With this broader context in mind, we now turn to the findings from the qualitative interview data. We first explore the general identification patterns in both generations before presenting the identity configurations present among the second generation respondents in the sample.

## I. Intergenerational Identification Patterns

During the interviews, all respondents were asked to fill out an identity chart which specified a list of social identities that they could rate their subjective sense of affiliation with on a scale of 0 to 5. Table 5 presents the average scores of these social identities for both groups and generations. In this section we discuss the broad differences in social identification between first and second generation Africans and Antilleans.

<b>ANTILLEANS</b>	<i>European</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Antillean</i>	<i>Martinican/ Guadeloupean</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Métisse</i>	<i>Religion</i>
<i>First Generation</i>	2.4	4.1	4.6	5	1.7	4.4	1.8	3.3
<i>Second Generation</i>	3	4.3	3.9	4.2	1.9	3.8	3.4	2.7

<b>AFRICANS</b>	<i>European</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>Malian/ Senegalese</i>	<i>Ethnic</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Métisse</i>	<i>Religion</i>
<i>First Generation</i>	1.4	2.8	4.2	4.7	3.7	3.1	1.1	3.3
<i>Second Generation</i>	1.9	3.9	3.6	3.9	3.4	4.7	1.1	4.1

**Table 5.** Average identity chart ratings of first and second generation Antilleans

### African Ethno-Cultural Identities

In the case of first generation African respondents, national and ethnic identities structure their social lives and remain at the core of their self-perception. These respondents typically retain strong social and economic ties to their village of origin, and the language they speak, their cultural traditions and their social and affective ties remain intimately bound up with their ethnic group. As Malian and Senegalese-born nationals, whether they have obtained French citizenship or not, their nationality is often equally important in their self-definition. Although Africa may by comparison be a much broader and culturally diffuse entity, they nevertheless also frequently see their affiliation to the continent as a salient part of themselves.

Most first-generation respondents rate their identification with France as intermediate, and primarily explain their sense of connection with France through the historical ties resulting from the colonial experience. Given the very heterogeneous impact of the French presence in West Africa, there is variety in the ties that first-generation respondents have with this French identity. Patrick, who has only been in the country for a year identifies slightly with France for this reason: “The French colonized us, so... we have the same things as you, in education, and on the administrative side also... so we also feel French sometimes, because we speak French there... it’s our official language, you know, for instance, when France plays in international competitions... half of the Senegalese support France”. Ibrahim also rates his French identity higher than other respondents because the city where he grew up was in “one of the first regions where the French... came in Mali... and the city has really kept a very European or French cultural trace... I think that culturally I’ve kept something of that, and it was much easier for me [to adapt when I came to France], it was like I had known them forever in a way”. Fatou has the strongest identification with France out of all respondents. Her paternal grandfather originated from Saint-Louis—one of the four Senegalese communes under French rule—and worked as an interpreter for the French colonial administration. Her family was thus far more acculturated to French life than most other Malians and Senegalese of her generation:

At home, in Africa, we were already practically assimilated to... French life, because my grandfather had always been with the French, so the behaviours, the way of looking at things, the way of doing things, he had already instilled them in his children... so my father also behaved that way with us. At home, when you go to Africa, there are many people who eat in pots and pans, just like that, everybody shares. We, at the time, had a table, chairs, we had a living room, we had everything we needed, so it was really in the middle of Africa, but we were in France. We were in France in the middle of Africa.

Although Fatou claims that other Africans often see her as Europeanized, she emphasizes that nobody sees her as a traitor to the country because of her family history. In fact, surprisingly few respondents mentioned colonialism as a significant barrier to identification with France, and typically spoke of the colonial experience as something that generates cultural bonds and commonalities between France and West Africa. Mamadi—who came to France from Senegal as a young man for his studies—thinks the lack of emphasis placed on teaching colonial history can explain this:

*Biorn: Does colonial history make it more difficult to identify with France or to have a sense of belonging?*

Maybe for the elders, but... we don't talk about it, there are no movies... there are no writings, we don't teach it, we tend to forget it, but those who are older than me do it orally.

Some respondents—even when they are highly acculturated and claim to have many affinities with France—nevertheless express reservations about identifying too strongly with the country, and primarily for cultural and moral reasons. Fatima thus points to “the respect towards others, the respect towards elders” which she finds severely lacking in France, thus echoing the comments on family and authority made by many other respondents, whereas Gérald invokes the legalization of same-sex marriage which he is worried “will impact the education of my children, my relations to others... it bothers me, but I tell myself I'm in France, I'm not in Africa”.

Racial identification was largely tied up with cultural identity among first-generation Africans. While many could express a strong identification with being Black, they systematically associated Blackness with cultural characteristics from their countries of origin. Patrick explains: “I'm black, I'm proud to be black—we have things at the level of culture, at the level of traditions, all that, stuff that is important, but also stuff that is bad you know”. The few respondents who did not identify with being black saw their colour as distinct from their culture of origin. As Gérald explains: “I know I'm black, but I don't associate anything in particular to the fact that I'm black, no—sometimes I don't even think about it... I don't reject it... I feel I have my values, but that are related to my soil, my education, etc. but it isn't related to a colour”. Gérald dissociates his blackness from his cultural background, and subsequently seems to dismiss it as being as insignificant as eye colour, and largely peripheral among the social identities that make him what he is. Fatou is even more dismissive of this identity, given her mixed ancestry: “I have more Mauritanian and Egyptian blood flowing in my veins compared to really black blood”. She thus prefers to identify as *métisse*,<sup>73</sup> despite having only one maternal grandfather of Arab Mauritanian descent, the rest of her ancestry being

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<sup>73</sup> The closest English translation for *métisse*—in accordance with the term's etymology—would be “mixed”, and usually refers mixed-race individuals (most commonly of white and black ancestry), but can also apply to cultural and linguistic processes as well. Given the term's specific meaning, and its lack of a satisfying equivalent in English, I have preferred retained the French word.



sub-Saharan African. Interestingly, when her 31 year-old son Souleymane showed her the identity chart that he had filled out she was highly displeased to learn that he thought of himself as black:

Fatou *[reading Souleymane's identity chart]*: "Black"? *[pause]* Well I don't think so.

Biorn: *Why don't you think so?*

Fatou: Well... he does nothing black—when he hears the griots<sup>74</sup> he says “they’re deafening me!”

Souleymane: That’s just part of the cultural differences *[he laughs]*...

Fatou: He isn't really [black] because we're all kinds of mixes... we've taken things from all races actually. So it can't be black. It can only be *métisse*. It can't be black. It can't be.

Biorn *[to Souleymane]*: *Well, I also said when you filled that out that it could cover identities which were imposed on you as well as identities that you identified with.*

Fatou: It's something that's imposed on us.

Biorn *[to Souleymane]*: *To what extent do you feel that it's an identification that is truly yours, compared to something that is simply imposed on you from outside and that you're forced to identify with?*

Souleymane: There's that too, the fact that it's imposed from outside, but there's also the fact that physically I just am—I'm black, I can't explain to somebody who doesn't know my family history that I'm *métisse*...

Biorn *[to Fatou]*: *Does it bother you that he says that?*

Fatou: That my son says he is black? Well, it bothers me a lot, yes. Because he isn't black. You can say he's Fula, that's true. He can say that. But "black"...

This exchange reveals two different cultural standards in identity ascription and in the conceptualization of blackness. Souleymane is darker than his mother, and was raised in a society with a different phenotypical norm, making his self-definition as black seem more self-evident to him, and a simple matter of self-acceptance. Fatou on the other hand, like most other first-generation Africans, incorporates much more ethnic connotations into blackness, and therefore sees her son's adoption of a black identity as ungrounded given his mixed ancestry and his limited familiarity with the cultural aspects of his ancestry. She also seems to suggest that his identification with the label “black” also negates this specific heritage and ancestry to some extent. Fatou's family has been French for generations, and her strong attachment to the colour-blind egalitarian ethic of the French Republic also explains an uneasiness in self-defining as Black. Although Souleymane also broadly adheres to this colour-blind ethic, growing up in a multiracial neighbourhood in modern France has made him more pragmatic about such racial categorizations in daily life, and thinks it would be absurd for him to go around refusing to identify with such an obvious characteristic about himself.

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<sup>74</sup> West African storytellers, praise singers, and musicians.

## Antillean 'Double Culture'

The social identities that first-generation Antilleans rate the highest are their Martinican and Guadeloupean identities, which is unsurprising given that these represent the most cogent container for their cultural inheritance. They also very commonly identify as Antilleans, but for them 'Antillean' refers to the larger constellation of Caribbean islands with their shared social and cultural specificities, whereas in France the term simply is used as a shorthand to describe Guadeloupeans and Martinicans. As Lucien points out: "if we're in Guadeloupe we say Guadeloupean, and a Martinican will say the same thing. But here in France it's Antillean." Eugénie thus only began thinking of herself as Antillean in this sense after settling in Paris:

It's when you come here that you become Antillean... It's like the term "Metropolitan" only exists for Antilleans and only from the Antilles, you know what I mean? Here you're in the Metropole, but when you're here you don't say you're in the Metropole, you say "I'm in France", that's it, and it's not "metropolitans", its blonds, redheads, and so on. And here I became Antillean.

As French citizens, Antillean respondents don't face the problem of having to reconcile two national identities, nor do they have the strong ethnic subdivisions that characterize West African migrants. Although they will often emphasize the cultural differences between their home islands and metropolitan France, these respondents will typically see their cultural characteristics as particular expressions of Frenchness, and may often compare them to regional identities in France. As Jenny for instance explains, being Antillean confers her with a sense of having a 'double culture':

...[O]bviously, I feel more Antillean than French, yes. I grew up there, so it's important—it's an important part of my culture and all that. But for me, being Antillean is being French also, so... it's really a double culture... We have French culture, and Antillean culture. Maybe people... who have grown up in another region [of France]—maybe they also have a double culture and all that, but it's less recognized than Antillean double culture. In my view, I have a "plus" in my life, in my view I have an advantage to have experienced a double culture and all that. I wouldn't deny it for anything in the world, and I wouldn't give up my place for anyone.

Most Antillean first-generation respondents expressed strong French identities. Even when Josette occasionally feels singled out as culturally or racially distinct from the mainland population, it doesn't affect her sense of anchorage in her French identity: "that's where we're a bit different also from Africans... or the children of Africans... who are always in this opposition, in this need to integrate and to be recognized as being French—whereas... I never question this French nationality... Or, I mean, it just never crosses

my mind”. Georgette—a 59 year-old school counsellor from Martinique—suggests that people only emphasize their belonging to the islands because of the suspicion that may otherwise hover above their claims to being French:

Martinicans and Guadeloupeans say they are Martinican and Guadeloupean when they are in France. As if it were an affirmation of one's self, of one's identity, but also of what they are pressured to say... It's not enough for Martinicans and Guadeloupeans to say that they are French, they have to prove it... [W]hat I notice here is that those who openly assert... their Martinican or Guadeloupean culture... it's like a reaction to the fact that when they say they are French they have to prove it.

A few first-generation Antillean respondents overtly distanced themselves from being French however, often as a result of not feeling accepted as French, not feeling adequately recognized as being black, or because of a sense of identity threat as a result of their identification as minorities. Josiane for instance does not feel adequately represented in the culture and the media, and often feels that her racial features overshadow her citizenship: "When you're French and white, it works out quite well, but when you're French and black... Except for my ID card, when you look at me, you wouldn't say I'm French". She feels she has much more in common with the Guadeloupeans and Africans in her neighbourhood than she does with white French people. Paul puts his French identity at a greater distance than other respondents for the same reasons. He also emphasizes the particular historical legacy of the islands that set them apart from the mainland: "There's an Antillean history. There's slavery. For me it's something really strong, even today... It's not the same history that the French have".

By contrast, frustration could also be expressed over being excessively or at least exclusively seen as French. Francine for instance complained about being too assimilated into the mainstream, where she didn't sense any sort of recognition from people around her that she is Antillean:

I live with many French people, because I socialize a lot with many of my partner's friends—and I must say, I've noticed that Antilleans have no identity in society. I mean, everywhere I've been during these three years in Paris, there wasn't one time where I felt that the people around me would say, "oh, she's an Antillean"—no, we go unnoticed and we're incorporated in—we're French, basically. And we have no identity alongside French. We don't stand out, except through the colour I mean, and that's not normal.

All first generation Antillean respondents expressed a strong attachment to being black, but there was greater variety in how they conceptualized blackness compared to their African peers. Some saw it as an

imposed identity that they needed to embrace, as Paul, who explains: “for me there’s no black identity... but since the other sees me as black before anything else, I’d say yes, I’m 100% black”. Others emphasized that it wasn’t even imposed, just a characteristic about them, like Georgette, who says: “it’s not something that’s imposed on me, it’s just what I am, that’s it. It’s like eye colour”. It was less common for Antilleans to attribute a cultural content to being black, but when they did, it rather referred to an abstract, universal blackness shared by all blacks regardless of their other ancestries, rather than the more ethnically anchored blackness that most Africans had in mind.

### Becoming French Africans

Compared to their parents’ generation, French-born Africans placed a lesser emphasis on their ethnic group and their country and continent of origin, but these still remained important parts of their identity. As we have already seen, the ethnic group often retains an influence on the second generation through the expectation of financial support or the restrictions placed on marital options. Many also remain familiar with the language and retain ties to their extended family back in Africa. Despite the continued association to Mali, Senegal and the African continent more broadly, these identities become more nominal and culturally “thin” ancestry markers. The cultural competence they require also lead many respondents to seek broader forms of identification. As Sané explains for instance:

I feel more African than Malian, it’s strange... I can’t explain it. I don’t know, I know that I’m African and that I’m part of Africa more than Mali... because I know I’m Malian, but I don’t really know much about Mali—which doesn’t mean that I know more about Africa, mind you.

Sané’s greater facility in affiliating with the African identity-marker most likely derives from not fully sharing the cultural assumptions of her Malian nuclear and extended family. The more culturally diffuse African marker thus serves as a more accommodating meta-identity for her, and reduces the potential cognitive dissonance she would experience if she identified strongly with an identity that might not be accepted by others (Amiot et al. 2007). Several African second-generation respondents nevertheless continue identifying with these markers, but often more for their psychological salience as nominal ancestry-markers

than their actual cultural significance. Regardless of the emphasis second-generation respondents place on these identities, they clearly lack the same familiarity with these cultural spheres as their parents, and this suffices to diminish identification with them slightly from one generation to the next in the sample.

The African respondents identified as Black to a much larger extent in the second than the first generation. For Malik, his attachment to a black identity is a way of defying any attempts to downplay this central characteristic about him: “we’re born like this, we have to be proud, we shouldn’t deny it—I’m not gonna be like Michael Jackson”. Djibril points out that it is always something central in others’ perception of him: “I’ve always been considered by others as Black, and not just Black as in the colour, but in the attitude, in everything”, but also claims that he identifies with it strongly: “But even I agree about it, the music I listen to, it’s Black singers... I maybe don’t see it in the bad things, like ‘he’s a gangster...’ but on many points I recognize myself”. He also feels a strong sense of commonality with other Blacks in France due to often having a similar upbringing and social experiences: “it immediately creates a link I think”. Soraya echoes this: “If I had to... recognize myself in a group... I would recognize myself in the group of Blacks”, and as Sané cogently puts it, the fact that she’s Black is probably one of the few things she can say incontrovertibly about herself: “It’s something I’m sure about basically [*she laughs*]. I’m sure that I’m Black”.

The second generation African sample was more religious on average than the first generation. This can partly be explained by the greater religious and socio-economic diversity within the first generation sample than was typically the case in the family backgrounds of the second generation respondents. The French-born African respondents were all quite strongly attached to an Islamic identity and were nearly all practicing Muslims. While their religiosity was comparable to that of their parents, and their parents certainly were instrumental in inculcating religious behaviours, it was not unusual for the actual content of their religious beliefs and practices to have been largely acquired from peers outside of the home rather than from their parents. Modibo, who is strongly religious, complains that his parents didn’t transmit their religion to him and his siblings enough: “they didn’t show us the importance of it... and I blame them a bit for that”. He points out that they have a very different attitude to the religion than he does “They pray, that’s it... I’m not saying that they just do it by tradition, but they were raised with

it... for me it has a primary importance, for them it doesn't, you know. So maybe they respect certain things a bit less, or they don't see things the same way".<sup>75</sup>

Finally, the second-generation African respondents also identified as French to a much larger extent. In contrast to the first-generation African respondents—where all save one rated their affiliation with their country and continent of origin as being more central to their identity than their identification with France or Europe—the French-born African respondents fall into three groups of about the same size, where the first rates affiliation with France as stronger than affiliation with the country of origin, the second does the exact opposite, and the third gives both nationalities equal importance. We will discuss these patterns in greater depth in the next section dedicated to second generation identities.

### **Becoming 'Negropolitans'**

In the Antillean sample, we find the same general pattern of a marginally decreased identification with Martinique, Guadeloupe and the Antilles more generally in the second generation. This decreased emphasis partly derives from being less familiar with the culture of the islands. In addition to the culture of origin rarely having a prominent place in their upbringing, many second-generation respondents also reported that locals in Martinique and Guadeloupe would call them "negropolitans" when they came to visit the islands on vacations, which often reinforced a sense of disconnection from Antillean culture.<sup>76</sup> The islands thus come to resemble ancestry markers rather than cultural identities in the second generation, while the Antillean marker takes on a broader, more diasporic connotation instead of referring to the Caribbean cultural mosaic as a whole as it did in the first generation. This is very similar to the change of meaning of the 'African' identity marker for the second generation Malians and Senegalese.

Several Antillean second generation respondents also claim to affiliate with their islands of origin because they generate no dissonance with how they are seen by others and are thus easier to claim a

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<sup>75</sup> These generational differences in religious practices have been discussed in detail elsewhere; see for instance Kepel (2012b)

<sup>76</sup> This experience is of course typical of second generation immigrants in general, and of course characterized most second-generation African respondents as well, who were called "French" or "Parisian" when they visited their country of origin. However, second generation Africans stood out from their Antillean peers through the dense family ties that their parents typically maintained with the country of origin, which were furthermore ruled by a large number of social, cultural and financial expectations.

belonging to. As Vincent explains, his Martinican-origin cousin in France primarily thinks of himself as Martinican: “I’ve noticed that everybody, even my cousin... who is my age—he’s Martinican, he’s not French—[Martinican identity] belongs to them. French doesn’t belong to them.” Franz, a 31 year-old musician from Martinique, forcefully echoes this point: “I’m never thought of as being French... I have to prove that I’m French. I don’t have to prove that I’m black... ‘Martinican,’ I just have to show where it is on a map, but ‘French’ I have to prove it.” However, the second-generation Antillean sample emphasized their Frenchness slightly more than the first generation, which could perhaps derive from the fading of their Antillean culture.<sup>77</sup> As Jean-Louis explains: “I was born into it, I know the culture more or less—I’m French. If I’m not French I’d really like to know what I am”. French culture is for many second-generation Antilleans the only cultural identity they can lay claim to. We will discuss these patterns in greater detail in the third section of this chapter.

The second generation Antillean respondents emphasized a black identity to the same degree as the first generation, with the exception of the mixed-race respondents, who emphasized it much less. However, as Josette explains, it takes on a different meaning in the second generation: “The black Antilleans who are born here... they see themselves as black... they don’t ask themselves the same questions... as us [first generation Antilleans]... they’re Antillean, but they know nothing about the Antilles, almost nothing, so they have this kind of blurred identity as well, this ‘who am I?’ kind of thing”. In other words, when the culture of origin wanes as a locus of identification, blackness takes on a greater significance, just like the island identities mentioned earlier.

In contrast to the French-born African respondents, religious identities decline sharply within the Antillean sample in the second generation. This largely seems to derive from the lesser influence of Catholicism on the French mainland, which Alphonsine contrasts with the more all-encompassing nature of Catholicism in the daily life in the islands: “in Martinique... there are prayer groups... there is mass

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<sup>77</sup> Although the inclusion of mixed respondents could have influenced the tendency for second-generation Antilleans to emphasize their Frenchness more than the first generation, there were no notable differences between mixed and non-mixed respondents in this regard. This difference between my first and second generation samples is furthermore corroborated by the TeO figures mentioned earlier.

every Sunday, so you have this sense of community that is much stronger in the Antilles compared to here... I've never been less Catholic than after I came to France". Josette echoes this, pointing out that to be religious in France "you really have to make an effort, you really have to want it" as religious practices are far less embedded in mainstream social life compared to the Antilles.

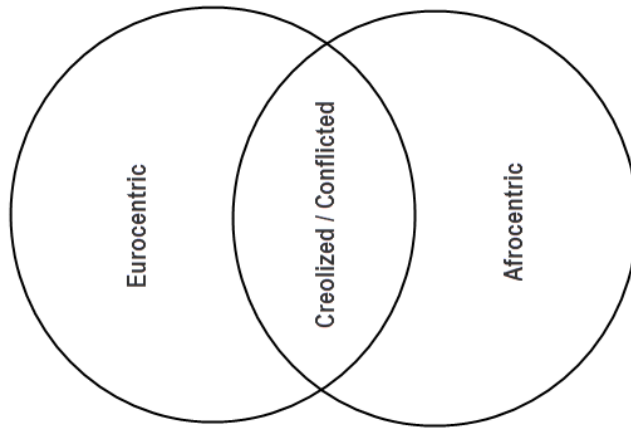
As this overview suggests, the cultural bonds to the society of origin seem to fade much faster among the Antillean than the African second generation. Structural factors such as the relative size of both groups could have an impact on this, as the greater size and concentration of the African population could be more favourable for ethnic retention (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). But the fundamental orientation of first generation Africans towards the society of origin has no comparable equivalent among Antilleans either, who come to France "culturally primed" for assimilation to some degree, given a cultural inheritance that sets French society and culture as the desirable standard of behaviour.

In the next section, we take a closer look at the variety of identity outcomes within the second generation, especially with regard to the French aspect of their identity, and how they reconcile it with their other social identities.

## **II. Second-Generation Identities**

This section focuses on the identity dynamics within the second generation of both groups. It maps out the variation in identity configurations along a shared spectrum that will help compare and contrast them. This spectrum consists of four ideal-typical identity categories: Eurocentric, Afrocentric, Creolized and Conflicted, which are depicted in Figure 7. We will discuss each of these in turn and highlight the similarities and differences of the identity dynamics within and between both groups. An underlying goal is also to determine how respondents relate to their Frenchness, and to what extent they can be said to experience what Milton Gordon called "identificational assimilation"—i.e. the development of a shared sense of peoplehood with the members of the host society—and what processes may facilitate or obstruct this.





**Figure 7.** Identity spectrum of second generation Africans and Antilleans

### **Eurocentric Identity**

The Eurocentric identity pattern applies to respondents who emphasize a French identity and an attachment to European cultural norms, and who largely downplay or disregard their racial background, their culture of origin or their deeper African roots. These individuals are fundamentally oriented towards the host society, and are less prone to have African and Antillean friends and non-white partners. Second-generation Antillean respondents are more represented in this identity category than their African peers. Eurocentric identities also seem more common among respondents who grew up mostly around whites, who have one French-origin parent, and in some cases lighter skin tones.

### *Eurocentric Antilleans*

Several Antillean second generation respondents fell into the Eurocentric identity type. Since Antilleans have been exposed for a long time to French republican norms, it is unsurprising that many second generation respondents would identify with France and downplay their racial identity in their self-perception and their social interactions. Also, it seems likely that the history of racial stratification in the Antilles has equally helped favour this identification tendency.

Cécile provides a first illustration of this identity type. She grew up with an Antillean mother and a white metropolitan father, and was raised in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood in Seine-Saint-Denis. The fact that her father wasn't Antillean led to her mother's culture being largely deemphasized in the home. Her mother thus hardly spoke creole, and Cécile never learned the language. Despite visiting the Antilles every three years, she never really felt fully accepted by her family there. Her mother's family could for instance make negative remarks about Cécile's education, which would lead her mother to ask her to behave in ways that she would ordinarily not at home. She doesn't feel any particular connection with the islands and only mentions it when people ask about her background. She has no particular desire to engage any further with the culture—she explains: “I'm very happy to be *métisse*... but this is the education I received, I've always been very happy, and I was more exposed to my Metropolitan family growing up”. Most of Cécile's friends are from European backgrounds, she has not had any Antillean friends or Antillean boyfriends either. She reported never having had a single experience of racism or discrimination, and doesn't think of herself as Black at all.

There were also respondents from non-mixed backgrounds who had been far more exposed to the culture of the islands as well as to experiences of discrimination but who shared the same Eurocentric outlook. Ingrid for instance has a Martinican father and Guadeloupean mother, and was raised in the outskirts of Paris. Since her parents—who were both civil servants—wanted to return to the Antilles, Ingrid spent three years of her childhood in Guadeloupe with her mother and siblings, while her father tried to transferred there for family reasons. Ingrid was gradually accepted by her peers, but never really got used to the tougher education methods. When she moved back to France it also took her a while to adapt again, as she had taken on an Antillean accent and way of dressing.

Ingrid's parents deliberately spoke French with her and her siblings, because “I think they really wanted... that we adapt, and have the best possible integration”, so her creole language skills are quite limited. Her family settled in a predominantly French area, so she mostly had white friends growing up. She also has a strong attachment to her French identity. She feels a sense of disconnection from her family in

Guadeloupe, as she claims that “before being French, they are black”, whereas for her “there’s no question about it, I’m French, that’s the primary thing for me”.

Despite not having had any experiences of discrimination in the labour market, Ingrid has been exposed to hurtful racially-loaded remarks throughout her life, especially when living and working abroad for the ministry of foreign affairs. Despite this she doesn’t think of her race as a central component of her identity: “It’s what I am [Black], but I don’t want to emphasize it, because it’s not my identity... and it’s certainly not what I want people to remember about me”. She generally feels uncomfortable when her distinctiveness is pointed out, because as she explains: “I was raised—well, to not think of myself as being different, so I didn’t want people pointing it out to me. I tried to... be like everybody else, you know, speak like everybody else, dress like everybody else, and then, every time, my difference is pointed out—it’s tiresome actually”.

This identity type rests upon the assimilationist assumptions traditionally promoted in French social life, which encourages the adoption of cultural and behavioural norms and standards while downplaying ethnic distinctiveness. Although this model worked well for European immigrants, dark-skinned second generation Antilleans who have internalized it often experience that they are not fully seen as French. While Cécile’s mixed ancestry allowed her to adopt such a posture quite seamlessly, for Ingrid her more distinct racial background made it much more difficult to be automatically accepted as French. But what characterizes Eurocentric respondents was precisely that this discrepancy between self-perception and the perception of others did not generate any fundamental shift in identification towards a racial identity or away from a French identity. Since Antilleans were often brought up thinking of their cultural and racial specificities as subcategories of Frenchness, this made Eurocentric identifications more stable when they were confronted by the experience of not being perceived as French.

### *Eurocentric Africans*

The Eurocentric identity type was far less common among second-generation African respondents. Since the nationality, language, culture and religion of their parents typically stood in starker contrast to the host

society, the second-generation Africans were prone to stay connected in some way to this cultural background. Furthermore, the fact that they were less racially mixed also made it more difficult to deemphasize their racial background. For these reasons, most second-generation Africans, even when they were predisposed in many ways towards a Eurocentric identity, had a cultural heritage and an experience of being racially different that made this identity type uncommon among the second generation African respondents. Furthermore, in contrast to Antilleans, there was no secure French identity foundation to stand on for second generation Africans who sensed that they were not seen as French.

Iba is nevertheless illustrative of this identity type. Iba's parents were both Senegalese, but during his childhood his mother remarried with a French-Swiss partner who became his surrogate father and an important figure in his life. This family configuration, which was very unusual in France at the time, was not difficult for him, as "I was lucky to have parents... who told me that... there's a way of being that works the same everywhere". He had always seen himself as a cultural *métisse*, but it was during a trip to Senegal that he truly realized how French he was in the eyes of others: "I was Franco-Senegalese until I went to Senegal and... they called me 'the Senegaul' and that was the first time where identity-wise I realized that I was more Parisian."

Iba has always felt a strong sense of affiliation with France, thanks largely in part to the education he received from his father-in-law.<sup>78</sup> This can for instance be illustrated by the fact that he has hyphenated his short Senegalese family name (his "name of birth") with the family name of his father-in-law (his "education name"), and uses this hyphenated name in his daily life despite the administrative obstacles he has faced in trying to make it official: "I've always wanted to have both, so I use both".

His general European demeanour has however sometimes led other Blacks to call him a 'Bounty': "just because I have no accent, because I'm Parisian... they call me a 'bounty'—but no, it's just that I'm

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<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, Iba's strong link to France differs starkly from that of his brother, who moved to Senegal a few years ago: "we've had the same education, the same parents... but you know, my brother is married to a Senegalese woman, I'm married to a woman from Brittany, my brother is a practicing Muslim, and I'm not". Fundamentally, he thinks the differences between them boil down to their different personalities and their friends that have drawn them in different directions. Despite having visited Senegal, knowing the culture and the language well, and enjoying the country at several levels, Iba is clear about the fact that "I'd prefer to be buried in Paris than in Dakar. While for my brother it's the opposite."

*métissé*, that's all. *Métissé* in my education, not my colour". Iba has not had many experiences of discrimination, which he primarily attributes to his level of professionalization, but has nevertheless had his share of racially charged encounters. However, he manages to brush off most such situations skillfully thanks to his cultural capital and repartee. However, this doesn't affect his attachment to his French, and especially his strong Parisian identity.

The experience of Iba is interesting to compare to that of Ingrid described earlier, who has also struggled with feeling very French but not necessarily always being seen as French. One of the main differences between the two is that Ingrid has a background that places her squarely in the French identity space and includes a large community that looks like her and identifies like her. Iba on the other hand can more easily be assigned to a non-French identity space, both by the mainstream and by his community. His experience suggests that an identification along Eurocentric lines might be more difficult to develop and maintain comfortably for African-origin respondents.

### **Afrocentric Identity**

Another set of respondents emphasize their blackness and their connection to Africa over their French identity. In this sense, they are the polar opposites of the Eurocentric identity type. These individuals were either raised with this orientation since childhood or developed it later in life after interacting more with other minorities, and/or experiencing discrimination and not feeling accepted in French society. They are more prone to have non-white friends and partners. There were far more Africans than Antilleans that fell into this identity type.

### ***Afrocentric Antilleans***

Alice was born in Paris of a Martinican father and a French-Argentinian mother, but her father left the household when she was very young, leaving her to be raised by her mother. Looking back, she thinks that racial distinctions were completely foreign to her for most of her childhood. Most of her friends growing

up were white, but she rarely thought about the fact that she was mixed. It was only when she started high school that she was introduced to “black culture” and began thinking about her ancestry. At university, she met a group of second-generation Africans who gradually involved her in their social lives. As she explains: “I think honestly that they changed my life, positively or negatively I couldn’t say, but in any case it’s clear that it changed my way of looking at things”. Alice’s social life, cultural activities, and even her life choices now largely derive from thinking of herself as being more attuned to the “Black side” of her identity, which is incidentally completely the opposite for her sister: “I almost only hang out with blacks, and she almost only hangs out with whites”. Despite primarily identifying as *métisse*, she feels she has positioned herself on one side of a black/white divide, which she primarily frames as a matter of culture and lifestyle: “We have to position ourselves regardless if we’re *métisse*, black, or white. Maybe we don’t have to, but we do it naturally you know. I positioned myself more on the side of blacks”. She also feels she wants to perpetuate this identity:

I’d like to have a child that is darker than me... I’d really like to transmit it, that he feels like he is black... in Paris blacks are beginning to take on much greater importance, and I’d really like for it to be like the United States, where there’s a real community that’s there, of lawyers, doctors and professors... and if we don’t make black babies well, there won’t be anybody to acquire- obtain those kinds of jobs. Yes, I want my child to think of himself as black.

Although Alice thinks of herself much more as being Antillean now, she is too disconnected from the culture to actually transmit any substantial Antillean identity to her children in the future. But she knows she wants her children to be surrounded by many blacks growing up: “I’d like him to grow up in a big city, in a big metropolis where there are many blacks, so he doesn’t feel uncomfortable.”

Alice’s particular experience probably derives in large part from being in-between two races and their more or less well-defined social and cultural spheres, which probably put a greater pressure on her compared to non-mixed Antilleans to affiliate with one side or the other, having no specific racial or cultural ‘community’ of her own. The experiences of other mixed respondents, like David, corroborate this. David grew up with a Martinican father and a French mother of European ancestry, and remembers how his biracialism was often an obstacle in his social life in the mixed neighbourhood where he grew up:

I was despised by some blacks, and I was despised by some whites. I was despised by some blacks because they considered that I for instance took glory from my skin colour that was lighter than theirs, or from my hair that was less kinky than theirs. Except that in my condition, I would have liked to have kinky hair, and be black—completely. And on the side of whites, well I got the message that I wasn't white, or I got the message that it was ok, I was acceptable, "because you're *café au lait*". Which is even worse.

David's experience also illustrates the importance of the neighbourhood in which he grew up, where it was particularly difficult being mixed, perhaps especially with regard to the European part of his ancestry: "there really was a weighty racism against whites... in the context in which I grew up, being white and being French was shameful". This played a large part on the greater emphasis that David put on a Black identity. He thinks he was also influenced in this direction by his father, who he describes as "pro-Black", but also by the Western history of colonialism and slavery: "the West having committed a crime against humanity with slavery and colonization, and not seeing the benefit of such an enterprise, I was rather on the side of revolted Blacks". David emphasizes that in addition to being "pro-Black" he developed a strong rejection of whites: "I hadn't even experienced any acts of racism, but I generalized: for me all whites were racist". This attitude also led him to reject his religious background: "for me Jesus Christ was white, the Catholic Church was an accomplice of colonialism... so I also categorically rejected the Christian faith".<sup>79</sup>

As these experiences illustrate, the Afrocentric identity type among second generation Antilleans primarily consists in affiliating psychologically and emotionally with blacks as a whole and their collective history, where colonialism and slavery play a central role in a psychological distancing from whites.

### *Afrocentric Africans*

Just like their Antillean peers, the Afrocentric identities of the second-generation African respondents were characterized by the psychological salience of their Blackness and their African origin over their affiliation with France. However, they stood out from their Antillean peers through the additional importance that cultural variables would take in this identification pattern, as well in the role of

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<sup>79</sup> In her study of the socio-racial hierarchy of the French Antilles, Ulrike Zander (2013) has also noted "a tendency today to devalue the white—or even mixed—phenotype". While this is more common among the less racially mixed Guadeloupeans, she claims that "the tendency to devalue—by reversing the stigma—everything that is attached to the white or fair color is also present among Martinicans, even though it is far from being as strongly affirmed as the opposite tendency".

discrimination in crystallizing it. The Afrocentric identity type could more easily take the form of a reactive ethnicity among many second-generation Africans.

A first illustration of this identity type is Sané, who was born in a Parisian suburb, and has lived there her whole life, but nevertheless explains that “I’m French—born here—but I don’t consider myself French at all, in my way of thinking and everything”. She explains how she nevertheless feels attuned to many values in France, and rejects some customs from her country of origin:

Sané: I try to take the good sides of the country, because there are really good sides, like in education for instance, I think here children are much more considered as human beings... I try to take from both sides, because there are customs from Africa that I reject.

*Biorn: For instance?*

Sané: We could talk about genital mutilation for instance. Those kinds of things are out of the question, they’re something where there’s not even a discussion.

However, Sané also distances herself from several French cultural tendencies, primarily deriving from the excessive individualism and downplaying of family relations—pointing for instance to the way young children behave towards their parents or how people abandon and institutionalize the elderly.

As was revealed earlier, Sané chose to marry a Malian-born man at a young age. The fact that she is deeply oriented towards her society of origin while her husband is not helps them get along very well, but ironically she sometimes feels he is not African enough: “take a simple example: he has gay friends. He doesn’t give a damn... He’s a little too open in my taste for a person that has grown up in Africa”. Sané also wants to transmit her cultural identity to her daughter: “I want her to feel Malian” she says, emphasizing the way of dressing, the cooking, the language, the family values that she wants her to preserve: “I don’t want her to feel completely French basically”.

Malik provides another good illustration of this pattern. At some level, Malik concedes that he is acculturated to French norms in many ways: “Since I’m born here, I think a little bit like them, I think like them at a rate of maybe 60 or 70 percent”. But he identifies far less with France as a result of experiences with racism and discrimination that have led him to feel rejected: “they get the message across, they don’t



accept you—if it were just one person, sure, but when it's many... too much is too much". Malik contrasts this sense of rejection to the inclusiveness of his society of origin, to which he feels much closer:

I'm very attached to my values over there, and when I was in my village of origin, you're welcomed like- they're happy, because you're a child who is born here but who comes back. You receive the same treatment and there are people who call you "my son", your cousins consider you like a brother, and there are those that consider you like their older brother so you see. I was in a neighbourhood in Bamako, I remember, everybody accepted me.

Despite his strong acculturation to France, a palpable sense of exclusion has led Malik to gravitate more towards an affiliation with his culture of origin. He has recently married a woman who was born and raised in Mali, and sees himself moving there with her after she finishes her studies in France to start a business there. Malik's life is also heavily structured around Islam, as he got intensely involved in the faith during his early teens. Although Malik's experiences in Africa have made him realize the extent to which he is westernized, he primarily stresses his identification with Africa and mainly appreciates French society because it allows him to be different from the majority as long as he is respectful of its rules: "Here, basically, you can live your own life, and if you respect their laws, they leave you alone... there are laws here that are not like the laws back home, we have to respect them. That's what they ask of us, and we have to make that effort also."

Keita provides an example of a stronger form of reactive ethnicity. From a young age his father told him and his siblings that they may be born in France but that they didn't really belong there: "Since he's been here a long time, he's worked with Europeans, with French people, he already knows—he said: 'you're born here, but this isn't your country'". In school, Keita feels he was told lies, especially about Africa, and a large part of his conflicting feelings about France rest upon colonialism: "The Europeans have helped themselves too much in Africa... it's true that our countries are poor, but our wealth is exploited... tomorrow if you take away all the wealth... they exploit in Africa, you would see France under a different light". Another important aspect that sets him apart is his racial divergence from the mainstream population and not feeling valued or accepted: "we don't have the same colour, and that bothers some people".

From an identity point of view, Keita therefore says “I have French papers, but beyond that, I don't feel French”, and feels rejected by the French mainstream: “deep down, they don't like us”. This attitude towards France is interesting to juxtapose with his view of Mali and Africa more broadly, which he feels a very strong connection to, despite his awareness that he is perceived as a Frenchman there:

...sometimes I say to myself France is all very well and all, but... I know it's not my country... you have to think of your country, of Mali, you have to think it's your home, it's our culture, over there people, even if they call us “Frenchmen”, “Parisians”, it doesn't matter, we're among each other, there's the family, it's cheaper than here, uh, you can make people work, you can invest there. I don't know... but it's better. But France—it's true that France, to live, France is good, there's everything you need here, but as I told you, it's the people.

Keita thus experiences himself as living in a country that is not his own and where he has no place, and despite the incantatory tone he takes when speaking of his sense of connection to his country of origin, he sees a future for himself in Mali at some point: “One of those days we're moving back there” he claims, without mentioning any further practical details.

The greatest point of contention for Keita is probably how he feels Muslims are portrayed in France. He claims that being French and Black is far easier for him to reconcile than being French and Muslim, and thinks the collective blame put on Muslims might lead to conflict further down the road:

It's Islam on all fronts apparently. They want to make Islam into the bad guy... The problem is I hope for them it won't blow up... Today people are thinking so they do nothing. They don't want to do anything, if they really wanted to they would. They're not afraid. In all *cités*, there are I don't know how many *cités*, the majority are filled with Muslims. And people are—most of them are armed. They have weapons. That means that the day it all blows up... it'll be useless to come crying. We know there are people who are already ready.

Keita's pugilistic words not only illustrate what a polarizing focal point Islam has become in French society, but also his resolutely adversarial stance towards the broader society. His experience and way of seeing himself illustrate the sense of defiance that can derive from a combination of experiences of social marginality, where Islam, blackness, and colonialism come together to crystallize a reactive ethnicity.

What characterizes the Afrocentric identity type among second generation Africans is that despite the frequently high levels of acculturation of many of these respondents to France, they tend to identify with their country and culture of origin to a much greater degree than with a French identity. This largely determines who they choose to socialize with, who they tend to choose as partners, and how they interact

with and see themselves as fitting in the broader society. There are several underlying causes for this pattern. As we have seen, discrimination and an experience of being rejected by the French population can play an important part, as it clearly does in the case of Malik and Keita, however Sané also shows how differences in cultural values can also play an important role in this identification with their culture and ancestry over a French identity and culture.

It is however also clear from this overview that cultural variables are far less salient in the experience of Afrocentric Antilleans. This is understandable given that it is easier to associate being Antillean with a French identity and that Antillean culture does not diverge as sharply from the French mainstream as Senegalese or Malian culture. For second generation Antilleans it is primarily their racial status and the identification with the history of slavery in the Antilles that can lead them to distance themselves from a French identity. Whereas the sense of being racial outsiders is also strong among second generation Africans, cultural differences take on more significance as a locus of identification for Afrocentric second generation Africans.

Just as the Eurocentric identity type is far more common among second generation Antilleans, the Afrocentric one is more widespread in the African second generation. The smaller cultural gap between Antillean parents and their children most likely contributes to a greater loss of ethnic distinctiveness in the second generation, and a lesser sense of rejection by the majority population makes it easier to develop Eurocentric identities. In the case of second generation Africans by contrast, thicker cultural identities and a greater sense of rejection by the majority reinforces Afrocentric identities.

### **Creolized Identity**

According to Edouard Glissant (1996: 18) “creolization requires that heterogeneous elements that are put into contact valorize each other, that there is not degradation or diminishing of being, whether from the inside or the outside, in this contact and mixing”. It is this reciprocal valuation and harmonious melding that motivated the labelling of this identity type, not its association to the Caribbean, as it applies to both

Antilleans and Africans. Respondents with creolized identities successfully fuse their racial or ancestral identities with a French national and cultural identity so as to minimize or eliminate any apparent identity conflict or hierarchy. These respondents also exhibit a sense of ‘resolution’ in their identities insofar as they expressed a coming-to-terms with previously conflicting aspects of their ethnic, racial, and cultural inheritance.

### *Creolized Antilleans*

In contrast with the Afrocentric and Eurocentric identity types, second generation Antilleans with Creolized identities wove together their national, cultural and racial identities more seamlessly, and did not seem to put them in any apparent hierarchy.

A first example of this identity type is Christophe, who was born in Martinique but moved to a Parisian suburb in his early childhood. Since his parents later separated, and his mother moved back to Martinique, he ended up growing up living for extended periods both on the mainland and on his island of origin. This particular upbringing allowed Christophe to construct an ethnic identity with elements from both societies, which has led him to forge a ‘thick’ Antillean identity despite living since a young age on the mainland. He thinks that Antilleans in mainland France “are really a big community” which he is happy to see asserting itself much more over the past few years. A trip to Senegal furthermore made him realize much more viscerally how many cultural commonalities Antilleans had with Africans. However, he also emphasizes that “I am French and Antillean at the same time” and maintains a resolutely universalistic attitude and approach, which he thinks his upbringing was instrumental in forging:

What helped me a lot was being immersed from a young age in this diversity—both over there and over here—and always seeking out the other. Because to break this [barrier between people] I think you need to be proactive. When I went to Brittany, people told me “the Bretons you know, they’re really something”. But you know, with people it’s quite simple—it’s like if you as a white person go deep into the Senegalese countryside and just boorishly go “yeah, ok, alright guys, here’s what we’re gonna do” and you don’t try to seek out the other, taste things, show that, you know, you’re present, that you come as you are, put down your defences, and go towards people. And even if the most stubborn might not come right away, or may have a little comment—even a little one—or you’ll see in his eyes that this-and-that, it will evaporate over time. And I think that’s what you need to do, that’s what I think I’ve always done, so the fact that I know how to adapt, it’s innate.

Largely because of this attitude, Christophe's race has never really been an obstacle for him "I'm not saying that I'm a blue-eyed Swede" but "I reveal myself so much that people don't pay attention to my colour at first". This erosion of dividing lines has helped him to amalgamate his various social identities, root himself within them, while at the same time being uncompromisingly open to others—as he explains: "Universal is maybe a pretentious word, but that's what I try to be".

A different example is Esmeralda, who was born in Paris of Martinican parents, and has lived in Seine Saint-Denis since the age of 10. Before then, she lived in an almost entirely white neighbourhood but did not give any particular thought to her race during that period. It was when she moved to the more ethnically diverse Saint-Denis that she truly realized that she was racially distinct "I became conscious that 'oh, I belong to a sort of community: I'm Black'". Despite this epiphany, it was only later that she began coming to terms with her origins, which was a more drawn out and very intense process that she felt she had to go through to be able to construct her identity:

There was a period where I had a visceral need to know where I came from... I travelled... to the Antilles... to rediscover my island from an objective perspective, without any influence... I came with all my questions, "Where are you from? What happened?"... Internally it was really powerful... I can really understand adopted children, when they have a need—despite the love they received from their parents and all that—to find out where they come from... you can't construct yourself if there isn't any foundation, whatever the foundation, even if it's painful or chaotic... and this straightened everything out for me, and I could construct myself, and I had the impression that previously... I was looking for all kinds of things and I think it's really important to know where you come from, even if the history isn't pretty... it's part of you.

Esmeralda's experience suggests that she reached a sort of 'identity resolution' after travelling by herself to the Antilles, where she has melded together the various aspects of her identity and determined the meaning they had for her. This has led her to be much more comfortable with who she is, and is not swayed in any way by the negative attitudes or behaviours of other groups, whether it is from Antilleans in Martinique (because unlike locals she sunbathes on the beach, or because she has a white boyfriend), African women in Paris (because she doesn't straighten her hair or seeks to Europeanize her physical appearance in other ways), or from French people in general (when they make erroneous assumptions about her because of her race).

Esmeralda also seems to have worked through the legacy of the “colour hierarchy” that characterizes and largely structures Caribbean societies, which she claims “unconsciously perpetuates itself to this day”:

There are still those... who continue to think that being Black isn't good somehow, or that it still means being in a state of submission towards whites... And for me, all that... I just can't take it. It's perpetuating something that shouldn't exist anymore... I've noticed with regard to my experience that the fact that I'm not burdened by that thing allows me to have more distance, to laugh about it, or to tease others.

This internalized “colour hierarchy” seems to be an important part of the Eurocentric identity type among Antilleans, while psychological rebellion against it seems to be an essential component of those who rather find themselves on the Afrocentric side of the spectrum. For individuals characterized by the Creolized identity type, their identities are less structured by this polarization, and they experience a sense of identity resolution in this regard. This identity type can be encapsulated by words of the Martinican novelist Tony Delsham: “I cannot ignore that am both the descendant of the persecutor and the victim..., that I am both one and the other. So may I be left alone to manage all this in peace, I have a country to build” (quoted in Nkunzimana, Rochmann and Naudillon 2011:19).

### *Creolized Africans*

Like their Antillean peers, second generation Africans with creolized identities exhibited a similar merging of national, cultural and racial identities, so as to make them largely complementary. It was however slightly more challenging in their case as they had more cultural and racial boundaries to overcome.

Hamady provides an excellent example of the Creolized identity type and eloquently illustrates its many challenges. He emphasizes the need for children of immigrants to know about their ancestry and their family history when they are acculturated but racially distinct from the majority:

...when you're a kid, you know that you're French, so when you come to France it's your home, but without really being your home—why? Because your grandfather doesn't live in France. Your grandmother doesn't live in France. Despite this you know the language, the social codes... On the other hand during your vacation in Senegal and in Mali it's a different approach. It's dad's home, it's mom's home. You see the parents of your mom and dad, your aunts and uncles, the roots of the family, where you're from, who you really are. And why do I put it that way? Because my parents always made sure we knew the family history... so you're not a fractured personality, or you're sensitized to the culture of your forefathers... without necessarily being

completely sectarian, without necessarily telling yourself “you’re this”—no, you’re the sum of this. The sum of what you are in France, of what you are over there. You’re an amalgamation, and it’s up to you to make the best of it.

Hamady believes he was particularly blessed by the education that his parents gave him, as they inculcated a double sense of belonging in him and his siblings from a very young age. He thinks this has preserved him from many of the pitfalls that others who grow up in tough circumstances may more easily fall into, when deprived of a more comprehensive sense of who they are:

...the blessing of my siblings and me, is that we’ve always had this double culture. Let me explain: our parents always made sure that we would be little model Frenchmen, “our ancestors the Gauls” you know, big cliché, but that’s how it was; without forgetting that your ancestors maybe didn’t all necessarily come from Gaul—so where are you from, why are you in this country today, and what was the process that brought this about?—when you have this blessing you’re not somebody who’s broken or lost... I’m French, but I also have... another cultural portion in me, and when you have that, your reading of the world is much healthier, much easier, and you can accept differences... it’s not something that’s dividing. So this sense of belonging to a double—or even a triple—culture has meant that I haven’t failed at life, I haven’t struggled in periods where I was going in circles, etc. Because I have friends who are in the same case as me, who have a different ethnic origin, etc. and who have gone down the wrong path because they didn’t really know who they were. And I’ve always had this blessing of knowing who I am and where I’m from. To know where you’re going is more difficult, it’s up to each and every one, and the opportunities that you have, that you create or not, etc. but [at least] you already have a structured personality.

Although Hamady thinks of himself as having a solid attachment to a French identity, he has also learned to make this identity his own by embracing his African heritage, which he was exposed to more substantially when his mother sent him to live in Mali for several years during his teens.<sup>80</sup> Creating a bond with his culture of origin has also helped him develop a deeper understanding of who he is and where he comes from: “I’m a Frenchman, I’m Black, of African ancestry, and whose ancestors are Fulani”. But he stresses the importance of Frenchness as both an elective, but also a federating identity: “I’m born in France like everybody else... by destiny, or by accident... but I’ve chosen to live in France, I’ve chosen to be French”.

To be able to choose to identify with France, Hamady thinks a sense of connection with the French mainstream culture is essential. He thinks immigrants need to transmit key social codes and customs of the country if they want to foster a sense of belonging to the country in their children. He says:

...the person whose parents were a farmer who migrated because he couldn’t harvest any more, or a cleaning lady who can neither read or write, and who find themselves here and don’t know the social codes of the country, how are they supposed to transmit them to their child? What is the child supposed to do without

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<sup>80</sup> For a more extensive discussion about the role of experiences in Africa for identity construction, see Razy (2006)

the social codes? He just realizes he's black, that the others are white, that you are told this-and-that because you're black—maybe... it's not because you're black, it's because you never learned, your parents weren't in a position where they could understand all that, whereas I was lucky to have parents who were educated, that's what makes the whole difference. It's at the level of parents, it's the transmission of the parents' knowledge that gives you—it's silly, but take Christmas celebrations: "What did you get for Christmas?" — "I got this" — "But do you celebrate Christmas?" — "Yes I celebrate Christmas" — "[But] you're Muslim, or you're Black, you're African" — "Yes, but I celebrate Christmas, just like Jean-Baptiste".<sup>81</sup> It is this that makes you feel that you're in your home country... [M]y parents understood the meaning that this had... For the rest, you just try to take advantage of the chances you've been given, as a function of your personality, of what you want to do, your aspirations—where you're after all the master of your existence. You've been given tools and you do what you want with them. And if you use them or you don't, if you break them—you can make mistakes or not make mistakes, but at least you need the tools.

The experiences of Hamady illustrate how parents can build bridges or carve out a shared space between the culture of origin and the host society which encourages their children to identify with key aspects of the host society while at the same time retaining a link to their culture of origin. It is nevertheless important to note that Hamady stands out from many other respondents through his parents more educated background and greater cultural proximity to the host society. Although this is no prerequisite for the acculturation of children, it seems to make it much easier and avoids the internal conflicts that can result from conflicting cultural demands from the home environment and the broader society.

The challenges that Hamady highlights in developing a creolized identity can apply to both Antilleans and Africans. However, the greater cultural, religious, and racial disparities that second generation African respondents confront can make this more difficult. It is precisely to these challenges that we turn in the next identity type.

### **Conflicted Identity**

Respondents with a Conflicted Identity type did not exhibit either the Eurocentric or the Afrocentric tendencies, nor an integration of the two in a Creolized identity, but rather experienced a sense of internal conflict, ambivalence or confusion with the various strands of their identity that they were largely unsuccessful in resolving the contradictions between or melding together satisfyingly.

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<sup>81</sup> Hamady uses Jean-Baptiste as a generic French name to illustrate that he celebrates Christmas just like any other French person.



### *Conflicted Antilleans*

The second generation Antilleans who exhibited this identity type primarily seemed to experience an absence of any strong group attachments, or a feeling of not being fully part of any group. They consequently subsumed themselves under broader or more ‘thin’ group identities.

Mélanie was born in Paris of a Martinican mother and a French father, but moved to Martinique and lived there between the ages of two and eleven. A substantial part of her social circle in Paris is made up of Antilleans, and she grew up in the midst of Antillean culture, but she doesn’t feel this aspect of her identity takes precedence over any other parts—“I think I’m as Martinican as I’m Parisian” she explains. Racially she reports feeling just as Black as she feels White, and her only identification that stands out from the others is her identification as *métisse*. As she explained when we discussed her identity chart, she experiences a sense of incompleteness with all her identities:

Mélanie: I think [being *métisse*] is more important than all the rest [of my identities]. I think that all the rest put together results in [being *métisse*].

Biorn: *Alright... Because no other of these identities suffice to define you, is that it? Like there always something missing?*

Mélanie: Well yeah, because it doesn’t correspond to me at 100%. Especially right now, I find the mentality of some French people pretty narrow also. I believe we’re regressing. So I reproach Antilleans for not opening themselves to the world, but French people aren’t much better after all.

Biorn: *So what do you feel is missing to be able to... completely identify as French?*

Mélanie: I don’t know, I haven’t found it yet.

Pierrette—who was born in Paris of two Guadeloupean parents—provides a similar example of an identity that doesn’t emphasize ethnic, racial or national markers, but rather seeks to be incorporated in something broader and more inclusive. She explains how she always felt torn between her Antillean and French identity, doesn’t feel committed to either, and prefers to think of herself as European:

...when I’m in France, they say to me ‘oh, you’re Guadeloupean’ you know, I’m Antillean, I’m not French. And when I go there, I’m a negropolitan... so I ask myself sometimes ‘am I Guadeloupean or am I French?’... I don’t really feel French, and not really Antillean... I feel like I’m in-between... That’s why European is good for me... I really feel more European... that way, it encompasses [me] and I feel dissolved in the mass... that way I’m a little bit like everyone else, you know, in Europe there a little bit of everything, so that way I’m a little bit at the same level as everybody else.

In Pierrette’s case, this emphasis on a European identity derives from seeking a more inclusive social identity of which she could be part rather than an explicit “thick” identification with any European cultural

inheritance (implicitly contrasted with a shunned African inheritance), which was more characteristic of the Eurocentric type of identities described earlier. Pierrette remembers being singled out because of her race from an early age, which has contributed to her identifying more with being black than she otherwise would, but she prefers to emphasize this European category because of its greater inclusiveness, as she seeks to attenuate her distinctiveness rather than put forward her French, Antillean, or Black identity.

### *Conflicted Africans*

Among the African second generation respondents, this identity type primarily seemed to be characterized by internal conflicts between both cultural and racial identities.

Djibril provides an illustration of how such a conflicted identity could be experienced. We have already mentioned the disagreements that Djibril had with his father and extended family over remittances and marriage partners. The fact that he has succeeded in school and now studies at university has helped him adapt to French middle-class norms to a greater degree than most people from his neighbourhood. The fact that he has been a rugby player for many years has also exposed him very intimately to the lifestyle of his overwhelmingly French teammates. This has been very difficult for him to deal with sometimes, as it has put severe strains upon his Muslim identity.

With my teammates, we party a lot, and once I came to a party, everybody had been drinking, everybody was dancing with girls... I just stayed in my corner, sitting there: "that isn't good; that's a sin; that's a sin; that's a sin" and it isn't easy. I stay at home in that case. And the next week, everybody's there, they're laughing—"hey, you remember...!"—and you're not in the group anymore, you're a bit excluded from the group, and it's not easy to—you know. And I even have other friends who have stopped playing because of that. They prefer not to split the difference—religion and sports, it's not possible.

Djibril has sometimes given in to many aspects of this camaraderie with his teammates: "Now for instance I'm doing Ramadan, but that didn't stop me from drinking alcohol in a nightclub three months ago... my father doesn't know that—and he will never, ever know". However, when such indulgences occur too often, it begins to generate significant internal tension, and his religiousness always brings him back to order: "I regret it, it bothers me, I get frustrated—at 5am, lying in my bed, I say to myself 'come on, cut it out, this isn't- it just isn't you!'"

Although Djibril tries to hold on to the culture and values that he inherited from his family—which primarily take a religious form—the orientation of his life towards several aspects of the culture and values of French society—which he feels a strong sense of kinship to as well—it also very complicated in practice, as in simply trying to manage his daily prayers in the context of his university studies and his rugby training:

It's hard... to be a Muslim in the sense of my father... and be French in my daily life, it's not easy... 4am, get out of bed, pray, go back to bed, go to class, then I have another prayer at 1pm when I'm in class—how do I pray?—so 'I'll pray when I get home instead', but then I get home, I'm tired and I have my homework, but I still have to go and pray, then I have my rugby training, I train between this-and-that time, I've only done two of my daily prayers, I get home from my rugby training with sore muscles, pain everywhere, but I still have to get up and pray, and you haven't prayed on time so your father will give you a hard time... well no, you see, it isn't easy reconciling the two.

In a particularly revealing anecdote, he explains how far this attempted reconciliation once went when preparing physically for joining a new rugby club, and what a double bind he finds himself in by wanting to satisfy his parents and the values they have transmitted to him while following his own passions and desires:

I was doing Ramadan, I had to go run, I had to go lift weights... I was so dehydrated. I went to see a doctor... when I urinated, it was red—it wasn't blood apparently, it was just severe dehydration... So I arrive [at the new club], it's the beginning of the season, I had started hydrating myself and so on, but I got a muscular injury right away, and it was because of Ramadan, my body was still dehydrated. You shouldn't push the machine right away. So yeah, religion and my daily life, it isn't easy. But if I get up in the morning and I say to my father "no, I'm not doing Ramadan because I have my training", it's... you see?

He is very concerned about his ability to continue satisfying these divergent demands placed upon him, especially when thinking about getting married and having children himself in the future:

*Biorn: And is it possible to continue doing these concessions over the long term? Will it mean you'll have to do sacrifices on one side or another that will be uncomfortable or difficult?*

Djibril: I think so... luckily we're allowed to marry a woman who isn't Muslim... but how will that work out in daily life? ...even if I have a child with a woman who is not a Muslim, what do I do with my child? How do I educate my child? She doesn't have the same ideas as me, how are we going to... you know... those kinds of central questions, I avoid them... because I don't want to impose a religious education upon [my children]... there are things I approve of, and things I don't, but in the religion you can't choose, it's either all white or all black. It's complicated.

Djibril's experience emphasizes the tension at the heart of this conflicted identity type and the divergent demands that his group affiliations place upon him: "I feel torn. Sometimes when I have to make choices I say to myself 'I have to please so-and-so, I have to please so-and-so, but maybe it's not what I want'. This summarizes well the internal tension that being caught between the internalized culture of origin and the

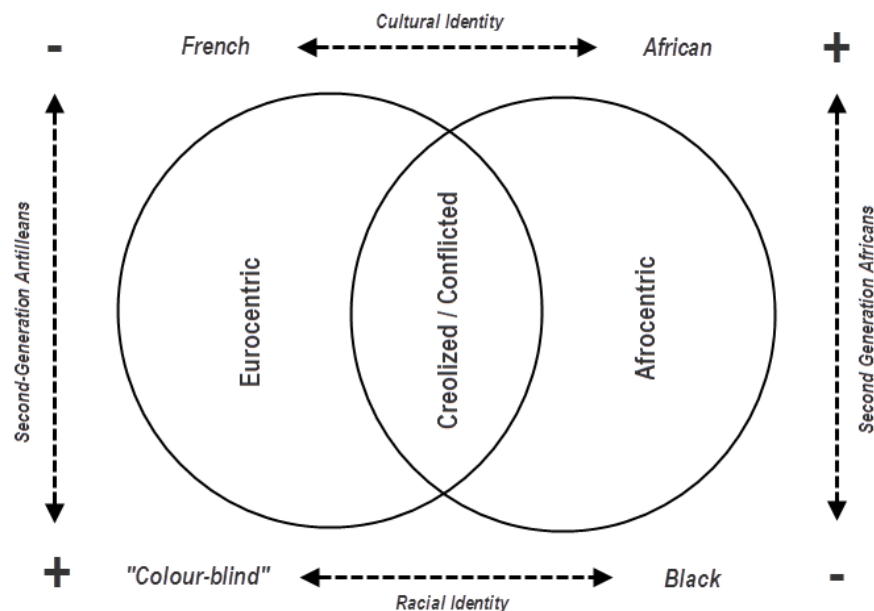
internalized culture of the host society. As Georg Simmel once emphasized: “As a rule an overlapping of group-affiliations cannot occur if the social groups involved are too far apart with regard to their purpose and in terms of the demands they make upon the individual” (Simmel 1955: 146). This internal tension is thus difficult to sustain over time and is likely to be eventually followed by a form of resolution.

### III. Concluding remarks

As this mapping of identification patterns has shown, there are both differences and similarities between the identity dynamics that second generation Africans and Antilleans experience. For the French-born African youth—especially when they have non-aculturated parents—the experience of being caught between two cultures with conflicting demands constitutes the most important dimension of their identity dynamic, where “two group identities may represent different and sometimes conflicting sets of norms and values; as different constituencies they may place competing demands on individual loyalty and resources” (Roccas and Brewer 2002: 92). This is conducive to different forms of identity management, where making sense of substantive cultural differences plays a central part in their subjective affiliation. This experience is further intensified by the salience of their racial features in French society, and their experience of being more racially discriminated than their Antillean peers. It is the combination of these two salient dimensions of their experience that leads African second generation respondents to be much more heavily represented in the Afrocentric identity category than Antilleans.

Among second generation Antilleans by contrast, the cultural differences between the islands and the metropole did not serve as the most prominent identity dynamic. Despite the existence of cultural differences between the mainland and the islands, these differences are less pronounced in the case of Antilleans and do not place such conflicting demands upon second-generation individuals. Furthermore, despite the very specific historical experiences of the islands, their culture is often framed as a French regional identity. As such, the cultural differences *per se* play a much more negligible role in the identity

dynamics of the second generation Antillean respondents, which explains that they are far more represented in the Eurocentric identity category than their African peers. However, despite their high levels of acculturation, the racial characteristics of second generation Antilleans often sets them apart from the mainstream population and plays a significant role in hampering their identificational assimilation. The most salient identity dynamic among second-generation Antilleans thus derives from the tension between their largely European cultural inheritance and their largely African racial background, which their status as highly acculturated racial minorities in France tends to exacerbate. It is this attempt to hierarchize and/or reconcile these European and African components of their identity that represents the core dynamic among the Antilleans second generation respondents. We summarize these patterns in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** Identification patterns of second generation Antilleans and Africans

As the figure illustrates, both Antilleans and Africans in the second generation are led to identify as they do as a result of their cultural and racial distinctness from the mainstream population. While a greater cultural and racial distance from the mainstream plays an important role in the overrepresentation of Africans in the Afrocentric identity type, the greater cultural and racial proximity of Antilleans to the

mainstream contribute to their greater representation in the Eurocentric identity category. As cultural differences wane more quickly among second generation Antilleans, they are more affected by the Racial Identity axis at the bottom of the figure, while the continued significance of cultural differences mean that African respondents are more highly driven by the Cultural Identity axis at the top.

These particular identity spectrums were highlighted because they represent the most salient dimensions along which the identification patterns of the two second generation groups could be classified. Clearly, the identities of the second generation Antilleans are also shaped to some degree by cultural differences, but these are far less conflicting than they are for the African second generation. Similarly, second generation Africans may not have inherited as stark socio-racial hierarchies as Antilleans, but the experience of French colonialism as well as the differential levels of societal development inevitably instill a similar polarization in them as well, despite the dominant trend for their identification being the aforementioned bi-cultural polarization. Beyond this different emphasis on cultural and racial processes, the fundamental differences that set the two groups apart are the African historical path of independence and emancipation, and the Antillean path of departmentalization and amalgamation with the French polity. These set the basis for fundamental orientations and postures of both groups towards the French mainstream, and as we will see in the next chapter, also plays a key role in their perception of each other and their group relations.

There were several examples in the respondents' experiences that closely followed the patterns identified by nigrescence or racial identity theory, where negative experiences initially bring a black social identity into focus, which the subject subsequently overemphasizes before integrating it into the self. Discrimination or differential treatment based on race was often the trigger that set such a process in motion, but it was also frequently caused by a simple awareness of racial distinctness that required a gradual coming-to-terms with their racial identity.

The more general model of ethnic and racial identity development—where a crisis pushes the individual towards a phase of exploration, which can result in resolution and commitment—thus proved even more applicable to the second generation respondents. As this model puts less emphasis on

internalized racial hierarchies and identity oscillations and allows for the inclusion of other processes than strictly racial dynamics, it was able to cover more of the variations observed in our empirical material.

A social identity theory perspective highlights the extent to which both groups seek to enhance the positive attributes of their Antillean and African identities. Part of this identity enhancement in the Eurocentric identity type consists in emphasizing Frenchness while downplaying blackness, while the opposite is true for the Afrocentric identity type. Given the racial proximity of Antilleans and Africans, and their disparate representation on the identity spectrum presented above, it seems likely that important aspects of this process of identity enhancement can also be uncovered through a closer examination of Antillean and African group relations and the social boundaries they draw.

## 10. GROUP BOUNDARIES

The following chapter identifies some of the most salient symbolic boundaries that Antilleans and Africans come up against in the host society and seeks to analyze how both groups react in the face of these boundaries. It also explores the symbolic boundaries that Antilleans draw towards Africans and vice-versa, and how individual members of these groups seek to either maintain or challenge them.

### I. Mainstream Boundaries

Two types of boundaries seem to stand out for the majority population in their dealings with Antillean and African respondents, which are similar to those identified by Lamont (2000). The first is a bright boundary based on citizenship and culture that distinguishes sharply between French citizens and immigrants. This sets a clear demarcation line between the French mainstream and Africans, while including Antilleans in the mainstream. A second boundary pertaining to racial differences is more blurred—reflected in the abstract universalism of the French Republic—and further minimizes the potential divide between the French mainstream and Antilleans.

The first section is devoted to showing how Antilleans and Africans are “framed” in France, i.e. how they believe that they are perceived by the majority population. We will subsequently discuss their accounts of the boundary-work that is undertaken on the part of the majority population to assert and enforce these boundaries in daily life.



## Framing Antilleans and Africans

When migrants settle in mainland France and raise their children there, they are confronted with the historically inherited boundaries that will frame them in particular ways depending on their group characteristics. Virtually all respondents agree that Antilleans and Africans are perceived differently in the country. One important distinction between the groups comes from the foreignness of individuals' names. Fatou points out that "first of all there's the name that differs... an African may be a Catholic, he'll take a Catholic name but he won't change his family name". Fatima, who has struggled to find durable employment in her field for many years, concludes that "I notice that as soon as they see my name, my last name, that's what complicates things. Whether I get a job or not has nothing to do with my knowledge, it's the first name and the family name". Esmeralda agrees that this difference favours Antilleans like her, as "my first and last name mean that there's no foreign connotation". As we have already noted this can for instance lead some employers to expect Antilleans to be white before they have had a chance to meet them for an interview.

The lighter skin tone of Antilleans was also often mentioned as one of their distinguishing characteristics, and was widely seen as being more advantageous for being socially accepted in France. Jenny for instance claims that "I have the impression that very dark Blacks... bother people more than lighter blacks". Esmeralda remembers how her French-origin landlord reacted when she first saw Esmeralda's new-born baby:

...she looked at him and said 'oh that's good, he's light-skinned, he'll have better chances in life'... Whether it's among whites or blacks, there really seems to be a value-judgement related to skin colour. The darker you are, the more miserable your social life will be, the lighter you are, the greater your chances are to succeed in life.

This was particularly apparent in the experiences of the mixed respondents, such as Mélanie, who has an Antillean mother and a French father: "for me it's always been an advantage, because I have the exotic side without the drawbacks, that is, the skin colour. I mean that isn't my interpretation. It's not what *I* feel, I think it's what *they* feel." Light-skinned Antilleans typically claim to always be identified as Antilleans in daily

life, and rarely complain about being framed negatively because of their race. As we saw earlier, some respondents like Francine could even complain about going unnoticed and being invisible.

The cultural differences were also often emphasized in the interviews. Jean-Louis explains that “the French find their footing with Antilleans, in behaviour, attitudes, all that. There are a lot of similarities. But the Africans live *à l’africaine*, they’ll do things that aren’t normal for the French... We’re really seen differently”. Alphonsine also mentions that “I’ve already heard people say that they don’t like Africans... OK, Antilleans are acceptable, but like, Africans no, because they find them too different or they don’t like their culture, or they’re worried that the African is too harsh”.

Many African respondents complain about the negative influence their faith has on how they are perceived by the French. Idriss explains “Now, after seeing all the terrorists and stuff on TV, French people are suspicious of Muslims... they’ll see a bearded Muslim, right away he’s a terrorist”. Mamadou broadly echoes this view: “people have such a view of Islam—for instance that we’re extreme, that we’ll cut the throats of our neighbours”. The non-Muslim respondents, whether African or Antillean, as a rule do not feel framed as negatively, even when they are highly religious.

Soraya—who comes from a Malian background—thinks that “it’s easier for a European to think that the Antillean is more accessible than the African” but emphasizes the deep-seated associations that French people still make towards the Antilles and Africa, which she thinks inform much of their attitudes and guide their behaviour:

...the islands... make you dream, there is this postcard side to it in which you recognize yourself more, whereas the picture of Africa that is sold is more family, misery, civil wars, and then they are former cannibals... I find that all those prejudices are still pretty present in people. Then again, when you socialize with people individually, they are surprized, because in the end you don’t correspond at all with the image that people have.

Most respondents affirm that Antilleans have a better reputation in France than Africans overall. Ingrid claims that “I think the Antillean is better thought of than the African, generally speaking”. For Christophe, the Frenchman “makes a very clear distinction. For him the Antillean, well yes, he’s French... but the Arabs and Africans... for him are people who are constantly swindling, who do all kinds of things.” According to

Ingrid, "Antilleans are maybe a little bit more integrated, are a little bit more mixed in the urban landscape... and they have the reputation of being joyful... they like partying, eating well—positive things in the end".

Pierrette was one of the few who emphasized one aspect where Antilleans may be less well-perceived than Africans, but thinks it is ultimately unfounded: "I've already heard 'oh, but you're Antillean, you're not like Africans, you're nonchalant and thin-skinned.' The African is maybe abrupt in her way of speaking, but she's a hard worker apparently. I don't think there's any difference between us at that level. I think the Antillean is just as hard-working". Souleymane thinks that the relatively positive view that the French have of Antilleans overall does not mean that they are always well-perceived or seen as equals:

Antilleans are second class French people, and Africans are Africans, that's basically how I feel when they distinguish between Antilleans and French people. Antilleans are Black, but they are still French... they are from home – well they are our holiday resorts basically – and the Africans are coming to eat our bread more than anything else. Africans are parasites and Antilleans are people we tolerate, we don't necessarily like them, but we tolerate them.

Some Antilleans also echo this view. Jean-Louis for instance, despite not having had any experiences of discrimination, feels that Antilleans are perceived as being different from the French mainstream: "France belongs first and foremost to the white French. Then you have the French, like us Antilleans, who can come and have our piece of the cake... we can taste with our fingers, but those who eat with forks and knives are white French people, that's for sure".

As this overview suggests, Antilleans are on the whole framed more favourably than Africans, where their names, racial features, cultural characteristics, religious background, and spontaneous associations set them apart from their African peers. However, Antilleans are not necessarily put on the same footing as the mainstream population and largely remain in a category of their own where they are put in a subaltern position to the majority population.

### **Mainstream Boundary Work**

In light of the boundaries that frame Antilleans and Africans, boundary work is also undertaken by the majority population to promote contact and access to resources or inhibit contact and skew this access

to resources. This boundary work can consist in treating Africans less favourably, displaying more social proximity towards Antilleans, and emphasizing categorical distinctions between the two groups.

A first instance of mainstream boundary work is reflected in discrimination in the labour market. The experiences of respondents in this regard varied widely between both groups. As our previous discussions of discrimination have shown, African respondents were more prone to report being refused employment or hindered promotion than their Antillean counterparts. Jean-Louis, who has never seen any particular problems with discrimination towards Antilleans nevertheless recognizes that Africans are often explicitly kept out or marginalized in the labour market, even when they have a higher education: “you have people... who have studied in Africa, they’re really very intelligent, they’re really cultured, but because they have a little accent from back home, or because they are too dark-skinned, they aren’t employed”. There were also examples of a seemingly greater reluctance to promote African workers. Fatou for instance remembers never being granted a promotion that she was formally supposed to be given in light of her seniority in the institution where she was employed:

It was my due, but I never received it. Never. And that's the thing in France that isn't right. When you deserve something, and you're of foreign origin—especially when you're Black—you don't get it. Arabs and others get it easily, but I don't know why people of African origin don't get that. They just don't give you your place.

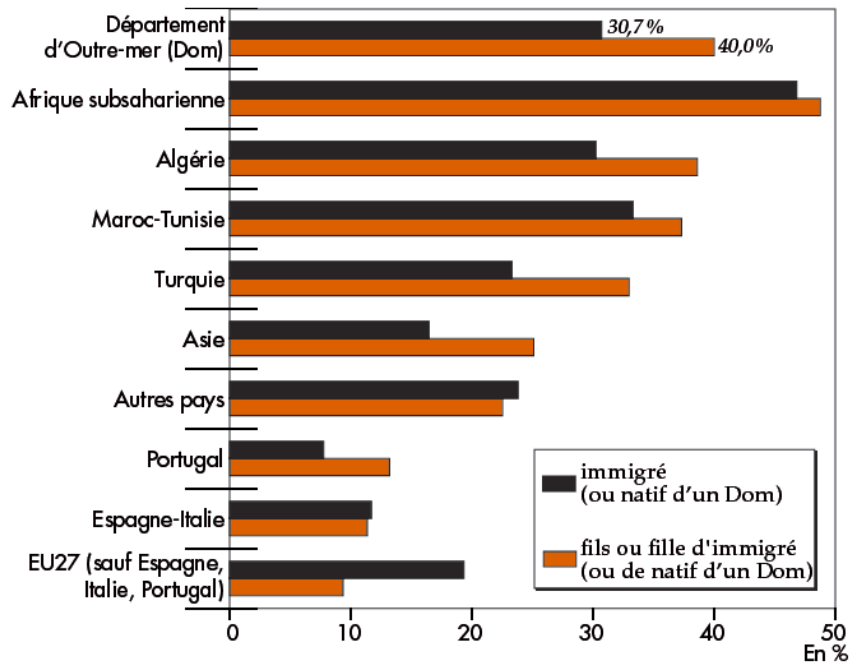
Antilleans by contrast reported experiencing discrimination less consistently. It was not uncommon for Antillean respondents to say that they had never experienced any discrimination whatsoever, but others claimed that the fact that they hailed from the Antilles did not shelter them particularly from the phenomenon, and that it was enough for them to be Black to be exposed to it. Despite the presence of both patterns in both generations of Antillean respondents, the self-reported experiences of discrimination in the TeO survey suggests that there are substantial differences between the generations in this regard.

As Figure 9 illustrates,<sup>82</sup> sub-Saharan African respondents report the highest levels of discrimination of all groups at slightly over 45% in both generations. Whereas the figure for DOM migrants

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<sup>82</sup> The data compiles the percentage of respondents from each group who responded 'often' or 'sometimes' to the question: "In the last 5 years, do you think you have experienced unequal treatment or discrimination?"

(30.7%) is high compared to most other groups, it increases even further in the second generation (40%). Antilleans are thus the likeliest of all second generation groups after their sub-Saharan African peers to report experiences of discrimination, and report skin colour as the cause in 73% of cases, while Africans do in 88% of cases.<sup>83</sup>



**Figure 9.** Percentage of migrants (in black) and their children (in red) who have had an experience of discrimination in the past 5 years (source: TeO)

Furthermore, Antillean respondents who might otherwise complain very little about discrimination can often have a very different experience when they travel outside of the Paris region. Marie-Ange, a 41 year-old Guadeloupean woman who had never had any experiences with racism and discrimination in Paris was shocked when two cafés refused to serve her and her family in a little mountain village in the south. “As far as racism is concerned, in Paris, there’s no problem” Ingrid says, but vividly remembers how out of place she felt when visiting a medium-sized city in the West of France: “I was walking in the street and

<sup>83</sup> As the figure shows however, this experience is not limited to Antilleans. Children of immigrants from post-colonial backgrounds, as well as from Turkish or Portuguese backgrounds all report higher experiences of discrimination than their parents’ generation. Of note is that 10% of the majority population also reported experiences of discrimination in the past five years for a variety of reasons (Beauchemin et al. 2010b).

you... had shopkeepers who walked out of their stores to look at us walk by". Many respondents from both groups had this experience of being singled out or treated in a bad manner when they travelled outside of the Paris region.<sup>84</sup>

In general however, many Antillean respondents experienced that their race was deemphasized in social interactions, and could even say they rarely gave their race a second thought in daily life—Alphonsine for instance claims: "oddly enough I think that 99% of the time I forget that I'm Black". Some respondents have also had the experience of other French people telling them that they did not consider them to be Black. This was for instance the case for David: "As a *métisse*, I've often been told 'no, but he's not Black!'", but this even happened to non-*métisse* respondents such as Francine, who had a similar experience with her mother-in-law: "We had a family gathering, and we were talking about race, foreigners, and everything, and she said she didn't like Blacks, and I said 'but I'm Black'; she said 'no, you're not Black'... I'm often told this. Being black isn't a question of colour, you know". Beyond skin colour, being black is a central part of Francine's identity and she experiences comments that deny her blackness based on a mere cultural reading of her behaviour as deeply hurtful to her.

Antilleans were often explicitly told by other French people that they saw them as different from African immigrants and their descendants. Martine came to mainland France from Guadeloupe in the 1970s and gradually saw how this distinction was made as African immigration developed: "In the beginning when I came here, Antilleans were all called Martinicans... It didn't bother me, it's a sister island, it doesn't matter, people just didn't know, I put it down to ignorance. And then after African immigration became a little bit more sustained [they began saying]: 'oh no, but with you it's not the same'". Paul for instance recalls when a friend from his engineering school confided in him: "he told me that his brother was maybe going to marry an African girl, and... that it bothered him. I asked him why and he said 'no, but you know Antilleans in the end are much closer to us, but Africans you know, this-and-that'". This illustrates how

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<sup>84</sup> This is important to keep in mind with regard to the limited applicability of the interview data to the country as a whole.

the French mainstream, in social interactions, can include Antilleans in an “us” that sets them both apart from Africans.

Several Antilleans also reported that people often become friendlier with them when they mention that they come from the Antilles. As Eugénie for instance explains:

...people ask me “where do you come from? You come from Martinique? Oh, Martinique! Rum!... Zouk!<sup>85</sup>” ...as soon as you say you're from an overseas department, it changes people's perception... if I had said I was from Mali—I don't know... I spoke with a guy who is Senegalese... and people always think he's Antillean, and he told me that he feels a change of attitude when he says he's Senegalese.

Eugénie's experience has thus been that disclosing her origin suddenly places her in a position of proximity to the French people she interacts with: “they don't ask themselves if you've been naturalized French... you're French, you're from Martinique”. But as she mentions, Africans can have the exact opposite experience to hers.

As we have seen throughout this study, the fact that first generation Africans typically don't have French citizenship puts them at a disadvantage in multiple ways. Martine claims that “since they don't have French citizenship—when they don't—I think that they are more exploited; exploited at work, exploited in housing”. In some cases, being born abroad can remain a strict demarcation line despite the fact that they have French citizenship. The fact that Iba came to France from Senegal as a young child can sometimes cause difficulties in the public administration despite the fact that he is a naturalized French citizen:

...in the French public administration, you're always brought back to the difference: “born in Dakar”... My brother had no problems getting married... My sister is born in Paris, she has never had any problem with her papers, with social security and everything, the only one who has problems is me.

Some respondents had also experienced overt forms of hostility where their foreignness was put on center stage. Keita for instance explains that “there are those who look at us and say—it's already happened to me—‘go back to your country, you're not from here’, but to build the country you needed our parents, and today they don't respect us, that's what's not good”.

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<sup>85</sup> A popular type of music in the French Antilles.

Other African respondents complained that members of the mainstream population could be disrespectful towards their religiosity. Mamadou has for instance sometimes been asked to justify himself with regard to his refusal to eat pork: “I explain myself, I give my reasons and so on, but in the end when they tell me ‘oh, it’s a shitty religion’ I just say ‘that’s your opinion, but you could at least respect what I do’. It ends there. Afterwards there are people who sometimes have a different view, they say to themselves ‘oh, alright, he’s a little bit mellower’”.

As this overview suggests, mainstream boundary work can consist in creating more social distance with Africans while minimizing it with Antilleans. This is done by emphasizing cultural and religious differences with Africans, while making salient distinctions between Antilleans and Africans on the grounds of shared citizenship or culture. Boundary work undertaken on the racial boundary primarily consisted in deemphasizing the significance of racial differences in general, by using skin tone as a heuristic and by encouraging Antilleans to not think of themselves as Black—thereby associating Blackness to Africans.

## **II. Antillean Boundaries**

This section explores how Antilleans react to mainstream boundaries, and how this affects their boundary work towards Africans. There is a clear pattern of maintenance of mainstream boundaries among several respondents, but many also seek to “broker” them—i.e. to challenge and negotiate their salience or legitimacy. We explore these two different approaches and examine the changes in how widespread they are in the second generation.

### **Mainstream Boundary Maintenance**

Some Antilleans engage in framing and boundary work that results in maintaining and supporting the mainstream boundaries outlined above. These patterns seem far more common in the first generation.



Some emphasize their proximity to French culture and history, and minimize the historical link between Africa and the islands. As Georgette for instance points out: “Undeniably, we have more of a French culture than we have an African one... When you go to Martinique, I'm sorry, but there's nothing African... in our life habits we don't have that culture at all... I only see one culture that we privilege, and that's that we live *à la française*, all our life habits are French”. Pétronille claims that she thought of herself as being more African before she actually interacted with Africans on the French mainland and realized the extent to which there was a cultural gap between Antilleans and Africans:

Actually... when I was in the Antilles... maybe I had the impression that I was a little bit African, or that there was a part of African, and when I rubbed shoulders with Africans I realized that we have nothing in common except the skin colour... we have more in common with the Parisian than with the girl who comes out of the Congo. I mean we don't have the language, the way of behaving, I mean, in the end I realized that we're very different... so I respect Africa, but it's true that I don't feel African.

Pétronille also emphasizes the religious distance she feels towards many Africans, a large portion of whom are Muslims in France: “we have many Africans who are Muslims... For a start the Muslim religion is sort of the antithesis of what I am, but on top of that, being black and Muslim is something that I fight against”.

According to Jenny, a large part of the distance that many Antilleans can put towards Africans also derives from considering that one is part of the developed world, which creates a feeling of superiority: “the Antillean has a sort of superiority complex, because after all they grew up in a French country, with all the facilities that derive from that, whereas African countries, for the most part, after gaining independence, have really struggled... many African countries are less developed—that is what the Antillean thinks”.

Honoré—a 30 year-old second-generation Guadeloupean—remembers how he was told repeatedly during his childhood that he was not African, and thus puts down his non-identification with Africa as simply being an Antillean cultural characteristic: “Antilleans say they're not African. It's cultural. So it's something that you hear so much when you're a kid that you don't know if it's true or not, but that's what you think in any case... My father has always told me that my grandfather wasn't African, my grandparents, my great-grand parents said that they weren't Africans”. But he also thinks that this distancing

from Africa also derives from having a mixed ancestry: “But I also have a part of my family that descends from the Indians of the Caribbean, and there was one of my great grandfathers that was a white Caribbean. So I think that also explains why people say ‘no we’re not African’.” This argument of mixed ancestry was common among many respondents who sought to emphasize the specificity of the Antillean racial *mélange*.

There were also examples of Antilleans who reproduced negative images and attitudes about Africans that had been passed down in their families. As Marie-Ange bluntly puts it: “For Antilleans, Africans are dirty, have many wives and children, and they’re only here for the social benefits or to take advantage of society”. Despite not endorsing this view herself, she claims—as many other Antillean respondents do—that they are widespread in her family.

There are several examples of how this Antillean boundary towards Africans was maintained and reinforced in the social interactions of daily life. The first and probably most contentious consisted in using historical grievances to erect a moral barrier between the two groups. Several Antilleans could thus blame Africans for having sold their ancestors to slavery.<sup>86</sup> This was often stressed by African respondents, like Patrick for instance, who points out: “they say we sold their grand-parents to the whites. So they don’t respect us. They respect the whites... but they don’t respect us”. Malik has had the same experience: “They say that... our ancestors sold their grand-fathers... they don’t like us”. Fatou has several Antilleans at her workplace and has received a similar comment from one of her Antillean colleagues: “There was one who was bugging me by saying: ‘you sold us, we will never forgive you!’”.

Some respondents mentioned an unwillingness of many Antilleans to socially mix with Africans. Pétronille claims that “It’s in the professional sphere that I’ve often heard that Antilleans didn’t like to mix with Africans”. But this did not seem to be limited to the professional sphere. Fatou remembers how tense the atmosphere was at the wedding of her daughter, who actually happened to marry an Antillean:

Before it was really odious. It was really flagrant, but now they tread more carefully. They still do it but they tread more carefully. I mean at the marriage of my daughter... they were all on one side and we were on the other, but we acted as if nothing had happened, we invaded the dance floor and then they came. They came

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<sup>86</sup> According to Pétré-Grenouilleau (2004) only 2% of deported Africans were in fact captured by Europeans (mostly by the Portuguese during the earliest period of the slave trade) while 98% were directly sold by African slave traders.

and danced next to us, and that was that. There were those who didn't understand why [he] would marry an African girl—an "African girl"!

Despite the experience of Fatou's daughter, many respondents also underscored the relative rarity of Antilleans and Africans intermarrying, and could even themselves express a reluctance at the idea, or mention such a reluctance among their family and acquaintances. As Pierrette for instance explains: "Among the girlfriends from my generation, when you were supposed to speak about marriage and so on it's true that marrying an African wasn't superbly well-perceived."

Specific self-presentation strategies were also used by Antilleans to set themselves apart from Africans. Mamadou explains that many second-generation Antilleans set themselves apart from their African peers in the neighbourhood by for instance using the departmental codes<sup>87</sup> of Martinique and Guadeloupe on clothing or tattoos:

*Biorn: Do you think there's generally a strong distinction made between sub-Saharan Africans and Antilleans in France?*  
Unfortunately yes, because they don't mix. You see it right away... they don't mix with Blacks, they enjoy staying with each other. The Antilleans openly assert it—that's the worst part...

*Biorn: How do they assert it do you mean?*

In the way they dress and hang out... you recognize them right away... with their hoodies and the "971" or the "972", "Martinique forever" and all that, and there are only Antilleans or only Martinicans.

The negative perception that Antilleans can have towards Africans can also be revealed when they are thought to be African in daily life. Jean-Louis explains that "If you go tell an Antillean that he's African... the majority won't take it well—'what are you talking about, I'm not African!'". From Ingrid's perspective, "as someone who is pretty dark-skinned, I've often been taken for an African... and every time it has irritated me because I don't want to resemble an African! [*she laughs*]... I can't stand that people take me for an African." Ingrid however recognizes that this reflects a desire to not be tainted by the widespread negative associations made towards Africans:

There is maybe also racism between Antilleans and Africans. Because, actually, Africans are pretty ill-perceived... so it's a little pejorative to say that you're African... So if somebody says you're African it associates you to an image that isn't necessarily... very positive... so you don't want to be mixed up with them. If somebody has that doubt [about you] it becomes a problem, because no—you're not like them, you know. So I think—I'm even convinced—that my parents had that racism towards... other minorities. I'm

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<sup>87</sup> Every French department has been attributed an administrative code that is for instance used in postal codes, but these are sometimes also brandished as territorial identities. The code for Martinique is 971 and for Guadeloupe is 972.

pretty much sure, and I think I've continued in the same vein, if you will. I felt—not superior to them, but not far from it... because I was French you know, not African.

This pattern of boundary maintenance that some Antilleans perpetuate towards Africans can thus be interpreted as an unwillingness to be tarnished by a stigma that is placed upon Africans because of their behaviour. However, as Franz argues, it is something that is also deeply characteristic of the colonial cultural inheritance in the Antilles:

You see less of this phenomenon in the Anglo-Saxon islands—even much less—but the French model is assimilationist, so the freed slaves who wanted to integrate have to consider the values of the settler as their own... The African represents... what they were before, and what they no longer want to be. And they forget what they are in order to become what they want... what they are supposed to be in a sense, that which is seen as good to be—and it's frequent in the colonies [that] there's a lot of words to define the individual by his degree of blackness or whiteness, because the whiter you are the better, the blacker you are the worse. And you have that in Brazil, in the French Antilles... and from then on, well, when you say you're African, you place yourself directly at the bottom of the list. Because it's one of the remains from the colonial society.

Céline Labrune-Badiane has pointed out how an assimilationist narrative was jointly pushed by the mulatto population of the Antilles and the French authorities to explicitly detach the history and the consciousness of the islands from their African heritage:

In the post-slavery Antilles engaged in an assimilationist process, the discourses—of republican authorities and local political elites—put Africa at a distance by stifling the historical ties, linked to slavery, and spread the image of a continent where violence and barbarism dominate, in opposition to Europe and France—the mother country, considered as civilized. For these elites, in majority “mulatto”, the goal is to be recognized as full-fledged French people to gain access to full citizenship. For the colonial authorities, the goal is to erect the “Antilleans” as a model of successful French assimilation, an objective to be attained for the colonized as a whole, especially Africans. (Labrune-Badiane 2013: 138)

Esmeralda is bothered by the fact that many Antilleans who picture themselves as not being subordinated to whites remain caught up in the colour hierarchy they have inherited by applying the same patterns towards Africans: “What I find sad is that they reject slavery, submission to the white man, but they take hold of that racism and transpose it on the African.” Franz largely echoes this, by pointing to the example of “how Haitians are deprecated, mistreated”, which he attributes to the fact that they asserted their independence. Franz believes that Africans are treated negatively for the same reason: “we simply reflect the rejection of our masters—our former masters, but who remain our masters by other means”.

Although we have not considered generational differences so far, the next section examines to what extent this crucial pattern of boundary maintenance is preserved between the first and the second generations of Antilleans.

### Intergenerational Differences

There are quite substantial differences between the generations regarding their involvement in this pattern of boundary maintenance. As Christophe explains “if I take the case of my father... it’s quite straightforward, they’re not even cousins, they’re not even brothers, he really takes a very resolute stance”. Malik has very cold relations with Antilleans of his generation, but stresses that “it’s more like a war in the parent’s generation”. Mamadou echoes this: “the worst are mainly those that are born in the Antilles”. From Fatou’s first-generation perspective, the generations are different in this regard “those who are born in France don’t have the same behaviour as those who are born over there.”

Fewer Antillean respondents engage in this boundary maintenance in the second generation; indeed, many second-generation respondents claim that distinctions between Africans and Antilleans are gradually decreasing—Jean-Louis for instance says “We the younger ones, we’re much more relaxed... being born in France, especially when you come from a neighbourhood where it’s coloured, you find commonalities and it works out much better. It’s natural, at least for me it’s natural. But for the elders, it’s not. There’s really a barrier”. Several second-generation Africans also emphasize this point, such as Souleymane, who points out that the shared experience of racial stigma has made distinctions between Africans and Antilleans increasingly illegitimate: “we have that experience of segregation, of black skin and all that, which leads us to not even make any distinctions like that. Antillean or African, it doesn’t matter, we have the same skin colour anyhow and people judge us the same, so we don’t pay attention to it.” Djibril also emphasizes the importance of having grown up together and sharing a similar environment:

The fact that we’re in the same area, that we come from the same environment, we ran into the same difficulties, we have the same trajectory, we maybe have the same tastes on many things, and... that brings us together... the parents are immigrants as well, yours come from the Antilles and mine from Mali, your father earns the minimum wage as a garbage collector, mine is a street cleaner, mine is a painter, we have the same

financial difficulties... it created a bond, and then it turns out that we also have the same skin colour, yes, but our trajectories make it easier for us to share a sense of affinity.

David thinks that emerging trends in the Antilles are also having an influence on the younger generation in France: “the current generation get along better, because there’s a sort of a return to the roots going on in the Antilles which is quite strong, and which is ensuring that all the work that has been done [to separate Blacks] is being dismantled.”

Some in the second generation are more cautious in their assessment, as they see many lines blurring but some also remaining. Alice for instance points out that “In my generation... Antilleans and Africans get together quite a lot”, but she thinks that some divides nevertheless persist: “I have girlfriends who say ‘you’re open-minded Alice, you date Africans too’ because they don’t date Africans for instance, because they say that maybe the family will be too stifling, or they are swindlers... or they have lots of women, or they have stuff hidden back in the country of origin”.

Keita thinks that the tension that remains in the second generation comes from the fact that “their parents talk them into it... as soon as they would see them hang out they’d say ‘get out of here, don’t stay here!’”. However, he also emphasizes that this is common in other groups as well: “It’s like you go to Black parents and they’ll tell you ‘don’t hang out with the Arabs’ and the Arab parents will tell the Arabs ‘don’t hang out with the Blacks’. But it’s the same thing... we grew up together. Then again, there are tensions, it’s like everywhere else.”

Others are more pessimistic about things changing substantially in the second generation. Vincent, who has one Antillean and one mixed African parent (but was raised as an Antillean), explains that “when I speak to my buddies, you hear ‘oh, the Africans!’ and your African buddies say ‘oh, the Antilleans’ so I’m caught a little in between you know... among men at least, Africans and Antilleans don’t like each other, but then again there are always the exceptions that confirm the rule”. He thinks the dividing lines largely remain in the second generation:

It’s the same thing, because we’re influenced by our education. So parents, in their way of thinking, in their way of speaking, you’ll feel that something isn’t right, and you’ll reproduce the same pattern, at one point or

another... Whether you're born here or there, you have the same mentality for me... Africans will keep on talking on their side, and Antilleans will keep on talking on their side.

Despite some evidence of remaining divides, many in the French-born generation experience a decreased salience of the boundaries between the two groups compared to the first generation. We now turn to the Antillean respondents (from both generations) who do not maintain mainstream boundaries.

### **Brokering Mainstream Boundaries**

While boundary maintenance was primarily undertaken by respondents with what we earlier called a Eurocentric identity type, there were also Antilleans who sought to broker mainstream boundaries and who were more commonly characterized by an Afrocentric identity type.

This is primarily the experience of Antillean respondents who don't experience the racial boundary in French society as particularly blurred, and feel deeply excluded as a result of their skin colour. They tend to affirm their racial identity more vehemently, and sometimes place it above their sense of belonging to France. As Josiane rhetorically asks: "When you look at my face, you see me outdoors, you take a glance at me—what will you think that I am? Will you think that I'm French? ...us Guadeloupeans, Martinicans, we're not from France!" As her son constantly gets stopped by the police for identity checks, and she feels there is no representation of Black people and Antillean culture in the media, she feels she can't identify with her French identity—"this is a white country" she claims. She thus emphasizes her ancestry above her nationality and distances herself from Antilleans who do the opposite:

There are those who reject [their African heritage] by saying "hold on, I'm not African!". Sure, but where do you come from? Do you come from France maybe? Wait a minute. Where did they go get your ancestors? ... We're slaves you know... we didn't come to Guadeloupe just like that. In Guadeloupe before, there were the Arawaks, they were Indians. We weren't there.

The social identity that elicited the greatest polarization in the identity chart ratings among Antilleans was "African": half of the first-generation Antilleans either rated their affiliation with Africa with a 0 or 1, while more than a quarter rated it with a 4 or 5. Marcel claims that "you can't dissociate Africa from the Antillean population, the person who dissociates them hasn't understood anything." Josiane exclaims: "For me it's

important! ... There are things where we are similar, so why would I deny it? I'm not blonde and blue-eyed! I'm not Gallic... I know that our African brothers are our African brothers. I can't deny my African race, it's not possible.”

David points out that mentalities among Antilleans have changed substantially over the years: “At the time of my father... it was very anchored in the mentalities—‘the closer you are to whites the better’—now I’d tend to say that... the closer you are to Blacks the better, among certain people”. This mentality shift has led to a greater sense of closeness to Africans than before: “there are Africans who realize that even if an Antillean has a French first and last name, his skin colour is there, and has an impact... I think Africans and Antilleans are far more united than before”.

As their proximity to French cultural norms does not necessarily lead them to be protected from differential treatment, some Antillean respondents can also challenge the boundary distinguishing French and immigrants. Martine thinks that many French people have a “double language” towards Antilleans. She for instance remembers one of her managers who “was a racist, that much is obvious, you could see it as soon as Jews, Muslims, Black Africans showed up”, but who at the same time claimed to treat Martine as an equal. Martine now reacts every time she hears mainstream French people distinguishing between Antilleans and Africans: “Somebody who says: 'but with you it's different, you're French' what does that even mean? What about the Africans who are French, they're French too! What does that mean? It's completely senseless!” She says people generally become speechless when she points out that many Africans kept their French citizenship after decolonization and that, as long-standing French citizens, they shouldn't be seen as being any different from Antilleans.

Paul has had a similar reaction to many of the things he has heard since he moved to Paris from Martinique. It was after the drawn out rioting in several *cités* across the country in 2005 that Paul began hearing people say things that made his vision shift: “I was in discussions where they’d say “it’s always blacks and Arabs that create mayhem” and it was the first time I was confronted by that... I wasn’t aware of that image people had of me, and at that moment something clicked”. Paul has never experienced any form of discrimination, but feels intensely targeted when something negative is said about minorities in general, and



has largely changed his social relations and his attitude as a result. He for instance started to distance himself from his former—mainly white—classmates: “I socialized with them far less, if you have that attitude towards minorities in general, it’s like ‘I don’t like blacks, but you’re alright’... that’s not going to work for me”. As we mentioned earlier, Paul had a French friend in school who told him how bothered he felt about his brother planning to marry an African girl. Paul told him “when you want to go out and have a drink, the African, the Antillean is alright, but when they come into the family there’s a problem”. This example illustrates how Paul rejects the assumed proximity with other French people when they simultaneously distance themselves from other minority groups like Africans, especially when he feels a point of commonality with them. Thereby he brokers the civic-cultural boundary that sets him apart from others by asserting his racial commonality with Africans.

Overall, Antillean respondents seem less involved in this type of boundary brokering than their African counterparts, perhaps in large part because they are less negatively framed. As Franz points out, despite his sympathy for Antilleans who seek to build bridges with Africans by challenging mainstream boundaries, he doesn’t believe this approach can gain any traction and succeed in the long run given the disparate appeal of both positions: “because faced with the choice, if you have to identify, will you choose to identify with all the external signs of success... even though you don’t look the part—or that which you look like, but which has all of the external signs of failure?”

However, the handful of respondents who were engaged in this form of boundary brokering were also characterized by Afrocentric identities that they seemed highly committed to. As social identity theory suggests, when individuals identify strongly with a particular social identity, that fact that it may be subjected to a negative social evaluation does not impact their self-evaluation to the same extent (Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 2002).

### III. African Brokering Patterns

Retaining a stronger identification with a culture of origin which emancipated itself from colonial rule, and being less prone to experience the same degree of social acceptance as Antilleans in France, African respondents were more likely to contest the way in which they were framed by the majority population, and to engage in boundary work that highlighted contradictions within mainstream boundaries, especially when these boundaries were upheld by Antilleans.

#### Brokering Mainstream Boundaries

Several African respondents engaged in boundary work focused upon the civic-cultural boundary. This type of boundary brokering was most common among the second-generation African respondents for whom civic belonging in France was largely a given. It primarily consisted in attempting to blur the bright civic-cultural boundary which had often been used to legitimize their outsider status.

Many respondents provided anecdotes where they reacted forcefully against attempts to try to put them outside the civic-cultural boundary that they considered was supposed to include them in light of their citizenship and their upbringing in France. Mamadou gives an example of how he pushes back when other French people frame negative behaviours from children of immigrants as being outsiders to France:

Sometimes people don't really say what they think... right now it's election time and they loosen up: "Yeah but come on, try to understand, sometimes when you see a couple of youngsters who speak to you like shit, you say... 'we don't talk like that here, we don't do that in our country!'" [Mamadou replies:] "Hey! Mister 'in-our-country-in-our-country'! Our country is your country! We're French you know... I'm not a foreigner!"

As this example illustrates, some seek to broker the civic-cultural boundary by highlighting its civic aspects over its cultural aspects. Some African respondents thus used their French citizenship to invalidate any attempt to frame attitudes or behaviours as culturally alien to France.

Souleymane provides another example of this form of boundary brokering. He tends to get very irritated when people ask about his origin, because he considers that his Frenchness should be the only relevant criteria about him: "it tends to get on my nerves, because... I really feel very, very French, so the

fact that people ask about my origin—I just feel it's groundless". In many cases Souleymane prefers to respond by giving his place of birth in France rather than his family's country of origin when people ask where he's from, to emphasize that he doesn't want to be put at a distance by other criteria than his citizenship and cultural affiliation with France. This example shows some respondents can insist on their civic and cultural belonging to France to push back against any attempt to frame them as different from other French people. Here, they reassert the supposed brightness of the civic-cultural boundary when other French people fail to give it enough importance. Hamady insists on this point as well, since he thinks that being accepted as a peer by the majority population is key for seeing oneself as a full-fledged citizen: "...when you're constantly being reminded of your ethnic origin, where your parents come from... you have a hard time to say you are French, insofar as... one wonders about your legitimacy as a Frenchman".

As most of these examples illustrate, racial criteria play a prominent role in the imputation of 'foreignness'. As such, a large part of African boundary brokering also focused upon brokering the supposedly blurred racial boundary by emphasizing how significant this boundary really was. Mamadou explains how African racial features in particular are routinely framed as a palpable criteria of 'foreignness' by the mainstream:

We're the darkest... we're basically considered like those who have just arrived... Because when they see a really dark African who is born here, despite that they still have prejudices you know—they say to themselves "maybe we should go ask that one a few questions to see what he does for a living" and a lighter [person] will have an easier time because maybe they say to themselves "perhaps he has a French parent".

Many second-generation African respondents emphasized the actual brightness of the racial boundary in French society, and the hypocrisy of the idea that it is in fact blurred. Despite being civically and culturally French, Soraya thinks that race generally trumps culture as far as Frenchness is concerned, despite her deep adherence to the official principles of the country that state the opposite:

I have a colleague who is Spanish, who has never felt like a foreigner—which is normal, she is white, she married a Frenchman, and culturally well, she has her Spanish part, and she's very proud to say that she's Spanish, and she's more anchored in France... I get the impression that as long as you're white, you're not foreign in France, but as soon as you have a different skin colour, you're foreign, whereas sometimes, through culture, because Africa was made up of former French colonies, there was a culture that was transmitted, sometimes I think that someone that comes from a former French colony is more French than another European that doesn't master that culture.

This form of boundary brokering typically took the form of pointing out discrimination and differential treatment on the part of the majority population to insist on the fact that the supposedly blurred boundary is in fact quite salient. Among many respondents, it could also take the form of emphasizing their racial identity and their racial pride, and refusing to deemphasize this to be more accommodating to the French ideological emphasis on the insignificance of race.

### Brokering Antillean Boundaries

This concern over racial pride largely informed the framing and boundary work that African respondents undertook towards Antilleans as well. In fact, several of them complained about the fact that Antilleans ‘deny their roots’ and lack racial solidarity with Africans. As Mamadou for instance explains:

Honestly, Black Africans get along well... but we have a great rivalry with Antilleans. Why? Because they deny their origins—because they do have African blood... They never mix with Africans... they speak in creole and stay among themselves... I don't understand why, but they feel, honestly, sincerely, superior to us... Apparently we have no culture, we are retarded... but Antilleans are more elevated than us, have more education than us and so on. They feel *French*, that's what it is.

One of the most common forms of boundary brokering that African respondents undertake towards Antilleans consisted in framing the supposedly blurred racial boundary in French society as being much brighter, and the civic-cultural boundary as being more blurred. This often meant stigmatizing Antilleans’ affiliation with France by framing it in racial rather than cultural terms—i.e. by presenting it as an adoption of white attitudes and behaviours—and by emphasizing Antilleans’ denial of their ancestry, which is where they considered that their culture and identity should be located. This framing thus largely consisted in emphasizing the primordial ties of blood and ancestry over those of culture.

When Antilleans would seek out intergroup categorizations that would favour them, such as suggesting that their islands were more culturally and materially advanced than Africa, many African respondents would react by emphasizing their own independence, rootedness, and sense of identity and pride. When Malik is confronted by Antilleans who place themselves above him he therefore insists on

Antilleans' colonial dependence, the fact that their names derive from the period of slavery, and that they don't know who their ancestors are:

Sometimes they say stuff and we just tell them flatly "I have a flag—the country where I come from has a flag. You don't have a flag. We managed to take our independence... you can't be independent, up to this day you're [colonial dependents]" That's what we answer them.

*Biorn: And how do they react generally?*

Oh sometimes they take it badly, sometimes there are those who say that they don't recognize their African side... They don't recognize that they're African. There are those who just flatly deny it, so when you tell them this you're better off avoiding it because it can go far... But what can you do about it? At least we're proud of where we come from... we know where our fathers come from, our grand-parents and so on...

Most African respondents who had had difficult experiences with Antilleans seemed to react most strongly towards the fact that they rejected their African ancestry and racial identity. When Antilleans would for instance point out that they had mixed ancestry, African respondents would often point to their physical similarity to Africans. Baïdy says that "when I speak about it with some they say 'we have many ancestries... so we don't know where we come from, but at least we know that we come from Martinique and Guadeloupe'" to which he responds "yes, but you're more African because you look African". Such attempts to build bridges with Antilleans would consist in emphasizing their common ancestry—as Baïdy again argues: "I don't think Antilleans and Africans should say such silly things to each other, we are all descended from the same ancestors so what's the point of tearing each other apart?". The primary dividing line is thus framed as being whether Antilleans accept their African ancestry or not.

In cases where Antilleans do not accept their African ancestry, African respondents could dismiss them as 'Bounties'. According to Keita, "for them we're not Blacks like they are. I don't know, they think they're superior to us... they're a little Frenchified, the Antilleans... an Antillean will never say that they come from Africa... they're Black, but they're not like us... they're 'Bounties' as we say".<sup>88</sup>

In cases where Antilleans did attach high value to their Blackness, Malik explains how Africans could use their higher degree of 'Blackness' as a form of symbolic capital when dealing with Antilleans: "in front of Europeans they will say they are proud, but [not] in front of us... We're superior Blacks compared to

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<sup>88</sup> As we saw earlier from the comments of Djibril or Iba however, this was not an experience that was necessarily specific to Antilleans, as Europeanized African respondents could also be labelled in this way.

them. I've known Antilleans like that, they say 'yeah, we're Black, we're above Europeans' and all that, but in front of us they don't act up".

Antillean respondents sometimes reported having precisely this experience of Africans expecting them to identify with Africa—"it happens almost exclusively with other Africans" says Franz. Jenny has also noticed how many Africans automatically assume a sense of commonality with her on racial grounds, which she thinks is a very uncommon attitude among Antilleans:

No, the only thing... that comes to mind is when... other Blacks call out to you because you're Black... that's something that gets on my nerves... and that [reaction] is typically Antillean I think... Africans have much more this notion of "brother" and "sister"... whereas we Antilleans are not at all like that... we can't stand when we're called "brother" or "sister"... it's not because we're both Black that we have something in common.

Esmeralda provides an illustration of how this expectation of automatic solidarity along racial lines has manifested itself in her experience—which she points out some Antilleans have also exposed her to—and how these assumed group ties came in conflict with the emphasis that she personally places on French norms of abstract individualism that she has consciously decided to follow:

...when I was a fine arts student I was the only black person. I even got remarks from Africans or Antilleans who told me "why did you choose that track?"...all the others were in sociology or in law... I even got racist criticisms "you are only with white people!" And I was still in my mindset where I didn't make any difference... I made a real choice to not follow any community... And I didn't understand, I said "I do what I want, you study law, that's your-" and I really had the feeling that it was brought to my attention that I belonged to a community... people who have that type of criticism really scare me because I tell myself that I'm a person with my own identity, my own story, I do what I want, I don't want to follow a- I belong to nobody you know.

As these experiences illustrate, the brokering of a brighter racial boundary serves both to highlight discrimination from the mainstream population that is otherwise hidden through the lack of emphasis placed on race, and to acquire greater solidarity and recognition from Antilleans by encouraging them to identify as blacks before identifying as French, as many feel that this choice is not as readily given to them.

In this boundary brokering context, several African respondents also emphasized the differences between Guadeloupeans—who are less racially mixed—and Martinicans as far as their expressed affiliation with Africa is concerned. As Patrick explains: "Guadeloupeans... have more of an African mentality than the... Martinicans... so they accept us [Africans] more than the Martinicans". Several Guadeloupeans could

describe the same boundaries, as Josiane for instance: “the African population is closer to the Guadeloupeans than the Martinicans. You ask any African, he’ll say ‘I don’t like Martinicans’ so you say ‘why?’—they say ‘they think they are white!’ And it’s true”. She recalls a revealing interaction she had with an African lady in this regard:

I once met a lady... who said “you’re Guadeloupean right?” I said “but how did you know?” she said “I spend time with both... and Martinicans are not like you” I say “really?” she says “yes, Martinicans think they are white”... I said “that’s correct, I come from Guadeloupe” and she said “that’s good, because you don’t deny your roots”...I don’t deny them... I don’t consider myself European. Europeans are white people. Am I white?

As this anecdote suggests, this type of boundary brokering is undertaken by both Africans and Antilleans with Afrocentric identities. African respondents who were closer to a Eurocentric identity on the other hand were more prone to broker mainstream boundaries.

#### **IV. Concluding Remarks**

Among the Antillean respondents, the framing and boundary work patterns seem largely divided along Eurocentric and Afrocentric lines. Antillean respondents with Eurocentric identity types are more prone to engage in mainstream boundary maintenance, while Afrocentric identity types are more prone to engage in mainstream boundary brokering. The African respondents were more prone than Antilleans to broker the mainstream boundaries than to maintain them, and thus had more in common with Antillean respondents with Afrocentric identities. In contrast to Antilleans however, second generation African respondents were also more prone to broker the cultural-civic boundary of the host society, where they sought to emphasize the importance of the civic aspect of inclusion to minimize the weight given to cultural aspects in defining inclusion.

The chapter also highlighted the tensions that many study participants reported between Antilleans and Africans in France. A substantial part of this can likely be explained by the social closure of the majority population and the attempt to gain access to valued material and symbolic resources. The specific patterns

it takes also seems to be informed by the deep historical and cultural forces that structure social relations in the societies of origin, which continue to affect the second generation despite a simultaneous acculturation to mainland France.

Another potential explanation which derives from the premises of social identity theory suggests that this tension is an instantiation of what Judith White and her colleagues have called “horizontal hostility” (White and Langer 1999; White, Schmitt and Langer 2006), where a minority group is more likely to express unfavourable attitudes towards an outgroup that is similar but more mainstream than the minority ingroup. This phenomenon, the authors argue, is thought to derive from a minority group’s valuation of their social identity, which can even occur when the group is stigmatized. This could account for the motivations of the African respondents. As far as the patterns among the Antillean respondents are concerned, the findings of Rozin et al. (2014) that groups that are positioned just at the edge of a social boundary but within a positively valued group will tend to exaggerate their membership in that particular group seems to describe the social psychological dynamic underlying many Antillean respondents with Eurocentric identity types.

An additional point to stress in conclusion to this analysis is the centrality of race to the patterns that we have observed. First, as we have seen, race plays a decisive role in the position it places Antilleans and Africans in relation to the majority population and in the ascription of foreignness from the national community, even though these patterns affect Antillean respondents far less. Second, regarding the role of race in the assimilation process in France, the experience of being racially different from the mainstream population entrenches an awareness of a categorical difference that renders identification with the mainstream more difficult. Race is often seen as a vector for assigning cultural attributes “from above”, but this chapter also highlights how race is used ascriptively “from below”, where individuals are encouraged to identify with cultural attributes framed as being racially primordial. In fact, the experiences of many Antillean respondents show how race functions as an “identity hook”, where they are solicited by other minorities to identify or affiliate themselves with an African identity despite the sense that many have of



being formally alien to it, and having lived in separate societies where they have followed a different cultural path as a group for centuries. This process is similar to the racial mechanisms at work among West Indian immigrant children in predominantly African-American areas in the United States (Waters 1999).

This positions Antilleans in a very peculiar way with regard to the majority population and the African-origin minority. As we have seen, despite experiences of discrimination, they are also encouraged in many ways by the majority population to identify with France on cultural grounds. On the other hand they are also solicited to identify on racial grounds by the African population. This puts many Antillean respondents in a position of psychological in-betweenness, where they are pressured to pick a side on which they can found their fundamental psychological and cultural orientation. Here, subjective factors may in the end matter more than structural ones. Depending on the perceived symbolic resources that individuals can muster by picking one side or another, and also as a function of their ability to embody these identities comfortably, they will orient themselves more to one side or the other.

## 11. CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, we bring together and discuss the key findings from the study. We begin by discussing the extent to which the three potential assimilation scenarios between Africans, Antilleans and the mainstream (see Figure 1) are supported by our findings. We then explore the key factors that the study identified that help explain these patterns. Finally, we discuss the relevance of central mechanisms postulated by segmented assimilation theory in the context of this study.

### I. Assimilation Patterns

#### Summary of Assimilation Patterns

As was initially suspected, the assimilation outcomes of second-generation Antilleans and Africans reflect aspects of all three of the scenarios that we initially envisioned in the introduction: Assimilation, Racial Segmentation and Cultural Segmentation.

The Assimilation (or Boundary Blurring) scenario, where all groups gradually converge in the second generation, is supported by part of our findings. It is clearly the case that children of Antilleans and Africans as a whole both experience a greater convergence with the mainstream population in the second generation, as far as their educational and professional attainment is concerned. Unsurprisingly, they are also far more acculturated to the norms of mainland France than the generation of their parents, and both groups are more likely to think of themselves as French than their parents' generation. The intermarriage rates show lower rates of endogamy in the second generation for both groups. All this evidence points to a gradual *rapprochement* of both of these groups with the majority population, which is in keeping with what the Alba-Nee assimilation model would predict.

However, despite these general trends in educational and professional attainment, there is also evidence that is suggestive of patterns of segmentation. We distinguished between cultural and racial segmentation. In the cultural segmentation scenario, Antillean descendants assimilate to a higher degree into the mainstream than their African peers, while in the racial segmentation scenario, children from African and Antillean backgrounds converge with each other to a greater degree than they do with the majority population.

The racial segmentation scenario is supported by part of our findings. As we noted in Chapter 10, reported instances of discrimination increase sharply among Antilleans in the second generation, nearly reaching the frequency of their African peers. Many respondents also underlined a growing sense of commonality between Antilleans and Africans in the second generation which largely results from growing up together and facing the same difficulties. There is also an emergence of a shared sense of Blackness despite some remaining cultural divides and different degrees of identification with the mainstream. This emerging common identity seemed to be more common among Guadeloupean than Martinican-origin Antilleans. As we also saw, there are parts of the Antillean population that grew up in immigrant-dense suburbs that are converting to Islam, which is also an indication that a portion of the second-generation Antilleans might not be on a converging course with the mainstream. We can thus also see patterns of convergence between the Antillean and African second generation around sharing a racial or religious identity in common that may set them apart from the mainstream.

However, there is also evidence for the cultural segmentation scenario. This is for instance reflected in the educational attainment data we presented in Chapter 8, which showed that young men from Sahelian backgrounds are twice as likely as the majority population and DOM children to drop out of school prematurely, but also have three times higher unemployment rates as well as higher rates of delinquency. This suggests that a larger portion of second-generation Sahelians are at risk of downward assimilation and involvement in an oppositional culture on the margins of society. In addition to higher rates of achievement in school and on the labour market, second-generation Antilleans also identified with France to a larger degree than their African peers. Several respondents also pointed to persistent social

divides between Antilleans and Africans, and indicated that Antilleans would often socialize separately from Africans and other children of immigrants, even when growing up in the same neighbourhoods. Inter-marriage with the majority population also occurs at much higher rates among Antilleans, and while marital choices become less endogamous among African descendants, they remain highly culturally and religiously codified. Identification with the mainstream was also more common among Antilleans, and there were even examples of an explicit distancing from Africans among several Antillean respondents. As we have seen this seemed more common among Martinicans than Guadeloupeans. These patterns are suggestive of the cultural segmentation model where divides and disparities largely remain between Antilleans and Africans in the second generation, and where Antilleans assimilate more substantially.

Although it would be difficult in the framework of this study to draw any conclusions about how widespread these patterns are, or how they may be evolving over time, we can nevertheless make some remarks on the variables that seem to undergird them.

### **Summary of Underlying Causes**

A variety of structural variables obviously contribute to shaping many of the patterns that we have observed. The segmentation patterns we have observed can be partly explained by the characteristics of the neighbourhoods that several respondents of both groups grew up in, where the disappearance of manufacturing jobs, the decline of structures of working-class life and the increased concentration of immigrant-origin populations have gradually led to the emergence of a series of social problems ranging from elevated school drop-out rates to increased welfare dependency and crime. As such, for many of these respondents, there were ample opportunities when growing up to engage in delinquent behaviours and/or adopt adversarial stances towards the mainstream society, which could create significant obstacles for upward mobility or even open a path towards downward assimilation. The risks of these potential outcomes nevertheless seemed to be reduced by educational achievement as well as the intactness of family structures and the influence of parental authority. While both groups were confronted with high

risk factors in these situations, it nevertheless seems that many African origin families confronted more difficulties in avoiding these negative outcomes than Antilleans.

In addition to these structural variables, there were also variables specific to the groups themselves which were influential upon these outcomes. Part of the reason for the greater difficulties that African families faced derived from substantial cultural differences between the two groups. The family structure and dynamics within Sahelian families differed sharply from Antillean families with regard to age and gender hierarchies, authority, the reliance on the extended family, the orientation towards the society of origin, and the emphasis put on the transmission of social, cultural and religious practices. Furthermore, the historical trajectories of both groups—with regard to colonialism and race relations as well as their divergent political trajectories towards independence on the one hand and departmentalization on the other—also influenced the general stance adopted towards the French mainstream. These historical legacies also impacted acculturation dynamics in both groups, the internalization of French mainstream norms being far easier as a rule for Antillean than African children, which in turn could facilitate their assimilation.

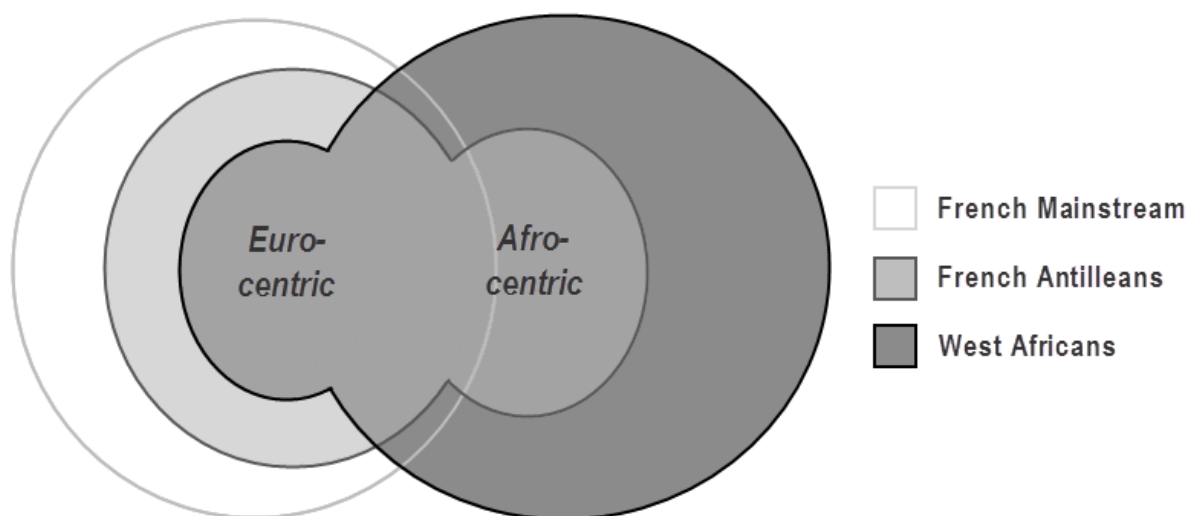
Racial variables were also influential on these patterns. The racial distinctness of Antilleans and Africans from the mainstream also meant that both groups were subjected to experiences of discrimination. Despite survey evidence pointing to both groups having had such experiences, it does so over long time spans and provides little evidence regarding its frequency or its severity. In the interview data, discrimination and feelings of rejection from the mainstream were more common among African respondents than Antillean respondents. The variations among Antilleans in this regard were however stark, for a variety of reasons, but chief among these seemed to be their skin tone (which served as a proxy for nationality) and the extent to which they adhered to a Eurocentric identity.

The Republican integration model also had an influence on the assimilation patterns of both groups. Despite the changes it has undergone over recent years, this model still provides a space for children of immigrants to think of themselves—as well as for others to think of them—as French, which is perhaps less of a given in other European countries with less universalistic conceptions of their nation's polity.

Similarly, by officially deemphasizing ethnicity and race, it also grants legitimacy to colour-blind attitudes and behaviours, and takes wind out of the sails of ethnic and racial advocacy, which decreases the emphasis upon ethnic and racial markers in intergroup relations in general. In this sense, the Republican model on the one hand can have a socially cohesive effect and favour some degree of identity convergence between groups. On the other hand, the model also puts a lid on what some see as legitimate grievances which cannot be adequately aired. Furthermore, the implicit cultural content of the republican model can also be seen—despite its universalistic self-image—as too narrow for other groups, which may therefore resist adapting to it. As such, the Republican model has both socially cohesive and socially divisive aspects. It can tone down racial differences to some extent and make French identity more accessible to racial minorities who deeply internalize its implicit cultural norms, but also less accessible for immigrant groups that may have a larger cultural gap to bridge and a tangible experience of discrimination. This Republican model therefore tends to be much more conducive to the incorporation of Antilleans than Africans.

These structural, cultural, racial and ideological factors also institute a particular social dynamic between the two groups which is an additional factor to consider here. The majority population erected fewer barriers towards Antilleans than Africans, and a portion of the Antillean population seemed prone to maintain their more favourable group position to some extent in the second generation. However, many Africans sought to challenge this group position by seeking to instill more Afrocentric identities in their Antillean peers. This, in addition to the experiences of discrimination that Antilleans may face or the historical grievances that they may develop towards France, can also contribute to patterns of racial segmentation in the Antillean population.

Taken together, these factors nevertheless suggest that on average second-generation Africans face much greater challenges in the assimilation process than their Antillean peers. However, some Antilleans, given the social circumstances in which they grew up, instances of racial discrimination to which they were exposed, or simply through the sense of commonality they may have with Africans, instead came to develop an Afrocentric identity type, whereby they primarily identified on racial grounds.



**Figure 10.** Summary of African and Antillean assimilation patterns in the second generation

These general patterns are depicted in Figure 10. The varying degrees of overlap of Antilleans and Africans with the mainstream population in the figure illustrates the Assimilation (or Boundary Blurring) pattern. But both Antilleans and Africans also follow distinct tendencies depending on their Eurocentric or Afrocentric orientation. Whereas second generation Antilleans who are closer to a Eurocentric identity type (the larger light-grey circle) move largely into the mainstream, a smaller portion of Afrocentric Antilleans (the smaller light-grey circle) do not, or even distance themselves from it. Among second generation Africans, we can see a similar pattern, but largely inverted compared to Antilleans: a small African portion affiliated to a Eurocentric identity type (smaller dark-grey circle) moves closer to the mainstream, whereas a more substantial portion which is closer to an Afrocentric identity type (larger dark-grey circle) does not, or even moves away from it. As such the figure seeks to represent both the patterns of assimilation and convergence, and those of segmentation due to the social, cultural and racial dynamics summarized so far.

While recognizing the presence of these three patterns, the Cultural Segmentation model nevertheless stands out as one of the most prominent throughout our analysis, and seems to explain most of the observed differences between Antilleans and Africans. However, a large part of this pattern may

only be a temporary phenomenon that might not sustain itself over time. While it may be difficult to determine how ethnic distinctions are likely to evolve over time, it seems clear that through the dynamics of immigration and demography, the Antilleans in mainland France will come to represent an increasingly small proportion of the country's black population. While this may mean that French Antilleans may over time not "remain powerful enough to trump the association between blackness and outsider status"—to return to the issue raised by Michèle Lamont in the introduction—it might also signify that Antilleans might be absorbed within the sub-Saharan descended population in greater numbers. We can of course not exclude that this may only be a 'bump' on the path to gradual assimilation, but there are distinct concerns that might make this unlikely in the short or even the medium term.

## **II. Theoretical Considerations**

### **Segmented Assimilation Theory in France**

This study has also sought to examine the relevance of the segmented assimilation framework in the French context and identify the salient societal segments and social dynamics that could influence the acculturation and assimilation patterns among our respondents. Although segmented assimilation theory was developed to account for mechanisms characteristic of U.S. society, and despite the criticisms it has been subjected to, some of these same mechanisms do also seem operative in France, whether it is an adversarial subculture to which children of immigrants are more prone to be exposed, the protective nature of some degree of ethnic retention despite the absence of a dedicated ethnic economy, or the existence of racial barriers to advancement. But these take on a different expression in the French context.

We have already noted the similarities in French and American histories of immigration and assimilation. Several structural changes in the economy and society that segmented assimilation theorists see as a salient factors for immigrant incorporation in the U.S have also taken place in France—whether it is deindustrialization, the growth of the service economy and the segmented labour market. Furthermore,



the social and economic dislocation of urban areas where many low-skilled immigrants settle also negatively affects the assimilation prospects of newcomers and particularly their children.

There is also an oppositional culture present in many poor immigrant-dense suburbs which vehemently rejects the norms of mainstream French society, and into which many children of immigrants run the risk of getting involved. Despite the efforts of the state to target schools in these areas for increased funding and resources, the quality of the educational environment is clearly affected by the high concentration of immigrant families and the local oppositional subculture. Unable to rely upon the local environment to help socialize their children, or on the schooling environment to provide them with upward mobility, an enormous burden is put on families to protect them from the harmful influence of the street, and to succeed in school.

The segmented assimilation literature puts a strong emphasis on the potentially harmful effects of acculturation and the protective effects that ethnic retention can have for avoiding the problems resulting from dissonant acculturation or acculturation into the underclass. In this study, ethnic retention had some beneficial effects, but also created some problems of its own.

As we have seen, many first-generation African respondents had very strong expectations regarding their children's obedience and conformity to parental expectations. This could even result in parents sending their children to Africa if they began exhibiting downward assimilation patterns, or even in some cases shortly after their birth to ensure they would retain their culture of origin while keeping the benefits of French citizenship. Although some have suggested that the stringent educational practices and expectations of parents may at times backfire when their children don't see their authority as legitimate, for most respondents that we interviewed parental expectations and authority generally seemed to have a protective effect as far as involvement in the local oppositional culture was concerned.

Ethnic retention also seemed to be associated with some positive outcomes for many respondents from both groups, especially when it meant greater contact with their societies of origin. This helped them in their identity construction by providing a better understanding of their parents' cultural backgrounds and contextualizing the circumstances in which they were brought up in the host society. By being

systematically perceived as French in Africa, it could also often help them understand the myriad ways in which they in fact were French to which they might otherwise have been oblivious, and thus assist them in their identity construction as French people with ancestral roots abroad.

Another example of the protective effects of ethnic retention is the high religiousness of many African respondents. Very often, heightened religious activity seemed to be one of the most powerful and reliable ways to protect respondents from involvement in the transgressive behaviours of local gangs. It could also help them find more structure and meaning in their lives and keep a strong cultural bridge with their parents despite acculturation. However, paradoxically, this religious activity could also make their adaptation to the secularized lifestyle of the surrounding society far more challenging, simply because of numerous conflicting behavioural norms. Furthermore, the negative perception of Islam and the strong secularist expectation within the mainstream population is likely to make this religious affiliation an obstacle for upward mobility for many second-generation Africans.

Interestingly, although the Islamic identity of the second generation Africans can technically be considered a form of ethnic retention, it is more accurately a novel collective identity that develops in the host society. In fact, the heightened Islamic activity of many Sahelian children does not solely or perhaps even principally derive from parental cultural transmission, but rather from a religious activity that has more local origins, in large part through the influence of the more established patterns of the larger and more long-established North African population. As such, although the Islamic practice of many second generation Africans remains culturally in tune with parental norms and expectations and can often be seen as a preservation of them, this Islamic activity can also diverge from it in many ways, by for instance emphasizing certain practices over others, and is thus also largely a product of acculturation to local norms developed through previous immigrant waves.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> The emergence of the specific forms of Islamic activity present in France is more complex than a simple amalgamation of immigrant practices as it also involves a broad network of ideological currents promoted by state and non-state actors alike; for an overview, see Kepel (2012b).

For second generation Antilleans, Islam is thus far more of an alien cultural segment that is characteristic of the local environment in which they raise their children. As we have seen, it is not unusual for children from Antillean backgrounds to convert to Islam as a result of the religion's normative status in certain suburbs with large immigrant populations. Although it can have the same protective effects for second generation Antilleans as it does for their African peers as far as the local adversarial subculture is concerned, it also creates significant dissonant acculturation patterns between Antillean parents and their children. It may also increase the barriers that children from these families are likely to face in the host society, compared to the experiences they may have had if they had retained a more Antillean cultural identity. These Antillean experiences are clearly suggestive of a form of segmented assimilation, where the segment into which the children of newcomers assimilate derives from the religious imprint of Muslim immigrants rather than a long-established and racially marked minority, as in the U.S. context. The highly polarized question of the status of Islam in France combined with territorial segmentation, high rates of religious endogamy, and the development of radicalism in the younger generation seems likely to make this a highly salient aspect of immigrant incorporation in future.

### **Racial and Religious Segments and Future Research**

Segmented assimilation theory puts a strong emphasis on the role of race in the assimilation patterns of second generation immigrants. In the case of black immigrants to the United States, the primary concern has been the prospect of an acculturation of newcomers into the established black underclass. Despite the existence of an adversarial subculture in poor urban areas in France, its greater racial heterogeneity and immigrant origin in the French context means that children of African or Antillean migrants to France face different circumstances than black migrants to the United States.

Many of our findings suggest that cultural and religious boundaries have a greater significance for immigrant assimilation in France than they do in the United States, where race is more salient. As Alba and Foner point out in their comparative study of immigrant integration in Europe and North America:

Distinctions based on colour certainly have an impact in Europe and Canada, yet the United States is in a class of its own. Available data on residential segregation and mixed unions indicate that in the United States skin colour is a greater divide and barrier to integration for people of African ancestry, including those of immigrant origin, than it is for their counterparts in Western Europe and Canada. (Alba and Foner 2015: 120-121)

The experiences of several respondents—especially among light-skinned Antilleans—do suggest that race can lose much of its salience in French social life. While a colour line certainly does exist, it seems to be more blurred than in the United States, especially for blacks who are perceived as mixed.

However, many of our African respondents and some of our Antillean respondents have had experiences of differential treatment in their daily lives on the basis of race, which may influence their acculturation and assimilation patterns. But as we have seen throughout the study, in addition to this racial ascription ‘from without’, race also matters because of ascriptive processes ‘from within’ the Black population, where race serves as a primordial ‘identity hook’ which the African population can use to influence the identification of their Antillean peers. This suggests, following previous research (e.g. Bean, Stevens and Wierzbicki 2003), that in the case of migrant populations that are racially distinct from the majority population, identificational assimilation is largely decoupled from the other dimensions of assimilation that Milton Gordon identified, and may not occur in the same way as it did for European immigrants.

This also points to the relative obduracy of racial and religious population differences in the assimilation process. As Glazer and Moynihan already underlined in the early 1960s: “Religion and race seem to define the major groups into which American society is evolving as the specifically national aspect of ethnicity declines.” (Glazer and Moynihan 1963: 314). As France gradually moves towards a similar form of enduring pluralism along racial and religious lines, more research is needed on the development of this pluralism, and the challenges it might pose not only on the country’s particular brand of universalism, but also on the assimilation prospects of the children of immigrants. While race has long been a central focus of American sociological research on immigrant assimilation outcomes, which French research could greatly benefit from emulating, the religious dynamics identified in this study call for more focused sociological attention on the potential role that a more explicit religious segmentation of society—in

interaction with racial and religious processes—may play in creating relatively obdurate social segments which have significant consequences on the acculturation of children of immigrants.

Future research which would provide further insights into the dynamics underlying the racial segmentation pattern outlined earlier would advantageously focus more exclusively on the experiences of young Antilleans and West Africans from working-class backgrounds in immigrant-dense suburbs, perhaps drawing more directly on a sample of dark-skinned Antilleans to better understand the role race might play for Antilleans in those particular social circumstances. Such a project would also provide a fuller understanding of the process of acculturation that seemingly underlies the religious conversions that this study has identified among Antilleans who grow up in such areas. This would also help better identify the circumstances in which more radical Islamic outlooks are developed—more akin to an explicitly reactive ethnicity—which has already been shown to be more widespread among younger Muslims in France in downtrodden urban areas (El Karoui 2016).

An important contribution of this study has been in emphasizing the commonalities and differences that Antilleans have with their West African-origin peers from immigrant backgrounds. It has also demonstrated the value of comparing minority groups with shared characteristics, not only in their respective relations to the broader society, but also in their interactions with each other. Such an approach can help reveal many of the underlying assimilation challenges that can otherwise be difficult to identify if focusing exclusively on experiences with the broader society. More research of this type, for instance consisting in a comparison of sub-Saharan Africans of Christian and Muslim backgrounds could provide a more focused analysis of the role that religious variables play compared to racial ones, not only insofar as they may matter in the adaptation to the host society but also in the social dynamics between these minority population themselves, which in turn have feedback effects on acculturation and assimilation prospects.

Finally, some remarks need to be made on the relevance of using the segmented assimilation paradigm outside of the society in which it was initially developed. As this analysis has made clear, despite the structural similarities between France and the United States, there are also many fundamental

differences between the two societies which seem to influence the assimilation prospects of the children of immigrants. As such, segmented assimilation theory cannot simply be exported “as is” to other societies. While some have casted doubt upon the most pessimistic predictions of the theory and on the accuracy of some of the mechanisms it hypothesizes, its general approach remains highly useful insofar as it seeks to identify societally specific assimilation barriers that can disproportionately affect different groups, and which can lead to significant deviations from the assimilation scenario over time. It can also help to account for the salient role that cultural segments outside of the mainstream may play in immigrant assimilation and in potential segmented outcomes, which other assimilation theories fail to adequately account for.

However, in order to achieve this, the theory clearly needs to be tailored to capture the specific assimilation barriers and cultural segments of the society under study. I would thus encourage the undertaking of similar studies in other immigrant societies, driven by a “light” form of segmented assimilation theory geared towards identifying social mechanisms and segments that might be more disadvantageous for some groups and affect them more frequently. This could help to more systematically compare the structural and cultural barriers of various immigration societies—including the specific nature of those in the United States—compare the challenges that similar groups face within them, but also highlight emerging patterns of deviations from assimilation trajectories into the mainstream. Whether these subsequently turn out to be mere “bumps” on the path towards assimilation, or more durable and conflict-ridden trends of segmentation—the true test of a “stronger” segmented assimilation framework—can only be empirically assessed over the longer term.

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# Appendix 1. Interview Guide

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. *If born outside metropolitan France:* At what age did you come to France? \_\_\_\_\_
    - *If African:* Do you have French citizenship? Are you thinking of acquiring it? Why?
4. Civil Status: ☐ Married ☐ Common Law ☐ Divorced/Separated ☐ Single
5. Do you live: ☐ Alone ☐ With Partner ☐ With parents ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Highest diploma: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you have children? ☐ Yes ☐ No
  - a. *If yes:* how many and how old are they? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Do they all live with you?
9. Do you have any brothers or sisters? ☐ Yes ☐ No
  - a. *If yes:* how many and how old are they? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Father:
  - a. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Highest diploma: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Mother:
  - a. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Highest diploma: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## LIFE HISTORY

### First generation respondents:

12. What would you say was the initial impetus for moving to France?
13. Had you ever been in France before?
14. Did you think of your move as permanent or temporary when you moved? Why?
15. Did you come by yourself or with your family?
16. Have you been back to your country since you left?
17. Do you ever think about returning and living there?
18. What do you miss the most about your home country? Is there anything you are happy you left behind?
19. Can you tell me what the process of settling in France was like?
  - a. Did you have any friends or relatives here?
20. How would you describe the area where you settled at first?
  - a. Why did you end up settling there?
  - b. Would you have liked to settle somewhere else? Why?
  - c. Do you still live there now?
    - If yes: Would you like to continue living there? Why?
    - If no: How is your current neighbourhood different?
  - d. What did you like the most about this neighbourhood? The least?
  - e. What different ethnic backgrounds did the residents of your neighbourhood have?

### *If children:*

21. Have you ever felt that there was a cultural gap between you and your children?
  - a. If yes: Do you have any examples of how it expresses itself? Does it lead to many misunderstandings? Conflicts? How do you typically manage these?
  - b. If no: Do you think this was because you felt closer to the culture where they were raised or because they were closer to the culture where you were raised?

### *If married (if separated ask in past tense):*

22. What is your wife's/husband's occupation?
23. Does he/she work part time or full time?
24. What kind of employment contract does he/she have?
25. How much education did he/she complete?
26. Where was your wife/husband born?

27. Did you meet before or after moving to France?

Second generation respondents:

28. Did you grow up with both of your parents?

29. What language did you speak at home?

30. Have you ever felt that there was a cultural gap between you and your parents?

- a. *If yes:* Do you have any examples of how it would manifest itself? Did it lead to many misunderstandings? Conflicts? How did you manage these?
- b. *If no:* Do you think this was because you felt closer to the culture where they were raised or because they were closer to the culture where you were raised?

31. How would you describe the neighbourhood where you grew up?

- a. What did you like the most about this neighbourhood? The least?
- b. What different ethnic backgrounds did the residents of your neighbourhood have?
- c. Do you still live there now?
  - *If yes:* Would you like to continue living there? Why?
  - *If no:* How is your current neighbourhood different?

32. What particular things in your childhood made you feel [origin]?

33. Were there any particular things that made you feel you were French?

34. Did you have many friends that were also [origin]?

35. Have you ever felt that you had a childhood that was different in some way from that of other children?

36. Do you think you can walk me through your school trajectory?

- a. How would you describe the primary school you attended?
- b. And how would you describe your middle school?
- c. What did you do after middle school?
  - *If high school:* How would you describe your high school? What branch did you choose? Did you have many friends who went to high school?
    - a. *If university:* Why did you attend university? What discipline did you study? Did you obtain a diploma?
  - *Professional training:* Why did you choose that particular training? How would you describe the school? Did you have many friends that chose that particular training?
  - *Other:* PROBE

37. Can you describe what your school orientation choices were like?

- a. Did you feel your orientation was fully chosen or rather imposed? Why?

38. Would you have liked to do another training or have another occupation?

*If studies completed:*

39. Would you have wanted to do more studies?

*If married (if separated ask in past tense):*

40. What is your wife's/husband's occupation?

41. Does he/she work part time or full time?

42. What kind of employment contract does he/she have?

43. How much education did he/she complete?

44. Where was your wife/husband born?

45. Where did you meet?

**BOTH GENERATIONS:**

46. What were your first experiences on the labour market like?

*If no occupation:*

47. Are you registered as a job seeker at the employment agency?

a. *If yes: Since when?*

b. *If no: Why?*

48. What sources of income do you have?

49. Are you confronting any difficulties in your job seeking?

a. *Do you think you confront additional problems compared to other job seekers? Why?*

50. Have you ever had the feeling you have been unfairly refused a job? Why?

51. Are you optimistic about your ability to find a job?

*If employed:*

52. For how long have you been doing your current job?

53. Do you work part-time or full-time?

54. What type of employment contract do you have? (Temporary? Permanent?)

55. What do you like the most about your job? What do you like the least?

56. How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues? Are there any particular alliances or divisions to speak of? What would you like to see change?

57. Is there a person at you work that you particularly like? What are the qualities that you appreciate in this person?

58. Is there somebody you don't like at all? What do you dislike in this person?

For all:

59. Have you ever tried to look for an apartment?

a. *If yes:* In what part of the city? Have you ever felt that you have been unfairly refused housing? What made you feel that?

60. Have you ever had the feeling that you have been discriminated against, whatever the reason might be?

a. *If yes:* Do you have any specific examples of when this happened? Why do you think you were discriminated? How do you typically react in these circumstances?

61. Do you ever feel you are faced by any form any racism in your daily life?

a. *if yes:* Can you tell me about the last time this happened?

b. *if no:* do you think many people confront racism in France? Are there people who are more exposed to racism than others? Why?

## IDENTITY AND BOUNDARIES

62. If you had to classify your identities based on the importance they generally have for you (where 0 is an identity that you feel you don't have at all, and 5 is an identity that you feel is very important for you), would you say that you are:

European	0	1	2	3	4	5
French	0	1	2	3	4	5
Antillean	0	1	2	3	4	5
Martinican ou Guadeloupean	0	1	2	3	4	5
African	0	1	2	3	4	5
Senegalese ou Malian	0	1	2	3	4	5
African ethnic group: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5
Black	0	1	2	3	4	5
Religion: _____	0	1	2	3	4	5
Other? _____	0	1	2	3	4	5
Other? _____	0	1	2	3	4	5

○ PROBE FULLY: Why are certain identities stronger than others?

63. When somebody qualifies you based on your skin colour, do you prefer that the person uses the term "Noir", "Black", "person of colour", or another term? Why?

a. Do you dislike being qualified in those terms? Why?

64. What does being French mean for you?

65. Do people often ask you where you are from?  
a. *if yes*: Do you remember the last time it happened? What did you answer? How does it make you feel when people ask you that?
66. Do you often bring up your origin spontaneously?  
a. Do you do this in all circumstances, or only particular ones?
67. Does it happen that people think you are from another origin than [origin]?  
a. *if yes*: Does this happen more with some people than others? What makes people think that? Do you generally tell people your real origin when this happens? Do you remember the last time this happened?  
b. *if no*: what do you think makes people know you are [origin]?
68. What do you think [other group] generally think of [origin]?
69. What distinctions have you heard people make between Antilleans and Africans?  
a. Do you think people make less distinctions among their children born in France? Why?
70. How would you typically distinguish an [origin] in the street? And what about the children of [origin]? What particular clues help you recognize them?
71. Do you think you have ever had any advantages as an [origin]?
72. What do you like the most among [origin]? What do you like the least?
73. What do you like the most among [other group]? What do you like the least?
74. What do you think are the most important cultural differences between [origin] and [other group]? Do they also have things in common? Do you think there are differences in the way both groups raise their children?
75. Do you tend to feel closer to [other group] or to white Frenchmen? What makes you feel that?
76. Do you think there are any divisions among Blacks in France?  
a. *if yes*: Which ones? Why? How do you think they will evolve?  
b. *if no*: Why do you think that is?
77. Do you often think about your skin colour in your daily life?
78. Do you think people generally assign much importance to your skin colour?  
a. *if yes*: In what circumstances? Why?  
b. *if no*: Why?
79. Are there circumstances where your skin colour matters more than others?  
a. Do you have any examples?
80. Do you feel more comfortable around [origin]? Why?
81. Do you feel more comfortable around Blacks than Whites?

82. Do you think many French people of European descent often make distinctions between Antilleans and Africans? Do you think they have different attitudes towards both groups?

83. Can you think about your three closest friends?

- a. What is their occupation?
- b. Where did you meet them?
- c. What is their ethnic background?

84. Are there any customs or practices in your daily life that have any link with your origin?

*Second generation only:*

- a. Have you ever visited your [country or place of origin]?

85. Do you consider yourself religious?

- a. if yes: What is your religious affiliation?

86. Did your parents have a religious affiliation?

*If religious:*

87. How often do you go to [place of worship]?

88. What religious customs and celebrations do you follow?

89. Do you follow any dietary practices because of your religion?

90. Do you feel more comfortable with people who have the same religion as you? Why?

91. Is it important that your partner is of the same religion as you?

92. Do you think it is important that your children share your religious beliefs?

*For all:*

93. Could you marry or have a long term relationship with a person of a different origin than yours?

- a. Do you think this is important for [other generation]?

94. Have any of your family members married people who aren't [origin]?

*If children:*

95. What differences do you think there are (or will be) between your own and your children's sense of belonging? What differences would you like there to be?

## **SOCIO-POLITICAL ATTITUDES**

96. Do you think people's skin colour have an impact on people's trajectory in France?

97. Do you feel there is generally more racism in France than before, less racism, or that things haven't really changed? How do you think things will evolve?



98. Do you think Black people with lighter skin are less exposed to racism and discrimination than those with darker skin?
99. Do you think [other generation] perceive racism and discrimination differently than you? Do you think they generally have different relations to other Blacks?
100. What are your views of the idea of introducing "ethnic statistics" in France?
101. What is your opinion on introducing a "positive discrimination" or equal opportunity legislation?
102. Do you think there should be reparation for slavery?
103. Do you wish to see any changes in France's immigration or integration policy?

## Appendix 2. Consent Form



### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Department of Sociology**  
6303 N.W. Marine Drive  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

#### Consent Form

**for participating in an interview for the study:**

*"Identity dynamics and social mobility among  
Antilleans, West Africans and their children in Paris"*

**Purpose:** The project aims to study the life histories of Antilleans, West Africans and their children in Paris. More specifically, it will focus on their social trajectories and their identity construction, and on the factors which have influenced these.

**Procedures:** The interview should last about an hour, but this can vary depending on your experiences and your availability. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed.

**Confidentiality:** To guarantee your anonymity, the recordings and the transcripts will only be identified with an ID number, and will be kept in a password protected computer. I will be the only person to have access to the identities of the study participants, and your identity will not be revealed in any circumstances.

**Risks:** Your participation in this interview therefore involves few risks. If you for whatever reason don't wish to answer any of the questions, you are perfectly allowed to, so do not hesitate to let me know.

**Contact information:** If you have any questions regarding the study or the interview don't hesitate to contact me by phone at 06.30.38.49.25. or by email: [bivemark@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:bivemark@interchange.ubc.ca). If you have any questions regarding your treatment as a research subject for this study, you can contact the Office of Research Services by phone at +1604-822-8598

**Consent:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you refuse to participate or stop participating at any time. By signing this document, you indicate that you have read and understood it, and that I have answered any questions you might have, and that you accept to participate voluntarily in the interview.

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Signature of participant

Date