

# Upward social mobility among Franco-Algerians : the role of family transmission

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## Upward Social Mobility Among Franco-Algerians. The Role of Family Transmission

Emmanuelle Santelli\*

### 1 Introduction: Questioning the upward mobility of second generation

Research on the second generation has grown considerably in the United States and Europe in the past almost 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Inquiry into the second generation began with the realisation that the social destinies of the new generations seemed to no longer correspond to those of Old Immigration: although this second generation is not the first to integrate, it appears to be experiencing new problems. By comparing the second generation from a historic perspective, J. Perlman and R. Waldinger (1997) put the problems encountered by today's second generation into perspective. Whether this is due to less favourable economic conditions or to the social composition of recent migration waves, this social reality has attracted growing interest in an attempt to understand the underlying reasons and better identify the place of the second generation in their respective societies.

This has led to an investigation of social mobility in general – i. e. looking at the socio-occupational positions of second-generation migrants – and upward social mobility in particular in order to understand the factors involved in the socio-occupational success – identified by high skills, a supervisory position and/or a high income – of some second-generation migrants compared with their parents, unskilled or deskilled in the migration context.

Although they draw on the results of American research, European studies have developed a specific approach to reflect the fact that the parents of the second generation came from former colonies, were recruited as labour migrants and often arrived many years ago. By foregrounding the obstacles the second generation continue to face decades after their parents arrived in the host country, these studies tend to emphasise the inequality experienced by the children of migrants. L. Platt (2005), who studied inter-generational social mobility among ethnic groups in the

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1 While it is impossible to list them all, special issues devoted to this theme include *Journal of International Migration and Integration* (Gowricharn 2001); *International Migration Review* (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a); *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Portes and Rumbaut 2005); *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Thomson and Crul 2007a; Ellis and Almgren 2009); *Ethnicities* (Heath and Brinbaum 2007); *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008a).

UK, reports that since the 1980s, sociologists have demonstrated that the children of non-European immigrants are disadvantaged on the labour market, as well as the value of an approach based on the intersection of class, race and sex relations.

The key difference between North American and European statistical research is the type of comparison. North American research tends to compare the destinies of different minorities, while in Europe the comparison is usually with the majority population. American papers thus sometimes compare groups that vary considerably in terms of their histories, pathways, backgrounds and dates of arrival,<sup>2</sup> whereas European studies have mostly sought to identify the influence of different national contexts (Thomson and Crul 2007b, 1031). These scholars have shown how the issue of the second generation is approached differently in Europe and North America, and have questioned the meaning of the integration process by comparing modes of incorporation which display many structural variations. This article and the one by Holdaway et al. (2009) also stress the specific characteristics of European research on the second generation.

In addition to this focus on the impact of social context on occupational trajectories – from entry into the labour market to upward mobility – attention has recently been paid to migrant family structure. Both these aspects are considered in this empirical study of the upward social mobility of a generation of children of Algerian migrants.

Firstly, Section 2 reviews the theoretical background in order to define social mobility and approaches to it, and considers the effects of the socialisation process that might influence upward social mobility. It also describes the data and the methodology used. Secondly, Section 3 draws on empirical results examining the role of family resources in the process of social mobility, thus offering a methodological reflection on the contribution that biographical surveys can make. Then Section 4 points to differences between the two pathways to upward social mobility and the distinct family transmissions that contribute to them. To conclude (Section 5), this paper offers a reflection on combining multiple levels of analysis to provide a more accurate picture of the social pathways of migrants' children, by considering both their family and their socio-economic environment.

## 2 Looking at the issue from the perspective of social mobility

The issue of social mobility refers to the occupational sphere, usually the socio-occupational status attained in a given society. It implies a comparison between two periods or two generations. In the case of the second generation, social mobil-

2 For example, the study by R. G. Rumbaut (2008), which investigates the pathways of the offspring of immigrants from three Central American and six Asian countries, compared with three native population groups (European, African-American, and Mexican Americans) with a view to considering the effects of acculturation on mobility.

ity refers to the propensity of migrants' children to leave the subordinate status of labour migrants. It suggests an improvement in their living conditions, thought to go hand in hand with their absorption into the mainstream. Studies on the social pathways of migrants implicitly investigate their assimilation. This is even more evident in studies of the second generation, who are assumed to enjoy a better life than their migrant parents. Zhou (1997, 976) sums up this process of convergent assimilation: "there is a natural process by which diverse ethnic groups come to share a common culture and to gain equal access to the opportunity structure of society (...) and that, once set in motion, this process moves inevitably and irreversibly toward assimilation."

In the 1990s, A. Portes refined this approach by advancing the theory of "segmented assimilation." In a recent paper, based on a longitudinal research program on exogenous factors, family structure and modes of incorporation, Portes et al. (2009, 1078) show how these interact and explain why "some [lead] upwards but others downward." "Segmented assimilation" is an alternative paradigm for taking account of the complex adaptation patterns of immigrants and their children in post-industrial American society (Zhou 1997, 984). The work of Portes's team (including M. Zhou), conducted from an anthropological perspective, has since highlighted the importance of (familial and individual) life courses for understanding the factors that determine social mobility. This approach, which combines institutional and personal events that occur throughout people's pathways, is featured centrally in several highly enlightening articles.<sup>3</sup> Their analysis looks at all the experiences and resources that individuals can draw on over their pathways, whether favourable to mobility or not, and which come from their personal experience, family transmission, and from the choices and constraints they have had to negotiate. An examination of educational and occupational achievements leads to an interrogation of inequalities at school, which persists in access to higher education and the highest skilled jobs. Investigating social mobility ultimately means investigating the social mechanisms of social reproduction, or from a more optimistic perspective, the social conditions that would ensure more equality between individuals.

## 2.1 Mobility in relation to whom?

This also raises the issue of the object of comparison: is the social mobility of migrants' children evaluated in relation to their parents (or their fathers) or to other young people from the same generation? The results differ considerably depending on the comparison. Moreover, the changing socio-economic context can facilitate or hamper pathways of social mobility: as a result, the successive generations of young

3 Such as those contained in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (see Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2008b; Smith 2008; Zhou et al. 2008). In particular, the authors of the last paper describe the methodological value of a subject-centred approach.



adults since the 1950s have not been equally likely to experience social mobility (Chauvel 2010 a; Chauvel 2010 b).

The statistical results of several recent surveys attest to this phenomenon due to increased job insecurity expressed in a (very) high unemployment rate and the prevalence of short-term work contracts among minority population groups (Byron and Condon 2008; Penn and Lambert 2009). However, status on the labour market and the conditions of entry into the workforce also undeniably differ between men and women. While women can suffer from twofold discrimination (sexist and ethnic), research by the sociologists cited above also shows that they are more successful academically and better integrated in the labour market. In the survey on the impact of the German and Dutch education systems on the vocational occupational integration of the children of Turkish immigrants, the differentiated effects appear even more pronounced when the gender aspect is factored in: women of Turkish background in the Netherlands seem to enjoy the best opportunities (Crul and Schneider 2009). However, this effect is not homogeneous across all countries or for all groups of non-native origin, and, after Penn and Lambert (2009, 94), it is important to specify that “the general pattern of female educational success in Western Europe is not universal”: that contextual dimension has different influences on different categories of women.

Western societies no longer exhibit the near full employment conducive to upward mobility. The offspring of migrants from working class backgrounds suffer more acutely from the hourglass economy. When opportunities on the labour market are tight, they are the first to be excluded (Platt 2006; Silberman and Fournier 2006; Portes et al. 2009). When they also live in a devalued residential setting with high social homogeneity (an underclass), individuals have even less access to the social networks essential to their occupational success (including for the least skilled among them, e. g. to obtain an apprenticeship contract in a company). It is undeniable that growing up in the *banlieues* (deprived neighbourhood) (Santelli 2007) limits the opportunities to access the networks that are a decisive resource. Apart from being a sign of inter-subjective relationships through which the recognition process and identity construction occur, it demonstrates the importance of the social environment as an explanatory factor in social mobility (Platt 2006).

Furthermore, the parents' migration histories show clearly that each migration wave has its own history, inter-ethnic relationship and social status, which have different impacts on inter-generational upward social mobility. The proportion of parents in each migration wave who, for example, attended school, are highly skilled and/or know the language of the host country varies widely. This is of considerable importance because there is an undeniable link between the social status attained (and/or inherited) by the first generation and that of the second, as the empirical case study shows.

## 2.2 Family background or the effects of the socialisation process

Not all the individuals in a second-generation cohort will experience upward social mobility, but they nevertheless all aspire to a place and recognition in society. Encouraged by my past research, I suggest describing these pathways and their modes of integration as “ways of taking one’s place in society” to reflect the diversity of pathways in the second generation of the same migrant origin, and to emphasise an analysis of the *socialisation process* and of the *social contexts* in which individuals interact. This position involves considering both individual factors, discernible in personal and family pathways, and structural factors, which relate to both the context in which the pathways take place and the factors determining<sup>4</sup> the individual characteristics, identified through a set of social relationships.

The concept of socialisation is not used in the restrictive sense of education, i. e. “what is done by society,” but is understood in the broader sense of what “makes society.” The socialisation process is thus seen as contributing to the production of social ties between individuals, and between individuals and institutions. That approach to reality makes it possible to study the interactions and effects of resources transmitted within each family and how this transmission interacts with each person’s experiences within society; here these are called social trajectories, which form on the crossroads between the processes of vertical socialisation (by parents and grandparents, and the family sphere more broadly) and horizontal socialisation (through peers, school, the media, etc., i. e. the set of societal spheres to which everyone is exposed). Every individual trajectory is therefore an expression of this double socialisation process, reflecting a set of stages that individuals experience successively over time, and simultaneously within different social milieus.<sup>5</sup>

Based on a comparative analysis of two groups – managers and entrepreneurs – the study looked at family history to identify resources transmitted by the family that might have influenced the social mobility of these children of Algerian migrants. The underlying hypothesis is that these socio-occupational trajectories cannot simply be attributed to successful “integration” into French society, but more often reflect family transmission, identifiable through an analysis of inter-generational socialisation processes. These results can only be obtained through a biographical approach, as A. Portes and P. Fernández-Kelly (2008b, 21) also find: “There are times (...) when the study of individual cases can say something important about how social outcomes come to be or how they can be modified.”

The methodology adopted therefore focuses on the biographical and diachronic dimensions of the survey material. The survey uses biographical interviews, which

4 In the sense defined by D. Bertaux and I. Bertaux-Wiame (1988, 23, own translation): “The rather obvious idea that a life course can be determined much more easily by the transmission of a *resource* than by the imposition of a *constraint* completely upends the content of the concept of determination.”

5 A reference to A. Strauss’s (1992) interactionist analysis, which sought to take into account the different levels of interpenetration in society.

enable the interviewees to talk freely about their life experiences, and questionnaires that cover the whole life course (family status in the country of origin and during settlement in France, social positions held and places of residence, school pathway, occupational trajectory, family configuration, sociability networks, choice of spouse and relations with the country of origin). The survey is also diachronic in order to identify the decisive factors in the two phases of migration (before and after settlement in the country of destination<sup>6</sup>) and the inter-generational transmissions that are determinant in upward social mobility. Among these, we observe parental involvement in encouraging their children to do well at school, and a wish to improve their social status. Migration projects are by nature subtended by the prospect of upward social mobility. It is worth noting that not all transmissions are intentional, however: parents who are strict with their children and tell them not to draw attention to themselves can facilitate their children's performance at school by inculcating in them social and moral attitudes conducive to doing well academically, even if this was not the initial intention.

The approach focuses therefore on processes of family socialisation and transmission, and is also articulated with the social context of the period under consideration. The educational context varies considerably according to the period under consideration: the context that young people growing up in troubled urban areas experience now is not comparable to the one that existed in large urban housing estates from the 1960s until the 1980s. The previous generation grew up in a more socially mixed environment, offering opportunities to meet and form more extensive and more diverse social networks, and a less segregated school environment; whereas there is an undeniable link between urban segregation and educational segregation. Moreover, the economic environment has deteriorated dramatically in recent years, making it much harder for these young people to enter the labour market (their unemployment rate is high, as indicated by all the statistical data; Santelli 2013).

### 2.3 Observing social mobility in the Algerian second generation: fieldwork and methodology

Until recently, there were no available statistics on minority groups in France, as in many other countries until recent years. P. Simon (2007, 45–46) stresses that in order to study the second generation from a quantitative viewpoint, the statistics collection offices need to gather information about the parents (position in sibship, citizenship at birth, year of migration, etc.). However, with the exception of the Netherlands, most countries do not record these data, preventing the production of data about the offspring of immigrants born in the country of residence (the same problem

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6 A. Sayad (1979), the renowned sociologist of Algerian immigration in France, showed that immigrants are first and foremost emigrants and that their past has an impact on what they become in the society of immigration.

exists in the United States). Papademetriou et al. (2009) describe the implications of this in an article on comparisons between Britain and America.

In France, public statistics recognised only two categories: French (which includes naturalised citizens) and foreign. Until 1992, no major national survey had focused specifically on the destinies of the second generation.<sup>7</sup> Since that date, several surveys have included questions that identify this generation and analyse its modes of integration into French society (Simon 2007, 41). Recently, research based on data from the *Trajectoires et Origines* (pathways and backgrounds) survey (INED-INSEE, 2008<sup>8</sup>) will enable further progress here. In this context, the first studies on the formation of an elite of North African background were qualitative: they approached the formation of a group in supervisory positions mainly through individuals' social work and political and activist engagement (Taboada Leonetti 1984).<sup>9</sup>

Algerian immigration to France dates back several decades. Algerian families in France exhibit a certain homogeneity: they arrived in France, the former colonial power, as labour migrants, and the fathers were categorised as "unskilled migrant workers." As such, they occupied economically subordinate positions and suffered the effects of post-colonial social relations. However, despite this context and the uniformising tendency to present these populations as a homogeneous, social group with no capital, an inter-generational analysis of family and migration pathways reveals how these can facilitate the upward mobility of some of their children. It is therefore possible to observe different aspects of the labour-market integration of these children of Algerians who migrated many years ago.

Considering the heterogeneity of pathways is crucial and implies paying more attention to the differences within ethnic groups, which have largely been overlooked, as Crul and Vermeulen (2003b, 975) acknowledge. While taking the macro context into account is determinant (for identifying the structural effects specific to each national context), an approach that analyses the combined effects of individual and structural effects and how they interact seems highly productive.

My research since the late 1990s on the conditions of social mobility among the children of Algerian immigrant families (Santelli 1997; Santelli 2001) and the

7 This is the *Mobilité géographique et insertion sociale* (Geographical Mobility and Social Integration) survey (INED-INSEE, 1992), which already highlighted the difficulty that children of migrants faced in finding secure employment. However, among those who do have jobs, an above-average percentage of children of Algerian migrant workers have left the working class compared with the general population of children of manual workers in France (Tribalat 1995, 162–168). Subsequent studies have emphasised the higher-than-average unemployment and job insecurity faced by the second generation on the labour market, using data from the CEREQ survey (Brinbaum and Werquin 1997; Silberman and Fournier 2006) and the *Etude de l'histoire familiale* (Family History Study) survey (1999) (Meurs et al. 2005).

8 This national survey has been conducted on a sample of 22 000 people. For more details, see the survey website: <http://teo.site.ined.fr/>.

9 Other studies followed, such as in *Horizons maghrébins* (Samrakandi and Geisser 1993) on North African elites in France.

link between leaving education and entering the workforce (Santelli 2007; Santelli 2009a) has highlighted a lower rate of upward social mobility and persistent inequalities experienced by the second generation of North African origin in France. The gap with individuals from the majority group can be partly attributed to different school pathways – a critical factor in France where a close link is observed between education level and subsequent occupational status – which contribute to strong social reproduction. Compared with young people of similar social origin, however, a much higher percentage of children of migrants have higher education qualifications. In 2008, while almost three-quarters of the fathers of children of Algerian immigrants in France were manual workers – Teo only provides this information when the children are aged 15, one-third of the children of Algerian immigrants had the occupational status of manager or entrepreneur. By comparison, in the majority population only 39 percent of fathers were manual workers and 45 percent of people aged 18–50 had the occupational status of manager or entrepreneur (Okba 2010, 65–66).

Focusing on the successful career paths of some children of migrants, the research investigated the inter-generational processes involved in the social mobility of the offspring of Algerian families, in comparison with their fathers, manual labourers who migrated to France from the 1950s onwards. A subsequent study, written in 2006, on managers of foreign origin and discrimination, substantiated those results, confirming the validity of the hypotheses explored during the PhD research.

The sample included only people who at the time of the survey worked in one of the following occupational categories: intermediate occupations, managers and higher intellectual occupations (the “manager” group) or self-employed tradespeople, wholesale/retail traders and business owners (the “entrepreneur” group). The “managers” work in one of the following occupational categories: primary and secondary school teachers, nurses and other paramedical occupations, managers in the youth sector, technicians, intermediate and higher occupations in the corporate sector, engineers, or self-employed professionals (doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc.). The “entrepreneurs” are either self-employed tradespeople, retail or wholesale traders, or self-employed service providers or own a company that employs at least ten people, using the INSEE nomenclature.<sup>10</sup> Women were strongly under-represented in the entrepreneur group. Moreover, a significant gender gap emerged between female cohorts: while entering the workforce was a given for women aged under 40, the picture was quite different for women over 40: even if they had strong support from a family member, most of them had to fight for their families to accept their wish to enter higher education and a career.

The respondents were born in France or raised in France for those who arrived as children (two-thirds of them were French citizens at the time of the survey).

10 See INSEE 2003 for the list of socio-occupational categories used in France, and an article by A. Desrosières et al. (1983) analysing the construction of the list.



In 1995 they were, on average, aged 35 and had started working 15 years earlier. More than 120 individuals were surveyed; 100 of them answered a questionnaire about their educational and employment careers. Roughly 40 in-depth biographical interviews of men and women were also conducted. In both cases, the sample was chosen by snowballing, because there was no survey base that made it possible to choose a representative sample.

This approach based on *observed* social mobility studies the family and migration pathways likely to favour the social mobility of the offspring of Algerian immigrants. This methodological choice means that only “successful” individuals were selected, while others are excluded from this study. In other words, this paper does not look at the probability of becoming a manager or entrepreneur. The occupational trajectories of these children of Algerian migrants represent one way of taking one’s place in society.

### 3 Family resources: conditions conducive to social mobility

The issue of family transmission within migrant families is grounded in an apparent paradox: while intra-family transmission from one generation to the next is a universal anthropological phenomenon, it has rarely been analysed in sociological studies of inter-ethnic relations. In France, that state of fact seems attributable to two main reasons: firstly, immigrants are commonly portrayed as having no history prior to immigration, which, secondarily, causes a rupture (at least symbolically) between immigrants’ offspring and their families, which is considered to be favourable to their integration.<sup>11</sup> Yet transmission “is the means by which two temporal frameworks dialogue with each other (...). That dialogue makes it possible to connect memory with present actions and future expectations” (Collet and Rist 2007, 10). Therefore transmission is the key to understanding both socialisation processes and filiation ties. The transmission perspective makes it possible to establish links between a past situation and potential social outcomes. However it is rarely approached as such in its entirety (Collet and Rist 2007).

It is impossible to summarise all the processes that influence family transmission from the society of origin to the host society. This section will concentrate on the most significant ones, whether they took place in the country of origin or in France. A family’s migration history and social characteristics prior to migration can be transformed into resources that facilitate settlement and, in some cases, the social mobility of their children after migration. But their occupational pathways are not representative of all second-generation migrants in France, nor even of the children of Algerian migrants.<sup>12</sup>

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11 This argument is developed in the article by E. Santelli (2004).

12 The analysis that follows, up to the end of Section 4.3, is taken from an article published in

### 3.1 A beneficial family environment

The first important factor is the decision to migrate. The Algerian economy was in a disastrous state and there was strong demand for labour at French companies: these two factors are cited first to explain why the fathers migrated. The economic dimension is therefore decisive. But other reasons also emerge. These include an aspiration to live in a free, emancipated society; a desire for social advancement; ties with the metropole through family members who were living there; family context (position in sibship, conflicts, deaths); and political engagement in favour of Algerian independence.

In this respect, the involvement of some of these migrants in Algeria's struggle for independence would shape the family environment lastingly and profoundly, fostering childrearing practices based on dialogue, tolerance, social engagement, seeking social advancement and respect, etc. These values have structured family reference frameworks. This has influenced the socialisation process and in particular explains the strong engagement of their children, who came of age in the 1980s, in NGOs that spun off from the *Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme*, the first major demonstration of second-generation youth. This political engagement was conducive to the transmission of values, which created a family environment where education and standing up for one's rights were encouraged.

Beyond the "conventional" response (which conforms to dominant representations) on reasons for migrating – "to find work; to take a job; they could no longer work their land" – cited in the vast majority of cases, the other reasons show that, while the economic context is clearly decisive, it does not alone explain the decision to migrate. Other equally essential reasons played their part, in combination with the economic dimension, in making the intention to migrate a reality, starting with the aspiration to have a better life (for oneself and/or for one's children). The decision to migrate thus intrinsically contains this dimension of upward mobility. Not all these migrants had the means to fulfil this aspiration. But having certain resources in the country of origin facilitated it.

The second key factor for understanding the social, economic and symbolic resources that form the foundation for the migrants' lives in the host country is the social status. The information gathered about the occupational positions of grandfathers highlights three characteristics: the diversity of occupations, an over-representation of the self-employed,<sup>13</sup> and an unequal distribution of statuses between

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French entitled «La mobilité sociale dans l'immigration: Transmissions familiales chez les Algériens» (Santelli 2009b). It has been considerably reduced in this paper, however, in order to devote more space to the development of a theoretical reflection on the role of family resources in social mobility, and in doing so to propose a methodological reflection on the contribution that biographical surveys can make.

13 Almost three-quarters of grandfathers were self-employed, if all those who report having had a self-employed activity are included: farmers who owned their own land, shopkeepers and craft workers, as well as religious officers (imam, marabout, etc.). For more details, see E. Santelli (2001).



the maternal and paternal lines. Moreover, not all parents came from rural areas, and both parents' backgrounds should be considered when the mother's differs from the father's. As F. de Singly and C. Thélot (1986) show, it is important to take into consideration both the genealogical effect and the parental effect when the two lines differ in terms of social class; generally only the father's background is considered. However, this survey revealed that a higher percentage of mothers came from the city (one-third of mothers compared with one-quarter of fathers). This result is important since it can be correlated with education, and more broadly, with different socialisation processes in the city and the countryside: an urban background of one or both parents increases their chances of having attended school, been in contact with the French population and culture and/or having had access to more diverse, more highly skilled occupations, particularly for maternal grandfathers, but even for some mothers prior to migration. The implications of that past are considerable during settlement in France, whether in terms of way of life or reference framework: they facilitate the adaptation to French society and contacts with the majority group. The mother's education in particular is a crucial competency: it will be a determinant resource she musters during the education of her own children. Aspirations especially valued by these mothers include the importance of education and a wish for their daughters to be independent. If parents have not attended school, particularly because of the colonial context, this can also be a decisive factor: by generating powerful feelings of frustration and injustice, it encourages parents to ensure that their children have a better education. Thus, parental involvement, whether motivated by their own educational attainment or by a sense of their lack of education, is a powerful force in encouraging their children's education.

The combination of family characteristics (literate, French-speaking, etc.), a respected position in society and educational values create conditions that influence upward social mobility in a given family. These help integrate the family into a social universe and a set of social relationships. That social capital, which is an undeniable resource in the country of origin, can be transferred to the country of settlement, at least on a symbolic level. This social capital reminds children of who their parents were in the country of origin; as L. Missaoui (1995) puts it, they can be "small here and notables over there." Their subordinate status in France has overshadowed their social position prior to migration. But within the family, some parents have made it their duty to remind their children of the dignity of their past, and in some cases their "noble" origins (they might be the descendants of a prestigious tribe). Recognising that symbolic capital implies perceiving these families in all their dimensions, not only as migrants from former colonies (dispossessed and dominated). After a reaffirmed denunciation of colonisation, which destroyed the structure of Algerian society and dispossessed the local inhabitants, there is room for post-colonial studies in France.

However, these aspects handed down by families do not automatically shape the destiny of descendants: firstly, what is transmitted within a family is not always intentional and secondly, it can be transformed (Bloch and Buisson 1994). The inheritance is rarely direct; it can be reinterpreted, or even rejected depending on the individuality of each person and his/her own life course. However, regardless of the way in which each individual appropriates the family legacy, it is the parents' capacity to transmit some of their history that is decisive because, by doing so, they help broaden the scope of potential outcomes, give meaning to their lives and incorporate their children into the host society. The research by C. Delcroix (2004) also attests to the importance of parents passing on their own story, in order to give their children socio-historical references. This is a childrearing practice, "sometimes elevated to a strategy," which helps children understand their place in the world. Despite the many obstacles, this is an undeniable advantage over the children of French manual workers with no migration history who do not have these symbolic resources, which explains some of the success stories observed. In his study of the children of manual workers who gained entry to a business school, J. L. Laurens (1992) makes a similar finding: the over-representation of children of migrant manual workers.

### 3.2 The shift to permanent settlement

Migration was initially thought of as temporary, which was, incidentally, one of its enabling conditions (Sayad 1979). But over time, the effect of the length of time already spent in France increases. In addition, many changes take place during these years, with a lasting impact on the way in which families see their future. Some fathers experience occupational mobility (either within the manual occupations, or by moving into other sectors – retail/wholesale trade, subordinate jobs in the civil service). The paid work of mothers should not be neglected either, with one-third working outside the home. Usually unskilled, that work nevertheless represents an emancipation from traditional values, competency in French and a desire to supplement family income (particularly to pay for children's higher education).

Moreover, the children's occupational integration, marriage and grandchildren help make settlement permanent, even as the parents simultaneously lose their reference framework in the country of origin which has undergone profound change. Acculturation to French society is discernible in many areas of family life, such as attitudes towards the education of girls and paid work of women, moving to a more comfortable home, and acquiring French citizenship, all of which have facilitated their children's integration. Depending on the characteristics of the family, their motivations and types of support for their children, the impact and timing of these developments on the trajectories of the children have been different. Some families prepared their migration, chose to live in a mixed residential neighbourhood or bought a home, both parents worked, enjoyed upward mobility and extended their

network of acquaintances in the majority group. But others who settled in France were not actors of their social destinies in the same way.

A combined biographical and diachronic approach highlights how, over time, pathways are constructed at the intersection of the family environment and lived experiences in French society. For example, the school environment and the role that some teachers may have played, mediating or reinforcing some family practices, are all factors that contribute to the individual's history which, combined with family socialisation, can "determine"<sup>14</sup> social mobility. Both the educational pathway and what was acquired there (training, skills, qualification, etc.) and the residential setting have provided other reference frameworks than those of the ethnic group. Aspirations, opportunities and resources have coalesced into a foundation for social mobility.

#### 4 Two different pathways to upward social mobility

Sociability and the inevitable comparison with peers at school and in the neighbourhood setting contribute strongly to the assertion of new aspirations. "Significant others" (Mead and Morris 1934) play special role by offering access to other horizons and other sources of information (which can have a decisive influence on decisions about education, for example). They act as role models and can have a stimulation effect. Emulation, especially if it is reinforced by family resources, generates self-confidence, which fosters new ambitions.

The pathways of managers and entrepreneurs are constructed through this continuous interaction between their own experiences of French society and the family biography. These superimposed socialisation processes – within the family and the social setting, successively and simultaneously between different social milieus – highlight possible conflicts, juxtapositions or convergence between the social milieus in which socio-occupational pathways are constructed and which, more generally, provide information on how the offspring of immigrants take their place in society. While these children of Algerian immigrants all had a working-class childhood, many differences appear subsequently in the life course. The same social condition of the group (here, immigrant background and working-class status), seemingly relatively uniform, can conceal extremely diverse practices and milieus. By taking account of these family and migration histories, it is possible to assess the impact of family transmission on the social mobility trajectories that occur in a given structural context, "offering" opportunities but also constraints. More broadly, the modes of integration of the second generation reflect both individual characteristics and institutional settings that together determine social pathways.

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14 See footnote 4.

At the time of the survey, the occupational positions of the offspring of Algerian immigrants were characterised by a high level of skills, a prestigious status and/or high earnings. The two groups – managers and entrepreneurs – are nonetheless sharply differentiated.

#### 4.1 Becoming a manager ...

Managers may be private- or public-sector employees, or self-employed professionals: the majority are engineers, doctors, lawyers, managers in intermediate administrative jobs and intermediate occupations in the health and social work sectors. Managers hold post-secondary qualifications and occupy supervisory positions.

This form of upward occupational mobility is largely linked to their educational pathway, which was facilitated by the involvement of their families; the vast majority report that they received constant encouragement from their parents (or from one parent) throughout their education. Educational qualifications are often the means of upward social mobility. As L. Platt (2006, 3) shows it, “minorities achieve upward mobility through the education system.” Therefore, regardless of the language in which the encouragement was expressed and the parents’ social position, parents’ unwavering support for their children’s education was critical. Some parents gave verbal encouragement, stressing the importance of education for getting a “good job.” Other parents monitored school reports, made sure their children did their homework every evening, met teachers regularly, found out information to give their children guidance about their education, paid for tutoring, etc. Parental supervision of children’s education, especially with boys, kept them away from “bad influences” in the neighbourhood. Since girls were under much stricter supervision, they spent much more time at home doing homework. Parental supervision was therefore much more decisive for boys: the best students among them were usually subject to the same restrictions on going out as their sisters. More broadly, strictness and discipline helped children do well at school, even if this was not the initial intention.

This group of managers also stressed the role of the school, in particular the influence of some teachers, who gave them helpful advice, encouraged them and/or offered support at a critical time. Even though these interviewees also suffered from racism, there was in all the managers’ trajectories at least one teacher who had a decisive influence at one time or another in the respondent’s pathway.

These offspring stress the link between a “good” education and upward social mobility. The parents of managers, on average better educated than those of entrepreneurs, had high expectations for their children, because their past experiences enabled them to understand the importance and advantages of knowledge, all the more so after having been confined to menial jobs in France. They have invested in their children so they would achieve the upward social mobility that they did not achieve themselves, by encouraging their children’s education, valuing hard work and offering them the best possible living conditions (living in a “normal” place,

facilitating friendships with the majority group, enrolling their children in sports and/or cultural activities, and encouraging socially valued practices – reading, supervising their friendships, etc.).

Meanwhile, some family situations have hampered the educational pathway. Not all parents had the necessary resources – knowledge of the education system, money, etc. – to facilitate their children's education. Their non-involvement in the education system (e. g. during decision-making about subject and career choices) and/or their “blind” faith in the school prevented them from always acting effectively. That observation is particularly verified among eldest siblings who had to leave education and start working in order to supplement the family income.

Being the eldest child in the family nevertheless seems to confer an advantage. Firstly parents overinvest in the first child, who will later be a role model to his/her younger siblings, and secondly parents give the eldest child responsibility for tasks they cannot do alone (filling out forms, accompanying them on errands), which are opportunities to experience and develop certain skills that are valued at school. In our qualitative surveys, we note an over-representation of eldest children. For girls, however, it is often preferable not to be the eldest daughter so as to have less responsibility for household chores. Being a younger sibling also has advantages: being able to follow the path established by elder siblings and benefit from their experience.

There are two ways to attain managerial status: either by graduating from higher education with the necessary qualification for such a position, or by earning qualifications after entering the workforce, through continuing education, enabling them to achieve the occupational mobility they aspire to. Training during employment represents a substitute for an educational pathway considered too risky or that had to be cut short because of the family context. Discrimination experienced by some of these managers during their educational and employment pathways is not dealt with here. But it has undeniably left a mark on their careers, for example blocking promotion, limiting their educational aspirations. In France, attention has only recently been paid to discriminatory practices, which is why there are few measures in place to encourage education among minority groups, along the lines of affirmative action. In 2001, the *Institut d'études politiques de Paris* (“Sciences-Po”) was one of the first higher education institutions to set up an affirmative action program. This is a special admissions procedure for secondary school graduates from “priority education zones”; instead of sitting the usual entrance exam, they are admitted on the basis of an application and an interview.

#### 4.2 ... Or entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs are self-employed people who have set up their own businesses, but entrepreneurial pathways are varied. There are two main categories. “Self-employed



service providers” are individuals who started working as employees in skilled jobs after earning a higher education qualification, then set up their own businesses (in engineering, consulting, training, IT, etc.). They could be described as “manager entrepreneurs.” The other category, “worker entrepreneurs” have become retail/wholesale traders or tradespeople after losing their jobs as manual workers.

The latter group is larger and their educational pathways are characterised by higher drop-out rates. Their main opportunity to enter the workforce was as manual workers at the age of 16, the end of compulsory schooling. They thus followed in their fathers’ footsteps, sometimes working in the same company. But the decline of industry since the 1970s put many of them out of work from the 1980s onwards. However, economic conditions alone do not explain their occupational mobility.

The shift to entrepreneurship is undoubtedly grounded in an occupational strategy that draws on family history and resources. Some entrepreneurs started as travelling salesmen, alongside their manual jobs, before opening a shop. That strategy enabled them to acquire key resources (know-how, knowledge of the market, network, savings, etc.). In addition, these individuals clearly inherited aspirations that their fathers did not fulfil for themselves as migrants. Among Entrepreneurs, the most favourable position in the sibship is to be the eldest child and a boy: the eldest son therefore took on the father’s aspiration for social advancement and “to be his own boss.” They thus became “heirs”: they inherited one or more shops bought by their fathers in France, or like their fathers, started out by selling goods at markets. Either their fathers handed down know-how, social and business networks, because the father and/or grandfather had themselves been shopkeepers or self-employed in Algeria. In this case, social mobility is about reclaiming a status lost during migration. Or they inherited an entrepreneurial aspiration, where the father’s aspirations are passed on to the eldest son. In most cases, it was up to the son to achieve what the father had not. Insufficient income and difficulty negotiating the various events concomitant with migration prevented the father from fulfilling his occupational ambition to leave manual labour in his own generation. This form of occupational mobility reveals the aspiration of social advancement inherent in the parents’ migration project, but transformed and altered by their own pathways in French society.

Furthermore, the business is often supported by family members, through various types of formal or informal support. Family members may be employees or legal partners in the business. Half of the self-employed respondents declared at least one family member as an employee of the business. In an occupational context that offered virtually no prospects of promotion and/or that treated employees unequally, for a majority of these respondents, becoming an entrepreneur seemed to be the best way to attain recognition for their competence and occupational aspirations and, by extension, their place in society. Starting one’s own business is also a strategy to circumvent discrimination.

### 4.3 Two modes of family transmission

Family transmission is strongly present in these pathways of social mobility, but it differs between managers and entrepreneurs. Among managers, the family invests in education, encouragement and support for the child to earn the necessary qualifications to attain managerial positions. Among entrepreneurs, the family provided help later, by supporting the move to an entrepreneurial occupation. In the case of managers, the influence of the family was preponderant *before* the occupational pathway, through the family's resources, while for entrepreneurs, the family played a role *during* the shift to self-employment, by helping the business to operate and prosper. The resources mustered and transmitted are different in these individual pathways, for reasons related to their histories, from the original decision to migrate up to the present.

Thus, the categories of manager and entrepreneur shed light on the families' original motivations for migrating and the resources they were able to muster when they settled in France. Managers' families exhibit patrimonial behaviour, which consists in passing their capital (status in the country of origin, having attended school, having grown up in the city, speaking French, having aspirations of social advancement, instilling values promoted by society, etc.) on to their children. These family resources are made tangible through education. The transmission of that capital (consisting chiefly of symbolic resources) has created new opportunities in the context of migration. The families of entrepreneurs engage in capitalistic behaviour that invests family and community resources (family resources, the relational network, economic capital) with a view to increasing the individual's capital and that of his family, and thus to maximise their success.

In both cases, however, the families have "subjective resources" (Delcroix 2004, 58), which play a determinant role in overcoming obstacles and facilitating integration. These various types of subjective resources are combined and developed during the migration experience: "moral qualities (courage, tenacity, etc.), intellectual qualities (thinking, analysis, strategic planning) and psychological qualities (communication, understanding, etc.)." We also observe the same concern to be worthy of the sacrifice made by their parents who went through exile: they feel they have to live up to their parents' efforts, which in some cases is many years of self-sacrifice. These families transmitted values like courage, perseverance, a sense of duty and a work ethic, which respondents regularly cite as incentives during their education and occupational pathways. While not all the factors cited (in Sections 3 and 4) are specific to this population, they were determinant in view of the lack of other resources in encouraging their children's social mobility. It should also be borne in mind that it is the combination of these factors that is crucial; no one factor is decisive in itself and the influence of each factor varies between individuals (Santelli 2001). From a contrary perspective, this explains why the vast majority of the second generation have not achieved upward mobility.



#### 4.4 Successful occupational integration into the mainstream economy

This comprehensive, micro-sociological approach reveals that the social mobility of this group of migrants' children did not occur either by absorption into the dominant group or via the ethnic community. Indeed, the two groups studied – managers and entrepreneurs – are characterised by their occupational integration and relative economic stability in the mainstream economy. Their socio-occupational pathway and position are thus similar to the analysis of “minority cultures of mobility” developed by Neckerman et al. (1999). Those sociologists, while recognising the important contribution of the segmented assimilation theory, highlighted the pathways of upward social mobility that occur independently of the ethnic community and without absorption into the majority group. These individuals find themselves in a specific situation where they have to position themselves in relation to both the majority group and the minority group they have come from, and to cope with “interracial relations in white mainstream contexts and inter-class relations within the minority community” (Neckerman et al. 1999, 960). Different from both the white middle class and the working class, the minority middle class embodies another mode of upward social mobility, which is not without problems and discrimination.

This conceptualisation of a minority culture of mobility, while considering the specific obstacles, also sheds light on different types of solidarity and the way in which social ties are reconfigured between the different groups (family, community, mainstream), indicating how these individuals often feel they are “straddling two worlds” (Neckerman et al. 1999, 954). This approach implies recognising the pre-existing heterogeneity of minority groups, which the segmented assimilation theory tends to play down (Neckerman et al. 1999, 946) by considering upward mobility as either via the white middle class, or within the ethnic community (“upward mobility through ethnic cohesion”). The results presented here show that there is a third way: individuals can achieve career success outside their communities of origin (it is not their communities that have enabled them to succeed; they belong to an upwardly mobile group, like individuals from the majority population). Managers, in particular, can be seen as being positioned at the top of the socio-occupational hierarchy without “becoming white” (they maintain and even strongly identify with their culture of origin; their upward mobility has not been achieved by losing their origin).

### 5 Discussion and conclusion: towards a better understanding of the adaptation process

*The Integration of the European Second Generation* (TIES) survey<sup>15</sup> seeks to understand the mechanisms of social mobility by considering the national context in which

15 For a presentation of this survey, see: <http://www.tiesproject.eu/>. Several articles based on this

immigrants and their children live and work (Thomson and Crul 2007b, 1031). These sociologists apply two distinct theoretical approaches to explain the different modes of integration between countries: the citizen approach and the institutional approach; the former, which consists in accounting for differences by referring to the integration model specific to each country and its norms and values, while the latter stresses the specific institutional characteristics of each country and how conducive or unfavourable they are to particular pathways within that society. This perspective focuses on the societal context, rather than on the immigrants themselves (Thomson and Crul 2007b, 1032). The comparison of the pathways of descendants of Turkish immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands emphasises this: according to this study, the education systems have different influences on their integration into the labour market, which accounts for the different results between the two countries (Crul and Schneider 2009). From a comparative perspective, the work by I. Tucci (2010) also shows differentiated modes of incorporation of second-generation migrants of North African origin in France and of Turkish origin in Germany, who refer to “types of social distancing” inherent to each country. The analysis in all of those studies is at the macro-sociological level, without any real interaction with factors at work on the micro-sociological level.

Numerous sociological studies have overlooked the social conditions of the migrating families in terms of the social impact they have on individual pathways, with the exception of ethnic social capital, which has been well researched since the pioneering work of A. Portes (1998). However, these social conditions are not the general conditions related to the status of a migrant in a host society, but all the resources, support and aspirations specific to each family, drawn from past or present history that can have a lasting influence on the mode of social integration. The biographical approach can identify these and ascertain their efficiency in mobility pathways.

Based on an analysis of the role of family transmissions, this article has attempted to highlight the impacts of the socialisation process on the social mobility pathways of the second generation. Attentive to the inter-generational aspect, this approach can identify the factors that, in personal and family pathways, can be conducive to social mobility. Ascribing social mobility to either individual determination or integration into the French republic is too simplistic. Indeed, while these two factors can play a part, they account inadequately for upward social mobility because they exclude the family link. Yet this link, as it is updated and made tangible through aspirations, family support and transmitted family resources, will in turn be reappropriated, interpreted and transformed over individual pathways, enabling in some cases social mobility. Therefore, family histories and transmission warrant

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research have been published in special issues on the second generation in Europe: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Thomson and Crul 2007a); and *Teachers College Record* (Holdaway et al. 2009), on the growing share of second-generation migrants in higher education.

special attention, which has an obvious heuristic value. However, the structural context is not taken into account sufficiently and the statistics were lacking until now in France.

Furthermore, it would be an illusion to think that length of stay will make up for lost time. On the contrary, the situation of the young descendants of migrants is likely to deteriorate in line with growing social vulnerability. As victims of the social changes underway, their pathways could highlight current changes and the emergence of new social hierarchies. The question remains with regard to recognition and promotion policies so that the descendants of migrants are at last recognised as stakeholders in society. However, the mistrust they continue to suffer from, expressed as doubts as to whether they belong to the society of settlement, is undeniable evidence that structural and cultural integration can take place without real integration in society, i. e. without being recognised as a full member of society. This observation shows that it is less relevant to determine whether individuals are integrated than to study the institutional policies (and unofficial practices) that encourage them to become full actors, no longer subjects to unequal treatments. It is therefore important to pursue these inquiries, firstly to understand the processes at work during the “adaptation of the second generation” (Portes et al. 2009) and secondly to study the factors conducive to social mobility in order to understand how the logic behind individual actions is articulated with the institutional modes in each societal context.

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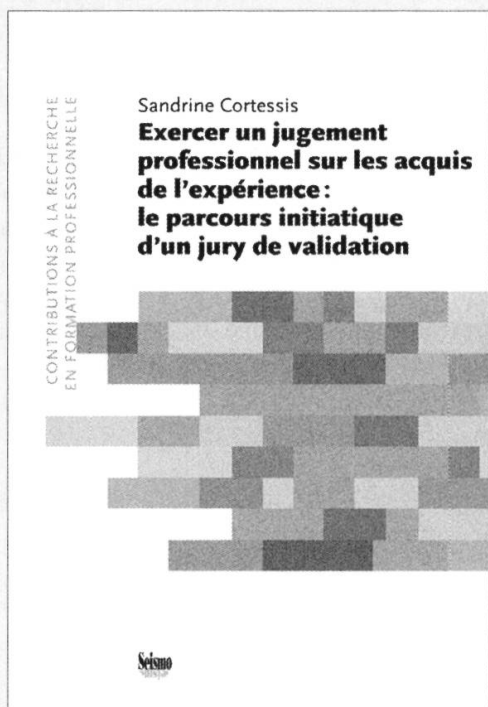
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Série «Contributions à la recherche en formation professionnelle»

Sandrine Cortessis

**Exercer un jugement professionnel sur les acquis de l'expérience : le parcours initiatique d'un jury de validation**

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Produire collectivement un jugement professionnel sur les acquis expérimentiels des candidats et le communiquer publiquement, sont au cœur de l'activité des jurys de validation des acquis de l'expérience. Le travail du jury consiste à élaborer une décision collective souveraine débouchant ou non sur une certification. L'activité de production du jugement suppose une activité discursive à caractère argumentatif. C'est donc cette activité collective de communication, d'interprétation et d'argumentation conduisant à la conclusion de la décision qui est interrogée et analysée dans cet ouvrage. Comment se construit l'accord entre les membres du jury ? Les opinions des jurés de VAE sont-elles à considérer comme purement subjectives ou peut-on leur attribuer des critères de rationalité ? Le dispositif de VAE suppose la rencontre de deux activités, celle des jurés, mais également celles des dépositaires de l'expérience, les candidats, appelés à démontrer la valeur de leurs acquis. Face aux jurés comment les candidats s'y prennent-ils pour valoriser leurs

expériences personnelles et professionnelles ? Quels candidats sont jugés les plus convaincants ? La partie empirique de cet ouvrage se centre sur des actes souvent couverts de la discrétion attribuées aux opérations de jugement en général et de la délibération des jurys en particulier. Cette contribution tente de relier des problématiques d'évaluation en formation et dans le champ du travail, en se centrant sur des activités qui articulent une attribution de valeur à une appréhension de l'action ou de la personne.

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