Who qualifies for citizenship:
The political and legal mobilization of Muslims in France

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Conference Paper for the European Union Studies Association, 2009
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Abstract:
This article aims to deconstruct the monolithic image of Muslims that is often presented in the media, politics, and academia today. Based on interview work completed in 2008 in France with Muslim activists and non-activists, as well as non-Muslim activists on diversity issues, the article explores the complex group affiliations and varying interest formation of Muslims in France. Instead of assuming that being Muslim is simply a religious affiliation that drives political interest formation, I explore the social situatedness of Muslims in France, and how that specific situation produces a multiplicity of group affiliations, all with their own spectrum of political interests, as well as resources and methods for mobilizing on those interests. The article also explores French legal consciousness – what do these Muslim activists and non-activists think of law and courts? I show that some preexisting American political science literature on French legal consciousness may have misunderstood the complex and intense relationship the French have with law.

Citizenship is of primary importance to those who study politics, and yet we often use the term carelessly. Beyond formal nationality, citizenship determines the shape and extent of freedoms as varied as political participation and private self-actualization. It is both the product of enduring principles and of the contemporary social vicissitudes of a particular place and time. And yet, while citizenship is more than a trick of law, its connection to legal institutions backs its definitions with the power of law, a force rarely underestimated by those who find themselves on the opposite side of it. Citizenship is raw political and social power, and its denial has powerful social and legal consequences.

In this dissertation, I argue that Muslims in France are denied citizenship, and that this denial leads to (and feeds on) social stigmatization and the denial of civil rights. How is it citizenship can have such expansive powers? And how is it that citizenship can routinely be denied to those who in fact bear legal and social artifacts of national membership, such as a passport, or language fluency? The answers to these questions concern students of minority rights, the law, norms as institutions, and freedom.

The two incommensurate views of citizenship

Throughout the history of the study of politics, citizenship has meant two things: activity and membership. The difference in these two definitions flows from different understandings of freedom. For proponents of the Lockean view, which defines liberty as freedom *from* government interference in one's life, citizenship means little beyond membership in a state. The meaning of this membership is very powerful, and I will come back to it in a moment; but for the time being, what matters is that the Lockean view of citizenship requires nothing in

particular from citizens other than obedience to those comparatively few obligations the government does place on its people.

For proponents of the Aristotelian view, however, liberty is understood as the freedom *to* participate in government and thereby shape the nature and course of one's life. This classical view, lost to much of the Western world until Rousseau recuperated it in the 18th century, necessarily sees citizenship as more substantial. For Rousseau, freedom is understood as authoring our own laws, and while it may seem paradoxical for those coming from an American tradition where the Lockean definition of freedom is so deeply entrenched in national ideology, Rousseau's argument equates the constraint of lawmaking with freedom. Constraint arises naturally in society, argues Rousseau; the freest we can be in society is therefore to be the authors of those constraints. This kind of freedom necessitates an active citizenship, one of participation in government.

The conflation of these two views is endemic to our discussions of citizenship today. We speak both of "citizenship as membership" and "citizen activity," without considering the importance of the gulf that divides these two views both in theory, and in practice on the ground in the contemporary politics of specific countries. This chapter examines the effect of this incongruity by looking at the efforts of French Muslim activists, clearly engaged in traditional French citizen activities, and yet refused membership into the citizenry. I conclude that citizenship-as-membership is not conferred by the performance of citizenship-as-activity, but rather by accordance to the dominant ideological articulation of who qualifies for citizenship. In regards to the case study at hand, this means that citizenship-as-membership in France is not attained through just any kind of political activity, even that which draws on enduring French political traditions and principles; one must have the political and social characteristics that fit

with today's dominant normative ideal of citizenship in France. As Charles Mills (2005) would say, citizenship is not value-neutral; it includes an ideal-type citizen who thinks and acts in a certain way in public *and* in private, and arguments to the contrary are merely obfuscatory (166).

Why is it important to consider the incongruity between citizenship-as-membership and citizenship-as-action? The latter suggests that citizenship is something that can be achieved via one's actions – one can attain membership in the polity by performing citizenship. The former, however, suggests that citizenship is only open to those who behave in certain ways or bear certain ascriptive traits, regardless of their engagement in the polity. This is significant because it helps us to explain the paradox present in the case study at hand: why is it that Muslims in France and their rights claims are continually depicted as radically foreign when many of them "practice citizenship" as the French do?

The Muslim activists and nonactivists I spoke to valued the same political principles that other French people identify as pillars of the republic, and the activists used the same methods of political engagement as other French activists do. It's too facile to say the difference is religion or race – that the French are simply intolerant to those who follow Islam or those of color. There are Muslims that have succeeded in politics and reached elite levels in business in France, so sweeping accusations of simple "religious intolerance" or "racism" fail to explain the situation. Nor is xenophobia an adequate explanation either, as the Muslim population in France is more and more French-born, to equally French parents or grandparents even. Instead, we can begin to understand this paradox, in all its complexity, when considering the possibility and consequences of an exclusive citizenship-as-membership model, and what it looks like in today's France.

Civil rights are rights to political and social freedom. They are commonly thought of as rights that protect the activities of citizens, such as rights to expression. Civil rights are also

rights to political and social *equality*, however, and it is here that the importance of citizenship-as-membership becomes clear. Who has the right to be equal? Civil rights, including this right to equality, are predicated on a prior right – the right of membership. If one is outside the ideological definition of citizen, one need not – and will not – be treated equally to full citizens, those people who personify the ideal-type member. Civil rights, then, do not automatically confer membership or expand it. Contrary to Hein's (1993) argument, civil rights in France are not rights to membership; rather, their uneven application is evidence of the exclusive nature of membership in France. Civil rights are reserved for those individuals who behave according to dominant French norms of citizenship. This excludes those individuals who seek to practice religion in ways other than sequestered in the home. Additionally, because of the common, albeit sometimes untrue, elision between race and religion – the stereotype that those of Arab or even African descent are likely to be Muslim – the exclusion of citizenship-as-membership sometimes extends beyond practice to race. Hein argues that civil rights in France seek to expand membership; my research into the elite rejection of Muslims in France suggests instead that civil rights are rewards for those who comply with the ideal-type of French citizenship. So, how does one qualify for this citizenship-as-membership in theory, and in the specific French case today?

The meaning of membership: the sociolegal argument

Sociolegal scholars have long told us that citizenship is membership in a community, but more than legal membership; it has an ideological side that may or may not be codified, but that nevertheless has legal effects.

Why is membership important? In his famous study of Sander County, Engel (1984) shows membership in this small community to be fluid and context-dependent; whether one is viewed as an "insider" or "outsider" depends on a series of characteristics that qualify one for membership. In this community that values self-sufficiency and scorns litigation as a sign of greediness or dependence, a farmer who earns his own living is valued as an "insider"; if this same farmer were injured in a work-related accident, however, and were to seek personal damages in court as opposed to help from friends or family, he would find himself branded an "outsider" (Engel 558-559). This denial of membership carried with it more than scorn. The ideological opposition to personal injury litigation was "reflected – and thus reinforced" by civil trial juries in the county, where "awards were very low and suspicion of personal injury plaintiffs was very high" (Engel 560). Membership is thus seen to be a powerful concept, with social and legal consequences.

Sociolegal scholars argue that on the national level, citizenship is a kind of membership that grants the right to have other rights. It is a legal concept with very real legal implications, but contrary to what is written on paper, citizenship is not just a legal status afforded by legally-defined circumstances. As with membership in Sander County, citizenship is a normative ideal, and one must *qualify* for it. Otherwise, one can be denied rights without social, political, or legal uproar.

How does one qualify for citizenship? This varies from country to country, from era to era. While there may be some enduring themes (such as self-reliance in the American citizen), their articulations are often temporally and spatially contingent. For example, today's articulation of American self-reliance that denies membership to single mothers of color makes sense only in the contemporary context of increased social welfare, national debt, and backlash

to the civil rights movement. To understand how one qualifies for citizenship, then, requires familiarity with both enduring principles and the sociolegal identities their contemporary articulations establish.

My use of the term "sociolegal identities" necessitates an aside. As Nelken (2007) points out, there is confusion over the terms legal culture and legal consciousness, and I argue that this confusion easily extends to the concept of sociolegal identity. As these terms are central to this dissertation, they merit some explanation. *Legal culture* is a description of collective meaning-making surrounding the law (Nelken 2007). For example, both France and the US have antiestablishment laws, but how these laws are understood in relationship to the nation's character yield very different relationships between church and state in these two countries. It is important to note that legal culture is neither monolithic, nor is it unchanging. The legal culture in France today that interprets the *hijab* (a head covering some Muslim women wear) as a threat to the nation is a dominant discourse. There are those who disagree with this, however (though few elites do). Also, this particular understanding of the relationship between church and state is but one chapter in the over hundred-year long history of French *laïcité*, or secular government and society. *Legal consciousness*, on the other hand, refers to attitudes toward the law (Nelken 2007). Whether or not someone sees legal solutions as an efficient or viable way to resolve a dispute relates to her legal consciousness – the way she understands the power of law and its relevance in her life. Finally, when I refer to a *sociolegal identity*, I refer to how people understand their relationship to the rest of society and the state in terms of legal rights and obligations. Engel and Munger (2003) argue that legal consciousness "is always related to the evolution of an identity" (p. 250). It is not just any identity they are speaking about, however. Research (such as Swann's work on identity negotiation) has shown that identity is plural and

context-specific; so speaking about identity broadly can lead to a trip down the rabbit hole – a long and surreal digression that does not easily lend itself to the kind of focused understanding sought by a research question such as this. It is of less importance to this project that an interviewee of mine identified himself as a sports enthusiast – though deeply relevant when he described how, as he saw it in France, a black man is understood to be good for soccer and nothing else; apart from that, his blackness is a social, political, and legal hindrance. Engel and Munger would have brought more clarity to their description of the relationship between legal consciousness and identity had they more explicitly stated their interest in identity *as it relates to legal rights and obligations*, or simply put, sociolegal identity.

Having clarified the nature of sociolegal identity, I ask again: how does one qualify for citizenship-as-membership in the French case? What are the enduring principles of membership in the French citizenry, and what are the "citizenship-worthy" sociolegal identities created via the contemporary articulations of those principles? In France, people qualify for membership into the citizenry if they espouse the merits of the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. For those with the vaguest sense of French history, this is not surprising, nor should it be; it is the perennial discourse of French citizenship that has remained dominant since the revolution, excepting the period of Vichy government that valued "Work, Family, and Fatherland."

What is less obvious, however, is how these principles are today translated into actions that qualify one for citizenship. Scott (2008), the feminist theorist and France expert, notes five characteristics that disqualify one from being seen as fully "French": anything short of complete liberality in sexual relations (p. 172); any reference to or sign of religion in not just political but also social affairs (p. 173); cultural pluralism (p. 5, 11); anything short of abstract individualism (p. 125); and ancestral origins beyond the countries of Europe (p. 88). Interestingly, apart from

the last of these five characteristics which unlike the others has nothing to do with personal choice, these characteristics are all defended as "French" based on the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. First, in this context, liberty is understood to encompass a certain kind of sexual behavior, and all other behaviors are less than free, or even dangerous to the freedom of others. Second, the dominant discourse on equality in France is difference-blind: respect is based not on the acknowledgement and discussion of difference, but rather on the equality of the abstract "French citizen." Following from this, those who fail to be "abstract individuals" – those who value their religion or particular culture (as opposed to national unity) – are seen as failing to be French, and as challenging the notion of equality. Third, the value of fraternity today is commonly thought of as inseparable from "*mixité*," the idea that those with differences should mix together, so that the differences become immaterial. While this could mean the mixing of social classes and people of different races or ethnicities – and elites sometimes do reference the important of reaching across these divides – it often is referred to as the mixing of the genders, and discredits those who for religious or any other reasons value notions of sexual difference or segregation, such as reserving a public pool for a short time each week for same-sex swimming (a contentious issue in France). Liberty, equality, and fraternity, just as any other big ideas, do not have fixed meanings. Their articulations in today's French political context draw a clear divide between those who merit citizenship and those who don't – and French Muslims often find that these articulations shut them out of membership in the citizenry, even while the same Muslims may still value the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. And because of stereotypes that exist about Muslims in France, even those who vaguely identify as Muslim in a cultural sense but have a weak attachment to the religion find that they are assumed to lack these

five characteristics that define the French citizen, even if they have them (or at least the first four) in spades.

This is a bold claim. Citizenship is commonly understood to be a legal fact. How is it one can legally be a citizen, and yet have a characteristic that disqualifies him or her from membership in the French citizenry? And how is it the denial of this right to citizenship can lead to the denial of further rights? I extrapolate on an example Scott (2008) provides. "Doing sex the French way" is understood to be sexual liberality; even those who do not critique the sexual activities of others but who prefer for themselves alone to abstain until married are seen as aberrant, as undeserving of membership in the French citizenry (Scott p. 172). As Scott describes it, "Those who don't share this value (Muslims in this case) are not only different, but inferior – less evolved, if capable at all of evolution. The ultimate proof of the inassimilability of Islam thus comes down, or adds up, to sexual incompatibility" (p. 173-174). In failing to "do sex the French way," one is seen as not French. Since she no longer is seen as qualifying for membership in France, she no longer merits other rights, such as a right to respect or to be treated with dignity. In my interviews, two Muslim respondents, one male and one female, spoke of the discomfort they felt when their decision to abstain from sex until marriage came up in conversation with non-Muslims. They both described derisive reactions, being chided as either a "saint" or "sexually frustrated." As the woman told me,

> I had a colleague at work who told me her adventures with this guy, that guy, a married guy, etc. And during the discussion, she asked me, "So, how's it going [interviewee's name]; how is your sex life?" And I told her, "uh… the only person I've had relations with was my ex-husband, when we were married; and since then, no; it's been three years since I've had relations." "What?!" she said, and she laughed, she was completely shocked….That, that was too… too crazy for her. Not conceivable. Not *thinkable*. She laughed and laughed… she was shocked!

The interviewee described with marked embarrassment how her personal sexual decisions became the object of hilarity for her co-worker. Sexual freedom in this interaction was not understood to include the freedom to chose to abstain from sex; the respondent felt deprived of both respect and dignity in this conversation with her co-worker. This is not surprising, considering the articulation of French civil rights today do not protect the freedom to chose to abstain from sex.

The male respondent described this denial of membership based on personal sexual behavior in even starker terms: "If you say to someone that you don't have sex because you're Muslim, because it's gotta be in marriage, you're an extra-terrestrial. You are from another planet." The French principle of freedom, articulated today as a certain kind of sexual behavior, protects those who practice that behavior and censures those who don't. Freedom understood as sexual liberality draws a line between citizen and non-citizen. In not qualifying for citizenship-as-membership, in being the "outsider" Engel describes, one encounters social hostility.

There are also legal consequences for this failure to qualify as a full member of the French citizenry. While I was conducting my fieldwork in France in 2008, there was a highly *médiatisé*[1] political uproar when the question of sexual mores entered into a legal question on the annulment of a marriage between two Muslims. The husband asked for an annulment because he discovered that, contrary to what his wife had told him, she was not a virgin before their wedding. Notably, the wife wanted to end the marriage as well, and as quickly as possible

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[1] "*Médiatisé*" repeatedly came up in interviews with elites and activists, and merits some explanation. This handy French term, which strangely has no English equivalent, is an adjectival reference to media attention. It is also present as both a noun in French, "*médiatisation*," and a verb, "*médiatiser*." Not necessarily part of an "echo chamber effect," a metaphor used in media studies to describe the media's repeated coverage of a single event in relative isolation from the facts of the event, *médiatisation* is a more general comment on media coverage. It is then coupled with other words to indicate the quality or nature of that coverage. "*Très médiatisé*," for example, is essentially a (less clumsy) way of saying "highly media covered."

(Chemin 2008, Vignaud 2008). The court annulled the marriage as asked, citing a breach of contract: according to article 180 of the French civil code, marriages can be annulled if it is discovered that there was a misunderstanding as to the "essential qualities" of a person (Chemin 2008). Mistaken assessments of a spouse's "essential qualities" that French courts have previously accepted as meriting marriage annulment include the impotence of the husband; the former prostitution work of the wife; the husband's living under adult guardianship; and the husband's HIV (Chemin 2008). Arguably, the prostitution case suggests that sexual history is grounds for a marriage annulment; this may have contributed to the court's decision.

Following the court's decision, however, a wave of vitriolic criticism from the left and French feminists challenged this ruling. French feminist Elisabeth Badinter, from the prestigious École Polytechnique in Paris, claimed she was "revolted" by the ruling, "declaring that she was ashamed of French courts" (Chemin 2008). The French Socialist Party described the ruling as "appalling," one that "overrides the rights of women to their bodies and to freely live, as men do, their sexuality"; the French Communist Party added the descriptor "scandalous" (Chemin 2008). The feminist activist group Neither Whores Nor Submissives described the ruling as "regression," an analysis that connects the discourse on the valuation of virginity with backwards philosophy – in this case, the philosophy just so happens to belong to the Muslim husband (Chemin 2008). The evocation of the specter of "backwards Islam" is even more obvious in the reaction of Fadéla Amara, Secretary of State for City Politics and former president and founder of Neither Whores Nor Submissives (and, significantly, one of the few Muslim political elites): she described the decision as "A real fatwa against the emancipation of women…I thought that we were talking about a verdict delivered in Kandahar [Afghanistan]" (Vignaud 2008).

While it is certainly worrisome for those who fight for a woman's right to sexual freedom to see a court recognize female virginity as an "essential quality" in marriage, it is curious that there was not similar media coverage of and elite outcry against the court for finding a history of prostitution as grounds for annulment. After all, prostitution is legal in France, as it is considered to be part of one's freedom of sexual choice and behavior. The fervor that swept across France over *this* particular story of annulment – the strongly worded condemnations of the lower court, the headlines splashed across papers and magazines for weeks – suggests that the valuation of virginity, specifically coupled with Islam, poses a uniquely intolerable threat to women.

There is another side to this story that was often ignored in the media fracas: that of the woman who wanted the divorce. Ironically, in seeking to protect women's rights, feminists and the French left called for the appeals court to effectively re-marry this woman to the man she had sought to divorce, the man who valued her less than her virginity. Rachida Dati, the French Minister of Justice (the "Keeper of the Seals," a very important cabinet position that also acts as vice-president over the entire justice system), was cautious in responding to the anger at the court's decision. As the Minister of Justice, Dati is expected to speak as a figurehead of the law; as a Muslim woman who herself benefited from a hasty divorce proceeding when she was young, Dati was hesitant to see this annulment undone. Following the outrage over the lower court ruling, Dati admitted that the case had "provoked a spirited social debate," and that the case now "went beyond the relationship between the two people and concerns the whole of citizens in our country, notably women"; as such, she asked the appeals court to take this case and review it again (Chaffanjon 2008). Dati also was careful to note, however, that "The law is there to protect. The act of annulling a marriage is also a way of protecting the person who maybe wants

to undo the marriage, because I think that this young woman…equally wanted, without a doubt, to be divorced as rather quickly" (Chaffanjon 2008).

This kind of nuanced analysis, taking into consideration both the larger social question over women's rights and the rights of the specific woman in the court case, was absent from elite discussion. The appeals court concluded that virginity is not an "essential quality" of a person, and the woman and man were legally re-married in the autumn of 2008. There is no denying that the man's motives are repugnant to feminist and progressive sensibilities. But in arguing he had no right to divorce, feminists, leftists, and the court denied the woman her rights claim to a divorce as well. Why would elite opinion and the court deny this right to a divorce? I argue that this is yet another example of the power of membership: because of their association with Islam and the stereotypes of this religion as a "backward" threat to women – encouraged, admittedly, by the man's misogyny – the couple was judged as unqualified for full membership in the French citizenry. As such, they did not earn the full set of rights afforded to full citizens. This story illustrates the real legal consequences of not qualifying for citizenship-as-membership: the denial of rights, and the subsumption of an individual's character to a stereotype of a larger group.

The citizenship activity of Muslims in France

Over the course of my fieldwork, I explored the political and legal mobilization of associations in France that concerned themselves, at least in part, with the fate of Muslim citizens. This ranged from elite organizations with direct access to politicians, to organizations that were more removed from political and media elites, to organizations that were even rebuked by elite politicians and media. There were organizations that preferred to not talk about Muslims but instead to talk about abstract French citizens, organizations that identified solely with

Muslims, and all varieties in between. Among all the activists that I spoke to who self-identified as Muslim, there was an enormous diversity of political goals, strategies, and resources. I also spoke to non-activists, so as to observe the additional diversity of political opinions they introduced as well.

I instantly found that it is difficult to speak of France's Muslims. One cannot entirely account for this difficulty even with carefully chosen terms like "of immigrant origin," "practicing Muslims," "cultural Muslims," or "Arabs." Muslims in France are all of these, none of these, and more. It's important to consider the immigrant experience when discussing the situation of Muslims in France, but not all Muslims are immigrants. Some were born in France, some were even born of parents that were born in France, and some have a parental line with no immigration as far back as the family can remember. There is also a growing number of converts among those French without known immigrant backgrounds. Not all Muslims in France are Arabs, and not all Arabs are Muslim. And what defines a Muslim, anyway – is it the number of times a day they pray? Is it a cultural marker one inherits from parents even if one doesn't practice, or is even an atheist? Also, while there are socioeconomic trends among French Muslims (however defined) that are worth mentioning, they do not reflect their overall diversity: not all Muslims in France live in depressed suburbs, are unemployed, or are marginalized. Some Muslims have even risen to the highest ranks of government and business.

This difficulty points the researcher to two important conclusions. First, one should be constantly aware of this diversity and pay careful attention to how people identify themselves. While the researcher can carefully reconstruct on her own how socioeconomic factors affect a population, she cannot and should not predict how another person self-defines. Second, if

Muslims in France form such a diverse group, diverse experiences and opinions can be expected to follow.

That is precisely what I found during the course of my fieldwork. Muslims in France are diverse, define themselves in plural ways that include more than just their religion, and have for the most part integrated French values and political habits. Though many would cringe at my use of the word "integrate," for as one interviewee reminded me: "The French culture is completely IN us – we don't need to integrate it, it's IN us! We grew up with it… so, it's like something you eat, and there you go. When people say, 'Are you integrated?', I ask, 'Integrated into what? Why do you ask me this question? Do you ask this question of a friend of mine I grew up with, played with all the time, who is named Françoise?'"

I outline here some of the diversity of political claims making that I encountered during my fieldwork. The Muslim activist groups and activists that I spoke to had wide-ranging political opinions, and the diversity of their goals reflected this. When speaking to the media liaison for the Parti Musulman de France (Muslim Party of France), I asked if it is difficult to speak as "*The* Muslim Party of France," considering the diversity among Muslims in France. He responded, "But, *of course*!"

> Within the party, all the questions that seem secondary to us, and that will divide
> our troops, and that aren't essential, we put to the side. *Like what?* Economic
> issues. It's an important question, but we have a hard time having a clear line on
> it….Some of our members prefer to valorize the workers as opposed to the
> bosses. But we also have members who think that it's important to support the
> bosses, because then they're the ones who contribute to growth. So we avoid
> these questions.

In the face of the diversity of political opinions in the party, the party chose to put its efforts into those fewer issues it felt its members could agree on: religious accommodations, fighting discrimination, and supporting Palestine. But not even all Muslims would feel comfortable in this group in light of other stated goals: it is against abortion, which some Muslims are not, or at

least feel should be a personal decision; and it supports "traditional marriage," an implied condemnation of homosexuality (compared to some of the party's more obvious condemnations on the subject) that many of my respondents do not relate to (Nos ambitions pour la france). It is interesting that the Muslim Party of France recognizes its limitations as a voice for "all" the Muslims of France.

Also of interest was the variety of goals found among the Muslim activists I spoke to. While the PMF wants to defend what it sees as the religious obligations of Muslims, some Muslims chose to be in associations that eschew discussions of religion. I spoke to a Muslim who is a long-time activist in SOS Racisme, an anti-racism group in France that was developed in the 1980s. This activist didn't want to discuss religion in the public sphere; like the association he belonged to, this activist believed in today's articulation of the Republican model of citizenship, and felt that the best way to achieve equality is to contain religion in the private sphere. There are many Muslims in SOS Racisme, and even in the feminist group Ni Putes Ni Soumises, a group that also seeks to move past discussions of religion or difference to those of abstract equality. Club XXIème Siècle (the XXIst Century Club) is an association of elite businessmen and women and politicians in France who want to see more diversity in France's elite. The diversity they seek is that of immigrants and the children of immigrants; the focus is on immigration and the "integration" of immigrants into the Republican model (Objectifs). Meanwhile, some other groups that also focus on the question of diversity understood generally chose to speak more about religion and its presence in the public sphere. I spoke to a Muslim activist from Dynamique Diversité, an organization that seeks to help France diversify the workplace through open discussions about issues such as religion in the public sphere of work. The head of this now defunct group, a successful Muslim woman named Dounia Bouzar,

recently published a book entitled *Allah, my boss, and me*, about being Muslim in the workplace in France. *Respect Mag*, a magazine with a large Muslim population on its editorial board, seeks to show the less sensational side of minorities in general, including Muslims, through a public celebration of their diversity: "Every three months, *Respect Magazine* puts a face of the diversity of French society" (Sun).

There are also groups that claim a Muslim identity, or a more specific interest in the Muslims of France while being open to non-Muslims as well. Oumma.com is a comprehensive online internet news site that can claim reporting from some of France's prominent intellectuals. The goal of Oumma.com is to talk about Islam and Muslims in the media so as to counterbalance what the contributors see as stereotypes about Muslims in mainstream media, and ignorance of the issues that many French Muslims themselves see as important (as opposed to those issues the media says are important to Muslims). Among these Muslim activist groups, I also spoke to activists who wanted to make Islam and Muslims seem "normal" in France, or "banal" even (their words); these activists I spoke to were in the groups Jeunes Musulmans de France (Young Muslims of France) and Etudiants Musulmans de France (Muslim Students of France). EMF didn't even limit their services to Muslims, emphasizing their role to help students generally, regardless of religion. This goal is subtly but importantly different than that of a group such as *Respect Mag*: where these activists from JMF and EMF want to make diversity seem so normal as to be unremarkable, *Respect Mag* seeks to value diversity by highlighting difference. As one of the three editors I spoke to, himself a Muslim, stated, "We wanted to talk about diversity, show faces that you don't see in the media."

Some of these groups were more religious than others, a fact that did not necessarily correlate to the religiosity of the groups' members. The Union des Jeunes Musulmans (Union of

Muslim Youths) had as its main goal the education of people about Islam, and language education in classical Arabic so one can read the Qur'an. As part of the Centre Tawhid, the UJM has an impressive library on its premises, crammed with books on just about every facet of Islam. I spent time with some cultural groups as well, such as the Association culturelle franco-tunisienne d'oullins et du Grand Lyon (Cultural Franco-Tunisian Association of Oullins and Greater Lyon) and a similar Senegalese group in Lyon. These cultural groups focused more on increasing awareness about their culture, not just the religion of Islam, engaging in cross-cultural dialogue with other groups in France, artistic endeavors, and community activities to promote greater connection with the community. The president of the Turkish culture association focused on the importance of providing for young adults opportunities to create things and find value in themselves – a theme that is not necessarily tied to religion. The Senegalese association was remarkably similar, emphasizing the importance of providing a space for people to practice *and* simply feel comfortable. I attended a special event with the Senegalese group, a reading and interpretation of the Qur'an; the event included as much of a party and friendly get-together as it did the reading.

Finally, I spoke to some activists who self-described as Muslim, They worked to help fellow Muslims and others in their community, and were in positions as functionaries. Paid by the state, their work could be seen as a mere result of employment; however they all started by volunteering in their community first, or continued volunteer work elsewhere outside of their paid job. These activists that I spoke to all worked for organizations that were concerned with recent immigrants in France, especially women with children who risked isolation in their apartments as non-French speakers; and with the children of immigrants who sometimes have a difficult time finding their place in France while straddling the culture of France and their

parents. I spoke to three such women who worked in various offices as functionaries under the umbrella group Femmes Relais (Women Intermediaries, a social service group with mediation elements). These women each had their own story of immigration to France as Muslim women, and explained their passion for their community work as stemming from a desire to help immigrant women succeed as they had. As with the culture groups, these activists were concerned with giving immigrants (especially women) and the children of immigrants, often but not always Muslims, a sense of self-worth and the opportunities to participate in and become part of their communities.

The differences in goals among these groups and activists is attributable in part to the patterns of generational differences among Muslims in France. Muslim immigrants to France, especially in the early years of immigration, often settled for undesirable conditions in housing, employment, and religious accommodations – renting hours in a bed to sleep as opposed to an apartment, or living in *bidonvilles* (shantytowns); taking low-paying, hard-labor jobs; praying in small cellars. While immigrants wanted better for their children, they did not demand more than the bare minimum for themselves. The first generation of Muslims born in France came into adulthood in the 1980s, a period of time associated with the Marche des Beurres (March of the Beurres; Beurres is a slang term for Arabs, relating to the 'butter' color of their skin. It is not taboo as such a word would be in the US). This was a movement of the children of immigrants that sought equality on *racial*, not religious, terms. In fact, religion was eschewed as an identity marker; while many of these Beurres were Muslim or claimed some kind of connection to a Muslim cultural identity, they usually made their rights claims in ways that correlated with the traditional French disinclination to discuss religion in the public sphere. The Marche des Beurres is the movement that inspired Fadéla Amara to begin Ni Putes Ni Soumises, a group that

also insists on the private nature of religion and the importance of keeping it out of public politics.

The next generation that came into adulthood, that of today's Muslim youths in France, has many individuals who seek to claim their Muslim identity as important to them, as something that shouldn't be hidden, and as something that does not exist in isolation from their identity as French citizens. I frequently heard among this generation that unlike their parents or even grandparents, they felt "no need to apologize for who they are." Interestingly, these Muslims often claim their Muslim identity in a complex way that cannot be described as a religious identity alone. Gaspard and Khosrokhavar's (1995) description of some Muslim women's choice to wear the veil as a sign of their pluralistic cultural identity, and/or a way of making political commentary on French values and politics as one who does *not* refuse her French identity, is an example of this kind of complex and subtle identity work.

Contrary to Hein's assertion (1993), there *is* tension between not just religious groups, but generations; the generation that came into adulthood in the 1980s and the groups they spawned, like SOS Racisme and Ni Putes Ni Soumises, critique these younger generations for their "failure" to integrate into French values, or for simply being "duped" into thinking that religion can be an identity or used to make a political statement.

How did these diverse groups and activists "perform citizenship?" As will be shown in greater detail in the case study chapters, they articulated a high degree of rights consciousness and a belief in the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. They engaged in street protests, a well-known traditional way of doing politics in France. Some of the associations also partnered up with the state to expand how far their message went. For example, *Respect Mag* is funded in part by the government; the Turkish cultural association in Lyon has repeatedly teamed up with

the mayor and local government for awareness raising and youth events; Club XXIème Siècle includes prominent politicians in its ranks and continually lobbies to the government for more investment in diversifying the elite of France; and JMF works with the mayor's office to organize youth events. Artistic projects as methods of insertion into society are taken more seriously in France and given more attention and funding than they are in the US; the women of Femmes Relais, Turkish and Senegalese cultural associations, and PMF and EMF made frequent use of such activities. Finally, following the AIDS blood transfusion scandal of the 1990s in which government officials were found guilty of knowingly allowing the distribution of infected blood (Provine 1996), the courts have increasingly been seen as a venue for rights claims and possibly even challenging the status quo. Legal mobilization is still new to France, however, and only a minority of French people see it as a solution to their problems. Mirroring this, I found that most of my respondents had little faith in the court to resolve their disputes (the most frequent complaints were that it was too slow, too costly, and too petty); a minority, however, did see hope in this as a method for social change. The Commité Contre l'Islamaphobie en France (Committee against Islamophobia in France) specifically takes discrimination cases that it seeks to resolve either through mediation or, if that fails, in the courts. There is one lawyer on payroll for the group (a woman who wears the *hijab*) who works full-time as their legal expert, evaluating and prepping those cases that will go to court.

There are two take-away points following this discussion of the political and legal mobilization of Muslims in France: one, that Muslims have diverse political opinions, life experiences, and levels of involvement in religion; and two, that many Muslims in France are engaged in the performance of citizenship through their political activity. This performance of

French citizenship is seen on three levels: first, these diverse groups share a political discourse that centers on the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Second, like most French people, these activists (and sometimes non-activists) have a very strong sense of one's rights, and the importance of acting on violations thereof when possible – what sociolegal scholars would call a high level of "rights consciousness." Third, these activists engage in political methods that are traditional to France: *gueuler*, associative mobilization with state partners, the growing trend of legal mobilization in France, and artistic projects that promote creative involvement in society and politics.

Citizenship-as-activity: Not enough for membership

Contrary to this diversity of opinions and involvement in "French-style" political activity, French elite discourse concerning Muslims in France is monolithic: there is a problem with Muslim integration into France. Somehow, even though many of these Muslims are citizens, they are still lacking the important values and attitudes that make one French, that qualify one for membership in the French citizenry. French elites both discredit Muslim articulations of French values as dangerous, *and* engage in stereotyping that ignores the diversity of experiences, desires, and claims-making of Muslims in France.

Before getting into the details of this elite discourse, how is it that there can be this distance between elite French discourse and the complexity and diversity of the experiences of Muslims in France? Institutional factors of French politics, if not solely responsible for this distance, certainly widen it. France is well known for its elite and centralist politics, which allows little room for the voices of those outside of power, or even outside Paris (Hinz 2008, Cole and Drake 1998). A political culture of *cloisonnement,* or insularity, exacerbates this: the

French political, media, and business elite mainly come from the same few *Grandes Écoles* (the French "Ivy League," if you will), all work out of Paris, and come together on late-night programming to preach to one another the same political discourses on citizenship and French political principles. This cozy circle even extends to academics: Caroline Fourest's recent book, *The Obscurantist Temptation*, criticized Islam as a backwards religion that fundamentally opposes the values of the French Republic; it won the French National Assembly's award for Best Book on Politics in 2006 (Scott 2008). The state gives prizes, literally, to those who share in this dominant discourse.

There is also a political institutional reason for the endurance and slow change of political discourses in France: unlike in the US where politicians typically come from other career backgrounds, often the law for example, French politicians enter into politics as a career. When they lose an election, there is not necessarily a career waiting for them to reenter. If they are civil servants, this is a possibility; but not all politicians have that background to fall back on. Also unlike the US, there is no spoils system in France. Young politicians in the US know that if they support their party or senior associates, they will be rewarded. This allows for advancement, and thereby a steady injection of new voices into elite politics. This does not necessarily increases the diversity of voices in politics, but it at least increases the possibility that such a thing might occur. Without a spoils system, French politicians don't see an "easy road up," and as there is "no way down" either – no career waiting after politics – politicians in France are unwilling to help politicians junior to themselves succeed. Advancement in French politics is typically a slow process. The French were astonished by the election of President Obama not simply because he was an African American, but also because he had such a short record of involvement in politics. President Sarkozy is exceedingly young by French standards.

Additionally, those Muslims who are part of the political elite share in elements of the dominant political discourse, some more or less than others. This was remarked on with bitterness by many of my respondents, who accused President Sarkozy of politically convenient tokenism. Not all of my respondents were so contemptuous of President Sarkozy's move to place religious and racial minorities in high positions in his government, and some even saw it as positive change; but they all remained circumspect in their evaluation of the politics of these highly-placed minorities.

So, what is this elite discourse? For the most part, political elites maintain a single political discourse on questions of citizenship and its principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity: it is the discourse introduced by Scott – that of the French citizen as a sexual liberal, irreligious (be she indifferent or hostile to religion), culturally singular, abstract individual; and, importantly, that of the Muslim as being its opposite. The fifth, racial element that Scott introduces is mostly absent from today's discourse, though it was certainly present in elite discourse as recent as that of President Chirac – who famously described at a benefit dinner in 1991, while serving as mayor of Paris, the unbearable "smell and odor" of black and Muslim immigrants:

> It is certain that having the Spanish, Polish, and Portugese working here in our home of France ["chez nous"], that poses less of a problem then having Muslims and blacks… How do you want the French worker, who lives in Goutte-d'or [a section of Paris] where I went walking with Alain Juppé three days ago, who works with his wife and who, together make about 15,000 francs, and who sees on same floor of his HLM [subsidized housing], piled up, a family with a father, three of four wives, and about twenty kids, and who earns 50,000 francs in social assistance, without, naturally, working! [hearty applause] If you add to that the noise, and the odor [laughter], well then, the French worker on that floor goes crazy. He becomes crazy! It's like that!...It's not racist to say that. (Guyotat 1991, Pipes 1990)

More common discourse today, however, focuses on Muslims as failing to integrate, either without giving a reason (it is self-evident, we are to assume?), or because they do not incarnate Scott's first four characteristics of Frenchness.

Scott and Bowen (2007) both argue that this discourse of failed integration by Muslims is a powerful one among elites in France. One of my interviewees, himself a Muslim and a business elite who regularly collaborates with prominent politicians, complained that French politicians, media, academics, and businesspeople are convinced that France has failed in integrating its Muslims. "There are the same clichés – the failure of integration. On the right, they say it's the fault of the immigrants; on the left, they say it's the fault of French society. But in both cases, it's false! There's no – ok, there are some difficulties with integration, but there is not a Failure with a capital F of integration!"

As a way of further substantiating this claim, I analyzed discussion in the 12th Legislature of the French National Assembly (2002-2007), reviewing all of the legislative reports that made any mention of "Muslims." In that timeframe, there were 43 reports; I coded 37 of them for how "Muslims," specifically, were described. I eliminated six of the reports from my sample because they were from the debates that centered on *laïcité* and religious symbols and clothing in public schools in 2003. These debates discussed Muslims and the *hijab* so intently, including that data in my analysis would have skewed my results so as to render them useless (the other 37 debates that mentioned Muslims did so between one and eight times; the six "outlier" debates mentioned Muslims between forty and over 100 times). In my sample, there were 81 references to Muslims total. I chose the term "Muslim" specifically because I was interested in how the National Assembly's discourse defined and what it associated with Muslims, as a group of people; so I

avoided terms that might normally be considered to be at least obliquely related, such as "Islam" and "immigrants."

Table 1.0 References to Muslims in the legislative reports of the
        French National Assembly's 12th legislature

Discrimination against Muslims	4
Illegal Muslim activity	2
Muslims outside the métropole	14
Harkis	7
Religious obligations of Muslims	5
Muslim terrorism/extremism/fundamentalism/fanaticism	5
The "veil" (*hijab*)	3
Muslims as functionaries	2
Muslim activists	5
Muslim chaplains	10
Muslim burrial/cemetary considerations	2
Muslim requests on government	3
"Muslim religion" (Islam)	6
French Council of the Muslim Faith	3
Immigrant Algerian workers	2
Muslim soldiers who died for France in the World Wars	3
Muslims on the National Consulting Committee on human rights	1
Muslims as the opposite of universal	1
Muslims as intolerant	1
Muslim involvement in social security bureaus	1
The Muslim invasion of the 1000s	1
TOTAL	81

For one thing, it is already telling that outside of the 2003 discussion of the *hijab* which mentioned Muslims several hundred times, Muslims were only mentioned 81 times in the reports of the National Assembly. This suggests that the 12th Legislature was primarily concerned with Muslims as a problem of integration, a central theme of the 2003 *laïcité* debates.

The data also reveals a view of Muslims as outside France geographically and historically. The majority of references were to Muslims living outside of Metropolitan France, either among overseas territories or communities or in altogether unrelated countries. Another frequent reference was to Muslims as *harkis*. This term, which has among some people taken on the derogatory meaning of a "collaborator" or "traitor," was initially used to refer to those

Muslim Algerians who aided or supported France during the War of Independence in Algeria. As a subset of Algerian Muslims from a very specific generation, *harkis* are not irrelevant to French politics; but they are relevant to only a single generation of the now three to four generations of Muslims that live in France, a generation that grew up in Algeria and only moved to France when they began to lose the war.

Finally, the nature of the National Assembly's discussion suggests that Muslims are primarily interested in religious matters – something my research refutes. Of the three requests made on government that were mentioned in the Assembly, all were religious: they were requests for prayer space, religious pool accommodations, and for the equal ability of soldiers to practice their religion as other non-Muslim soldiers do. In addition to this are the five references to religious obligations of Muslims, ten mentions of Muslim chaplains in the army and prisons, three mentions of the veil as a religious item (without any discussion of its complex uses in France today), and five mentions of "extreme religiosity" (Muslim terrorism, extremism, fundamentalism, and fanaticism). Not to mention six of the references to "Muslims" were in fact place holders for religion itself – that is, "Islam." These were references to "the religion of Muslims," a common but peculiar phrase which is not actually a reference to Muslims themselves, and which assumes a clear relationship between being a Muslim and following Islam. As I mentioned earlier, the "Muslim" identity in France is much more complicated, and the monolithic reading of the National Assembly of "Islam as Muslims and Muslims as Islam" is problematic.

And what of the Muslims in elite positions in France? I had a chance to speak to the special advisors of two Muslim elite politicians and directly to an elite Muslim businessman.

While this may not seem like a representative sample, considering the small number of Muslims in elite positions in France, it's a compelling sample.

Fadéla Amara, Secretary of City Politics, made her career by criticizing the violence and "machismo" of young Muslim men in the suburbs of France as founder of the feminist group Neither Whores Nor Submissives. Her goal was to defend women's rights, and there indeed was and continues to be a need to bring to light the abuses of women by men, sometimes committed in the suburbs, sometimes in the name of Islam. Yet her discourse depicted this violence as if it were unique to suburbs and Muslim men, an argument that neatly fits into contemporary elite discourse – and, coming from Amara, was probably seen as bringing legitimacy to this elite discourse as well.

Rama Yade, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights, immigrated to France from Senegal. Her special advisor described Yade as someone who wholly believes in the Republican ideal of abstract individualism, and that she engaged herself in politics out of a love for the country (culturally singular, identifying with French unity). She did not, he insisted, see her role as one of bringing the concerns of Muslims or immigrants to French politics. When she attempted in an uncharacteristic move to intervened in the expulsion of a squatter settlement in Aubervilliers in 2007, which was composed largely of residents of West African origin, she was critiqued by François Fillon, Prime Minister and her political superior, for not having first consulted with the rest of her party before becoming involved in the matter (Bissuel 2007, Visite controversée de Rama Yade à des squatteurs d'Aubervilliers 2007).

The business elite I spoke to who didn't subscribe to this story of "failed integration" still articulated opinions that fit neatly in the dominate elite discourse on citizenship. He stated he was Muslim, but adamantly denied that "being Muslim" was an identity, reaching across the

table during our interview and commenting on the descriptive title I was required by my IRB to put on my interview protocol:

> "In France, there are not Muslims. There are immigrants, and there are the children of immigrants... but they're not really Muslim. So, when you say, when you say.... [crawls over desk and gestures to the title on my interview protocol, which says in French, "Interview with a Muslim Activist in a Diversity Organization"] No, no…. There are obviously Muslims. I am a Muslim. But there aren't really associations – there are some Muslim associations, they exist; but their question is Islam. And then, there are the associations of the children of immigrants, in one way or another. The thing is, while lots of people in these groups [associations of the children of immigrants] might be of Muslim origin, or culturally Muslim, or maybe personally see themselves as really Muslim – those people, they'll never talk to you about the issue of *Islam*. They will never define themselves as Muslim. They'll define themselves as *French*…. Religion is a private affair."

This successful businessman saw identity as something unitary, and distinctly public. Part of what he said resonated with my interviews – many of the activist groups I spoke to did not consider their main subject of interest to be Islam, but rather social and political equality; the life of Muslims as citizens in France, as opposed to the religion of Muslims. Some of these groups even focused on diversity more generally, and being Muslim was but one of the diverse aspects they discussed in their work. Yet most of my respondents also claimed a more pluralistic identity, refusing to define themselves as "just French" or "just Muslim" or "just Algerian/Senegalese/Tunisian/Malian/Hatian," etc. Many also refused the notion of identity as a pure public essence, seeing their identity as the combination of their public interests in the nation and private associations, be they religious or otherwise. Related to this, some of my respondents who did agree that there is such a thing as a public identity and a private identity that ought to be left at home begrudgingly commented on how other non-Muslim French people continually dragged their private, Muslim identity into the public sphere when they themselves didn't want to.

Finally, the businessman was proudest of his activist organization for having introduced the term "diversity" into French politics; but as he emphasized, it wasn't "American style" diversity.

> "It [diversity] doesn't have the same sense that it does in the United States. *Yeah – because when we talk about diversity in the US, we talk about differences in a public sphere… And we embrace that; and in France, it's a bit different, it's the laïque tradition, no?* There you go. Differences, but those that don't want to be different. The differences that are there, all the same, because… but, we'd like for them to not be there. The differences that want to be forgotten."

This articulation of the French notion of abstract individualism, very present in elite discourse such as this man's, was often refuted in my interviews by respondents who did not want to "forget" their "difference" – who embraced being black, or Muslim, or an immigrant, or the child or grandchild of immigrants, and did not see these characteristics as something that ought to be hidden or overcome. For most respondents, these kinds of characteristics weren't described as *the* central element of their identity, but nothing was; they were part of their whole person, a whole that could not be reduced to a singularity, be it "French" or "Muslim."

Conclusion

While these French Muslim activists are demanding membership in the French state for the sake of rights, using very "French" methods, they do not seek to practice these rights in the same way that is understood by elites as qualifying one for citizenship; for this reason, we see that citizenship activity is not enough to qualify one for rights. These Muslims are seen as incapable of membership despite their performance as citizens. In addition to this, contemporary stereotypes about Muslims, rarely addressed due to the relative absence of Muslims from elite spheres in France (and the presence of some Muslims who inadvertently support these

stereotypes), reinforce the image of Muslims as the radical other, lacking those characteristics that qualify one for citizenship-as-membership.

I will restate the comparison to make the incongruity between citizenship-as-activity and citizenship-as-membership more clear. Like "good French citizens," these Muslims have the kind of legal consciousness that spurs them on towards traditional French political citizenship activities such as associative mobilization, street protests, legal mobilization (a growing trend in France), and journalism. The result is that, in drawing on these rich French traditions and discourse, the rights claims of these Muslims are not that different from those of the French who refuse them membership – they center on liberty, equality, fraternity, respect, and dignity. In short, these Muslims articulate via their citizenship activity a French sociolegal identity. French elites refuse this identity, however, as it does not adhere to the specific way that the dominant discourse on the enduring principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity are articulated today: sexual liberality, hostility towards religion, and abstract individualism. These are the behaviors that give one the right to other rights. Since some French Muslims seek to "do liberty and equality differently," they are seen as ineligible for these rights and the myriad rights that flow from them. The result is deep frustration on the part of Muslims in France who paradoxically feel rejected not just for identifying as Muslims, but for identifying as French citizens.

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