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Of Revolution or Postcoloniality? Identity Practices of Algerian Immigrants and Their Descendants in France

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ABSTRACT

Using qualitative research techniques, this article demonstrates how colonial memory and postcolonial dynamics permeate the everyday lives and encounters of Algerian-origin people in France and inform the ways they conceive of, and experience, social membership and belonging. This work investigates what it means to be a racialized minority in a postcolonial context and to learn and experience the boundaries of 'Frenchness' and 'Algerianness.' It is based on the narratives of Algerian immigrants who have migrated to Paris, France and their French-born children. The empirical evidence highlights how Algerian immigrants and their descendants encounter and structure their interactions with French society. This work explores how individuals draw upon historical and present-day experiences to articulate their sense of membership and belonging. Ultimately, this work situates the idea of immigrant integration in a broader historical and geographical context, examining how 'belonging' becomes a matter of contention in receiving contexts marked by post-colonial anxiety.

Keywords: France, Algeria, identity, postcolonial, immigrant-integration

INTRODUCTION

"I do not label myself in the same way in all situations. For example, I would insist on my Algerian roots if I am in a French context for three reasons. First, because I know that racism and contempt are very important in France, and I want people to associate my academic and professional success with my [Algerian] roots. Second, because I know that the [republican] French nation that I admire is mythical…I consider myself French in the sense that I want to belong to the community of philosophers and writers, but not in the sense that I have a common interest with all of my compatriots. Third, because since my father's death, I feel like I am required not to forget him and his [Algerian] origins."

- Abdel[1], 25-year-old son of Algerian immigrants

Abdel's narrative about identity and belonging illustrates the complicated reality of identity and the tangled relationships that migrants and their children have with places. Abdel's sense of self is bound with multiple places and with the difficult histories that bind them together. Migrants are often described as living between two different worlds, but in this case, the 'worlds' in question are not entirely separate. France and Algeria are not simply connected; rather, they have come to define each other over the course of nearly two centuries. In articulating who he is and where he is, Abdel refers to the 'mythical aspect' of French republicanism, the persistence of racism in French society, and a familial loyalty to Algeria. We can see in his statement some of the ways that people of Algerian origin engage with identity categories and find a sense of belonging in a sometimes-hostile context. In this example, Abdel mentions membership in different communities and polities, recognizing the terms and conditions associated with each. He outlines the boundaries of identities and communities, but then moves between them and muddles them. Abdel is one example of how Algerian immigrants and their descendants learn what it means to be 'French' and 'Algerian' through everyday actions and encounters; 'integration' for them involves negotiating a social position vis-à-vis Frenchness and Algerianness. This

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negotiation involves a creative interplay of identity whereby respondents qualify, reformulate, subvert, discard, and/or rework identities and the meanings attached to them. Practices of being French and/or Algerian both reinforce and destabilize these categories.

Further, the politics of immigrant integration are rooted in historical dynamics, but the meaning and relevance of 'history' changes. This article shows how colonial memory and postcolonial dynamics permeate the everyday lives and encounters of Algerian-origin people in France and inform the ways they conceive of, and experience, social membership and belonging. Entering the national community of France requires mastery of the attributes, habits, dispositions, and mores of French society and culture, as defined by the French political elite. Some research participants are able, willing, and even desirous to do this; for some, being 'French' comes somewhat 'naturally.' But for others, French 'culture' is a constant affront, one that they might resist (for instance, by creating alternative spaces of community), even as they conform to its strictures in certain contexts. This analysis highlights the political, rather than simply adaptational, nature of integration. Integration does not have any clear trajectory or end point; instead, it continuously unfolds, altering the significance of historical relationships.

This article proceeds as follows: in the following section, I describe the conceptual framework of this research by addressing the meaning of postcolonial and how it relates to discussions and debates about integration. In the third section, I focus on the historical relationship between France and Algeria and the ways this relationship continues to shape the lives of Algerian-origin people in France. In the fourth section, I outline the qualitative methods used to gather and analyze the data collected during fieldwork including the methods used to identify and recruit study participants and conduct interviews. In the fifth section, I draw from interviews to investigate the ways that Algerians in France articulate their identities and conceptualize belonging in France; I begin by analyzing immigrant identities, as they function along prescriptions of 'Frenchness' and 'Algerianness,' paying special attention to the postcolonial aspect of Algerian identity via iterations of oppression, revolution, and victory. A summary and discussion are presented in the final section.

Postcolonial Identity in the Context of Integration

This article focuses on Algerian-origin communities in France, examining how identity practices function in receiving contexts marked by anxiety and hostility toward immigrants. Immigrant integration is a key concept in the social sciences and it frequently appears as a 'problem' to be solved by policy interventions. Since the early 20th century, the concept of integration has referred to a process of adaptation, adjustment, and acculturation, whereby immigrants become part of 'mainstream,' national society (Castles et. al 2014). The concept of integration (commonly referred to as 'assimilation' in U.S. literature) suggests that immigrants are absorbed into a host-society over successive generations in ways that render their behavioral patterns and identities indistinguishable from the majority group (Alba and Nee 2003). The fundamental concern of scholarly and political discourse on integration has been the extent to which immigrants are 'succeeding' in disappearing as distinct socio-cultural entities—as ethnic colonies or clusters. This 'success' has typically been assessed and measured vis-à-vis indicators such as educational attainment, language acquisition, employment, intermarriage, naturalization, civic participation, and residential location (Crenshaw et al. 1996; Nagel 2009).

The objective of integration is absorption into a national host society, the boundaries of which are clearly defined and relatively static – both geographically and temporally. Thus, the concept of integration[2] assumes a defined and bounded national society but does not seek to explain or account for the ways that national society has been shaped by transnational historical forces (including imperialism), nor does it acknowledge how national identity is deeply contested. Here I offer an extension of these understandings of immigrant integration to include longer, transnational histories relating to colonialism by bringing the postcolonial element of integration more squarely into analyses of integration and assimilation in the French context. This research seeks to understand how different elements of French society (e.g., the French state, French citizens, postcolonial migrants) are constantly formulating the object of integration and assimilation debates.

In France, discussions of integration have revolved around the notion of 'failure' of immigrants from North Africa (and their descendants) to assimilate into French society (Silverman 1992). This interpretation of failed assimilation effectively places Algerian-origin individuals—even those who are French citizens and born in France—as 'internal outsiders' (Costelloe 2015; Driggers 2018). In discussing 'failed' integration, most commentators and politicians put the blame on people of Algerian descent – failed integration, in other words, is a matter of the unwillingness of Algerian-origin people to shed their 'homeland' identities, particularly religious (i.e., Muslim) identities. In this sense, France's assimilation discourse revolves less around the "spread of French customs" than on "the rejection of the cultural values and practices of migrants" (Sánchez 2019, p. 1).

Postcolonial immigrants thus have come to symbolize the ultimate figure of strangeness and alterity – the Other who does not belong and who is a threat to national cohesion. Tellingly, the French-born children of Maghrebi[3] immigrants are "still routinely (and unrealistically) imagined as 'first' generation" (Rosello 2001, p. 89). To be sure, plenty of attention is given to the material conditions of Maghrebian immigrants and their families and the poor living conditions found in the immigrant-dominated *banlieues*[4]; yet this attention serves to reinforce the main narrative of immigrant deviance, rather than to compel a deeper reckoning with high unemployment, economic insecurity, social exclusion, and persistent discrimination in the labor market. While French attitudes toward immigrants, in a general sense, is one of unease and distrust, it is the Algerian immigrant (and descendants) that draws the most visceral resentments. According to Imad Atoui (2021, quoted in Sofuoglu 2021), an Algerian political analyst, one of the main reasons for this tension is related to France's inability to reconcile their loss and withdrawal from Algeria in 1962.

Moreover, the French government and society continuously draw "a line between 'them' and 'us': that is, between those they deem unworthy of, or unable to access, 'Frenchness,' and those who are seen as properly 'French' and 'Republican'" (Tchumkam 2015, p. 1). These practices of social bordering are inflected with republican concepts and sensibilities. French republicanism is against separation of people based on their social, political, and intellectual views. The process of negotiating identities involves the attachment of particular values, roles, and responsibilities to identities, and also involves the placement of these identities into specific realms of interaction and social activity. It is this context within which identity is tied to a historical binary between the Centre and the Periphery, the colonizer and the colonized. The links between colonization and the Republic remain relevant to contemporary French society. From this depiction of immigration in France, it may seem that France struggles with immigration more than other countries – however, immigration trends in France are comparable to other similar countries in Europe (Boubtane 2022). Immigrants represent an estimated 10 percent of France's total population and the numbers have not increased dramatically in recent years (Boubtane 2022). To more fully understand these historical relationships and their modern-day implications, the following section offers a brief historical overview of the Franco-Algerian relationship, bringing special attention to the transnational historical forces that have, and continue to, shape French national society.

Historical Relationship between France and Algeria

Algeria was a French colony for 132 years (1830–1962) and a symbol of France's perceived greatness and unquestionably the most important French possession (Stora 2004). Algeria was defined as an extension of France on the other side of the Mediterranean, a vast territory to be settled by Europeans and assimilated to France (Stora 2004). Algeria was not merely a colony, rather, it was an integral part of France and was under the administrative authority of the Interior Ministry (rather than the Colonial Office), just as any other *département* of France (Cohen 2003). The geographic proximity of France and Algeria is shown in Figure 1.

The French colonization of Algeria engaged the *mission civilisatrice*[5] which assumed that France had a "duty and a right to remake 'primitive' cultures along lines inspired by the cultural, political, and economic development of France" (Conklin 1997, p. 2). Algeria was to be assimilated into France by means of the French colonizing mission. The official colonial structure in Algeria was constructed with severe discriminating practices along a binary of French citizens versus indigenous Algerians. French citizens enjoyed full civil rights (to these were added Algerian Jews in 1870), while Algerians were ruled by an entirely different set of laws, *le Code de l'Indigénat* – the Native Code (Stora 2004).

During World Wars I and II, Algerians were conscripted into

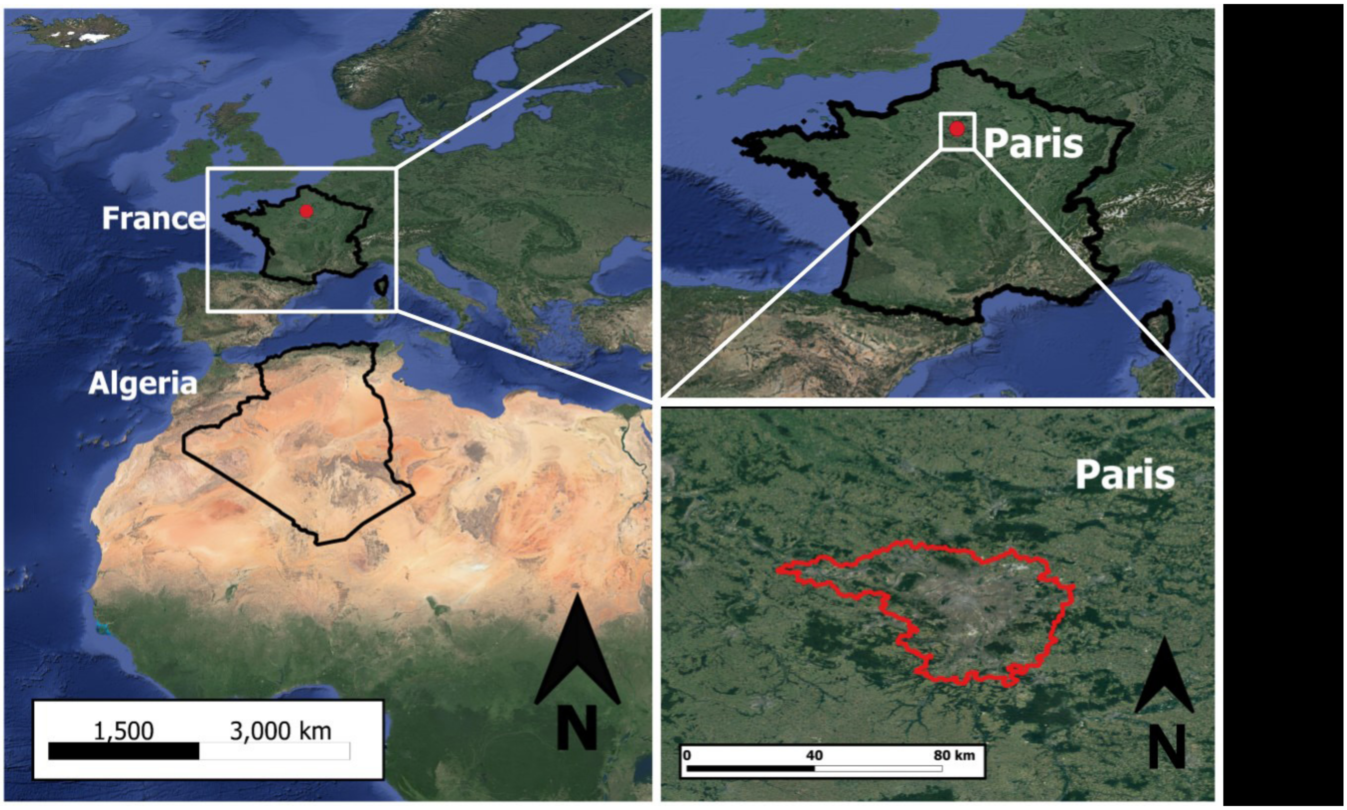

Figure 1. Map of Algeria, France, and the city of Paris, France. Map by H. Adams.

the French army. The military service of Algerians obliged the French government to scramble for new ideological justifications for the persistence of inequality – which inadvertently provided colonial subjects the conceptual tools with which to contest this inequality (Mann 2017). The resolute refusal of the colonial administration to extend equal political and legal rights to Algerians worked to fatally undermine the validity of French assimilation discourse, thereby fundamentally altering the nature of power relations between France and Algeria (Mann 2017). The rejection of rights for Algerians during this time fueled the emergence of more radical forms of contentious politics in interwar Algeria (Mann 2017).

Following the end of World War II in 1945, demonstrations for independence broke out across Algeria. In response, the French perpetrated massacres in Sétif and Guelma, triggering a cycle of extreme violence (Stora 2004). This was to be the prelude to the Algerian war of decolonization, which started in 1954 and ended in 1962 with the country's independence (Babicz 2013). It was an extremely brutal conflict, with nearly 30,000 French soldiers killed or missing and more than one million Algerians killed or missing over the course of the conflict (Babicz 2013; Ben Salem 2014; Stora 2006). Consequences of this conflict continue to play out in both France and Algeria. In Algeria, the war represents the ultimate legitimation of the existence and identity of the nation. In France, the loss of Algeria was seen as an amputation of the homeland (Stora 2006).

Though France officially ended its imperial rule over Algeria in 1962, the notion of 'empire' remains indelibly imprinted on relationships between France and its Algerian-origin communities. These (post)colonial relationships are not static, rather, they are constantly evolving. In Algeria, for instance, postcolonial political instability encouraged the rise of an Islamist political movement which, in turn, led to French intervention and a deepening of hostilities toward France. France, in turn, experienced its own 'imperial hangover' (Puri 2020) with the migration of hundreds of thousands of former colonial subjects to the former metropole (along with hundreds of thousands of European colonists, known as *pied noirs*) in the two decades after Algerian independence. In 2018, France was home to over 6.5 million immigrants, equal to 9.7 percent of the population, and many politicians (including those aligned with the conservative far right) perceive immigration and immigrant integration to be an intractable problem (INSEE 2020; Benaissa 2021).

This historical overview underscores that France is a "country faced with its inability to confront its colonial enterprise" in Algeria (Tchumkan 2015, p. 2). France's relationship with Algerian immigrants and their descendants is structured around "the long hatreds" produced by the original French invasion in 1830, sustained over the 132 years of colonization, and increased through their defeat in the Algerian War of decolonization (Evans 2012, p. xi).

METHODS

The French state does not officially collect census data according to "race" or religion owing to the republican commitment to universalism and its aversion to "communalism" – an aversion that stems partly from the Vichy regime's registration of Jews during World War II (Hargreaves 1995). But the state does collect information by place of birth. According to the *Institut national d'études démographiques* (The National Institute for Demographic Studies, INED), there were 845,000 Algerian immigrants in France in 2018 (INED 2020). Algerians represent the largest immigrant population in France, totaling 13 percent of all immigrants in France (the second largest group of immigrants is from Morocco with 11.9 percent) (INED 2020). In 2011, there were an estimated 4.6 million people of Maghrebi origin (with at least one Maghrebi grandparent from Algeria, Morocco, or Tunisia) living in France (up from an estimated 3 million in 1999) (Tribalat 2015, pp. 1-2). Between 2006 and 2008, an estimated 16 percent of newborns in France had at least one Maghrebi grandparent (Breuil-Genier, Borrel, and Lhommeau 2011, p. 33). This population is not evenly distributed across the country. As in many immigrant-receiving societies, Maghrebi immigrants and their children are highly concentrated in certain districts within certain cities. In 2005, Maghrebi-origin young people under the age of 18 constituted about 7 percent of the population of Metropolitan France, 12 percent in Île-de-France, 22 percent in the department of Seine-Saint-Denis, and 37 percent in 18th arrondissement of Paris (Tribalat 2009, p. 436). The Algerian immigrant community in Paris is diffused throughout the city. There are noticeable spatial patterns to immigrant settlement in greater Paris, as shown in Figure 2. In this figure, the 20 arrondissements of the city of Paris are shown in orange, the outlying districts, "*departements*" are shown in red (92, 93, and 94). The immigrant population of each geographical unit is shown as a percentage of the population.

I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews in the summers of 2016 and 2017 with members of the Algerian-origin community from a variety of class backgrounds, ethnicities (i.e., Arab and Berber), generations, and cohort groups. I used snowball recruitment[6] to build a pool of 73 research participants. I had informal conversations with many others, as interviews were conducted in homes, cafes, restaurants, and other social spaces where friends and family members of my interviewees were often present. I used a series of semi-structured questions to uncover how immigrants and their children articulate their identities, how they describe their family history, how they position themselves in social categories, how they interpret and interact with different "communities", and how they go about their daily business in the spaces of Paris. My goal was to reveal the linkages between identity and everyday socio-spatial activities and behaviors, to explore how people draw upon both historical and present-day experiences to articulate their sense of membership and belonging.

This research applied qualitative research methods in the framework of a narrative case study and attempted to accomplish findings that are valid and reliable through meaningful ordering, organizing, and analyzing the data collected. The highly contextual and subjective explanations of the immigrant experience and the processes of identity creation and belonging presented by Algerian-origin individuals in France required the use of qualitative techniques to produce substantive and thorough arguments about such abstract and unquantifiable subjects. This article focuses on using conclusions to engage

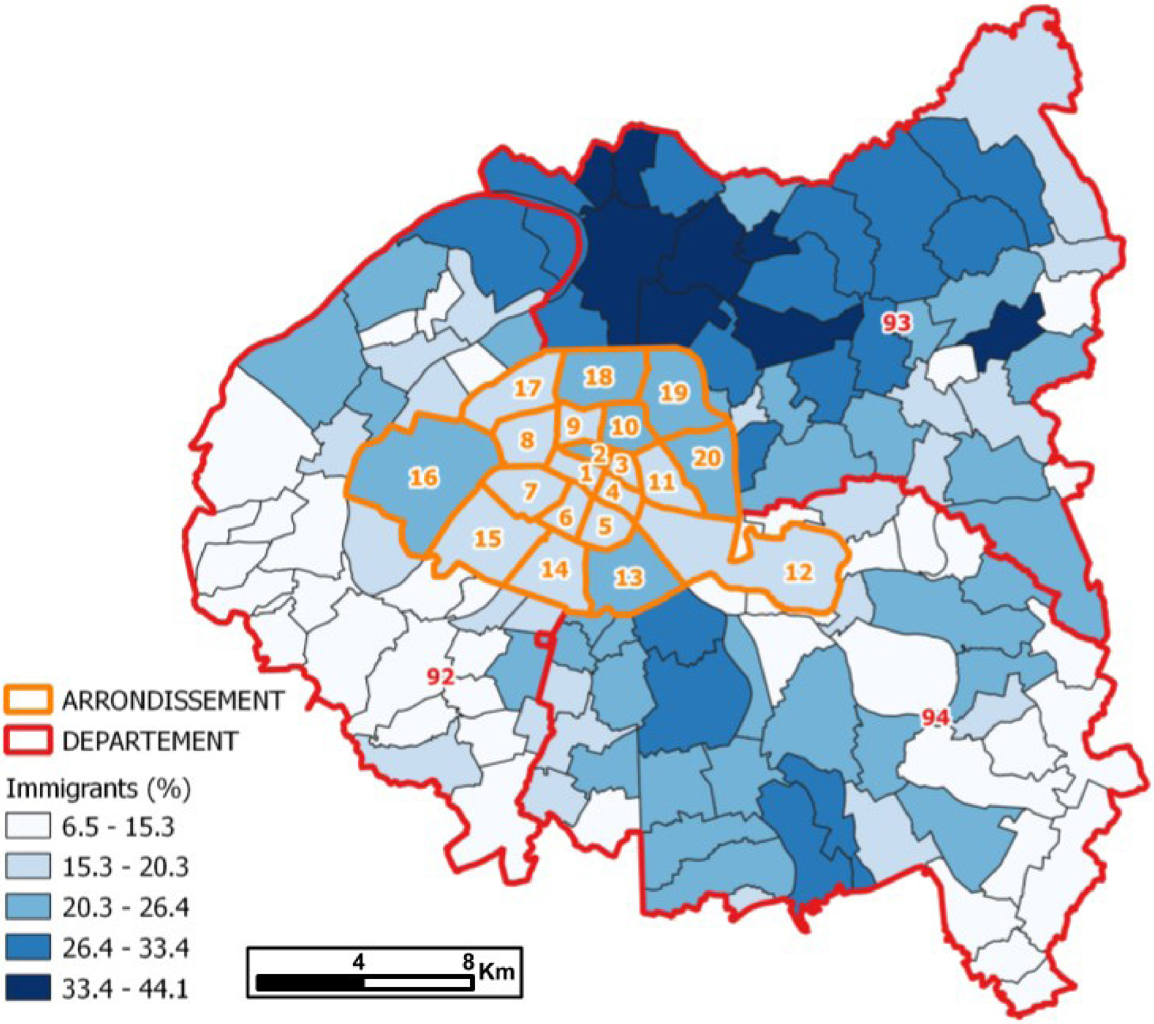

Figure 2. Migrant Population Rates in the Greater Paris Region based on OECD (2018) data. Map from Nelson (2021), cartography by C. Krause. Used with permission.

with and contribute to existing theories about identity, belonging, and immigrant integration in a postcolonial context. Importantly, I do not claim these findings to be generalizable to the entire Algerian-origin community in France.

FINDINGS

The preceding sections have provided conceptual and historical frameworks for understanding identity, belonging, and integration in the immigrant-receiving context of France.

Immigrant identities are configurations of both "self" and "other" that are expressed and materialized through categories of ethnicity, heritage, race, religion, and citizenship. While they occupy a politically and socially subordinate position in France, Algerian immigrants and their descendants position themselves in relation to these identity categories and assign values and meanings to them; as well, they act upon these values and meanings within the realms and spaces of everyday life. Algerian-descent individuals negotiate these identity categories by embracing or rejecting the traits, values, and meanings associated with each; in doing so, they often engage with ideas of what is "appropriate" or "socially acceptable" in different socio-spatial contexts.

My research participants draw on multiple identities and place themselves in several social groups simultaneously. Their narratives reveal complexity and fluidity, though, paradoxically, this complexity and fluidity draws upon and reinforces binaries. Algerian immigrants and their descendants continuously reproduce ideas about Algerianness, albeit in ways that attribute much more positive meanings to this category than one finds in French national discourse. Of the 73 people interviewed for this study, 53 referred to themselves primarily as "Algerian", seemingly confirming perceptions among dominant groups that Algerians are not 'assimilating' into French society. Respondents' articulations of Algerian identity most often revolve around notions of family and obligation, kindness and hospitality, and of morality and religion. They argue that strong attachment and dedication to family is what sets Algerians apart from the French and they define the French as more individualistic, self-centered, and isolated. Their Algerian identification was sometimes combined with religious identity (e.g., Muslim), and a more specific ethnic identity (e.g., Berber or Arab). Here, I am focusing just on "Algerianness" as this is the primary way that individuals identified themselves.

Algerian Identity: Hospitality

Interview participants identify hospitality as a key feature of Algerianness. Hospitality is often identified as a hallmark of Arab and Muslim cultural traditions, and the scholarly literature on North Africa recognizes hospitality rituals as a way of maintaining the family's status (Ben Jelloun 1999). Engaging with this cultural performance of hospitality, Algerian immigrants and their descendants weave common hospitality activities into their everyday lives in France. Algerian hospitality involves providing accommodation, food, and drink to visitors and extends to helping others, both friends and strangers. Hospitality, in my study respondents' narratives, is also associated with kindness and forgiveness – a willingness to grant outsiders some measure of welcome and inclusion within the "community", even if only temporarily. The opposite of hospitality is total, permanent exclusion – an unwillingness to accept outsiders even as guests; this way of defining themselves as hospitably Algerian versus inhospitably French is common among my research participants. Hospitality incorporates a number of social experiences ranging from acts of service, the providing of food and shelter, and protection from exclusion; my participants contrast these "Algerian" traits with the racism and rejection they experience in France. Expressions and performances of hospitality are central to the formulation of community and individual identity – and in the specific case of Algerians in France, hospitality is practiced intentionally, that is, it is practiced *because* it is *not* French. The conscious and intentional acts of hospitality practiced by Algerians in the context of France is an identity practice with heightened importance, both in its seeming ordinariness and its clear difference from what is perceived of as French.

For instance, Said, a 53-year-old immigrant, living in the 13th arrondissement, works to keep Algerian cultural traditions alive in his life and work through his practices of hospitality. As a café owner, Said takes hospitality seriously; he is well known in his neighborhood for helping newly arrived immigrants to find work and housing. Said regularly gives free meals to weary travelers and immigrants; his hospitality is something that nearly everyone in his neighborhood has experienced. During the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015-2016, a "pop-up" refugee camp existed a few blocks east of Said's café. The camp held hundreds of refugees living in tents in an open area under a bridge along the Seine River. Said regularly took leftover couscous to the migrants living there. While French society relegated these refugees to homelessness, Said sought to relieve their burdens, if only with a warm meal. Said's practices of hospitality also include acts of forgiveness. For instance, one of his regular customers at the café is a Frenchman who is a veteran of the Algerian war (he was a French paratrooper) who participated in the Battle of Algiers against Algerian revolutionaries. The two men laugh about this now. Said explains, "It is in the past. If it was my father standing here, yes, there would be a problem. But for me [makes a sweeping motion over his shoulder with his hand] it is in the past," despite the importance of this war to Algerian identity, as I later explain.

In another example, Kahina, practices hospitality in many of the same ways that Said does. Kahina's apartment is often the first stop for many newly arrived immigrants; in her home, she can offer a cup of coffee and an Algerian meal or dessert, while also providing a place to speak Arabic or Berber freely with her. Her home is a meeting place of sorts, commonly filled with relatives who live nearby, neighbors from North Africa, and other Algerian friends from the city. Kahina even goes so far as to offer the use of her address to newly arrived Algerians. Her postal code shows a residence in the 20th arrondissement, within the city limits of Paris. This is important because job applications are often rejected by postal code alone. Bonnet et al. (2016) note, for instance, that "job applicants have lower interview rates when their curriculum vita provides an address indicating a poor suburb" outside the city limits of Paris (p.5). Algerian immigrants come regularly to collect their mail and visit with Kahina. The assistance that Kahina provides follows the notion of social capital—the range of thinking around norms and networks, the values and resources that are the result (and product of) socially negotiated ties and relationships (Edwards 2004). In her own way, Kahina practices hospitality to honor her Algerian heritage, and in other ways, to distinguish herself from the French; this is illustrated in her efforts to help others of Algerian origin bypass French prejudicial practices involving residential location, in this small act, she maintains a sense of opposition to Frenchness. The practices of hospitality shown by Said and Kahina are thus central to the performance of Algerian identity, they are intentional, rather than random, isolated actions.

Algerian Identity: Revolution

In addition to the concepts of hospitality and familial dedication, the notion of revolution is central to the Algerian identity. Just as French public intellectuals connect French identity to the French Revolution, many of my respondents connect Algerian identity to the Algerian Revolution against France. Algeria's struggle against French colonial rule serves as an important reservoir of memories and discourses that my respondents draw upon in articulating their identities and subjectivity. Algerians have a tradition of cultural and political resistance that dates back to the colonial encounter. From the moment of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, "the indigenous society, in spite of enormous land expropriations and violent repression, sought to defend its core identity through a complex range of cultural resistances" (MacMaster 1997, pp. 218-219). During the colonial period, many Algerians refused assimilation, resisting their domination by and absorption into 'French civilization.' Though excluded from the realm of formal politics, Algerian colonial subjects were dynamic political actors who continually contested colonial policies and the authority of the colonial state. The legacy of this resistance plays out in Algerian immigrants' engagements with the dominant narrative of liberal republicanism in modern France. Just as the French hold an illusion of neutral, republican citizenship while dealing with the fallout of their racist imperialism, Algerian immigrants and their descendants maintain and assert a revolutionary identity even while, in many cases, holding French citizenship.

The paradox of living in a former imperial power's land is not lost on people of Algerian origin. My research subjects speak of honoring their forbearers' refusal to surrender to the French by resisting cultural assimilation in contemporary French metropolitan society. Interviewees frequently recounted cultural memories of the 1962 Algerian victory in the war against the French. According to Hakim, a 28-year-old immigrant, living in the 15th arrondissement, "there is a huge proudness" among Algerians that comes from winning the Algerian war of decolonization. From Hakim's perspective, people of Algerian descent do not experience a sense of Frenchness but rather they substitute that feeling with a sense of pride from beating the French, being a part of a great revolution, the victors of a great struggle. He says, "In Algeria when they would talk about the French, they were our invaders, we had a war with them, and a lot of people were killed by the French…It's a lot about culture and mistrust."

This pride often translates into practices of recounting memories of family members who participated in the liberation of Algeria. For example, Hassan, a 33-year-old son of immigrants, living in the 18th arrondissement, is working on a documentary about his father's life as a revolutionary in Algeria and France. Hassan becomes animated when he speaks of his father's accomplishments, and he has devoted his spare time and money to this project over the years. The stories of fathers smuggling weapons for the freedom fighters or of grandfathers being tortured but unwilling to betray Algeria are plentiful in the narratives of my research participants, and they use these nostalgic explorations of family history to situate themselves in French society. Embracing the colonial/revolutionary past with pride gives Algerians in France a degree of personal dignity and social prestige in an otherwise exclusionary social context.

Postcolonial discourses and historical memories circulate through their everyday lives, contributing to their conceptions of belonging and identity. In another example, Youcef, a 35-year-old immigrant, living in the 94th district outside of Paris, describes his pride in his revolutionary roots, as both sides of his family were heavily involved with the FLN[7] during the Algerian revolution. He explains that there were two kinds of revolutionaries: the first kind was actively participating in the resistance – keeping gun caches and plotting actions, typically from the mountains; the second type, often labeled as "administrative", found desk jobs within the French system and acted against the French from within. Youcef's grandfathers represent both types of revolutionaries. His maternal grandfather oversaw weapons stashes in the eastern part of Algeria while his paternal grandfather worked with the French *colons*[8] in the western part of Algeria. His paternal grandfather was so heavily enmeshed with the French that he feared for his life and his family's safety after the war; he was considered to be a Harki (a French sympathizer) by many locals. Youcef's mother remembers her father being taken nightly and tortured, only to be returned to her childhood home in Constantine, Algeria. One story that Youcef remembers clearly is of the night when his grandfather was taken by French soldiers to a graveyard, handed a shovel, and instructed to dig his own grave. This story gave Youcef nightmares as a child. Both families relocated to Algiers after the war ended in 1962.

For Youcef's family, the revolutionary spirit did not fade after Algerians achieved independence. His father was politically active before the Algerian civil war in the 1990s and was part of a group who started the Social Democratic Party of Algeria. When the violence of the civil war escalated, Youcef's father became frightened for his family's safety (because of his political activism) and sent Youcef's sister to France to live with relatives; he sent Youcef to a private French school in Algiers. Youcef follows in his ancestor's footsteps and is politically active in France, regularly participating in protests against the mistreatment of immigrants and social injustices in France. He frequently organizes groups through Facebook to bring together like-minded people (mostly Algerian) to talk about their common struggles in French society. He claims that he has revolutionary blood in his veins, and he honors his family tradition of fighting against political oppression, corruption, and social unrest – continuing the work in France, though in a much smaller capacity than his ancestors.

Numerous participants wove their revolutionary roots into their interviews in similar ways to Youcef and Hassan and work to honor and remember their Algerian heroes and heroines in modern France. Djamila, a 34-year-old immigrant, living in the Bobigny *banlieue* in the 93rd district outside of Paris, was named for Djamila Bouhired, a famous female Algerian revolutionary. Omar, a 28-year-old immigrant, living in the 20th arrondissement, speaks with pride about his mother, who was born and raised in the Casbah of Algiers, where Omar's grandfather worked with the so-called "terrorist cells" of Algerian revolutionaries during the Battle of Algiers. Abdel, a 25-year-old son of immigrants, living in the 16th arrondissement, describes his father's participation in the revolution. His father joined the FLN after moving to France and collected money from the Algerian workers as a "revolutionary tax" for the war; three of Abdel's uncles died in the Algerian War.

These stories appeared constantly in my interviews, though there was not a specific question that directed my respondents to identify a part of their familial history related to the revolution. This 'revolutionary energy' that Algerians so clearly identified with has been described as something like inventiveness, creativity, or self-management (Lyotard, 1988). The participants who speak of their revolutionary identity clearly link it to a sense of autonomy, resistance, pride, and struggle. From a French perspective, the notion of a revolutionary identity instead signifies a social problem with direct links to "Islamist separatism" that is placed squarely on Algerians: "the bloody Algerian war and the colonial past [is] still imprinted" in the "collective psyche" of France, according to French President Emmanuel Macron (quoted in McAuley 2020b, p. 1). This accusatory approach of holding Algerians responsible for Islamism in France has recently been taken to a grossly excessive level – in a January 2021 report, the socalled 'Algeria Report,' the recent brutal attacks carried out in France by Islamist terrorists (one a Russian passport-holder in a Paris suburb, and three attacks by a Tunisian immigrant in the southern city of Nice) ties these acts of terror to Algeria, the Algerian war, and the 'collective psyche' of the Algerian revolution, even though these "heinous crimes [are] wholly unrelated to Algeria" (Ramdani 2021, p. 1).

Macron addressed the specific matter of identity among the postcolonial population living in France, saying, "we see children of the Republic, sometimes from elsewhere, children or grandchildren of citizens from immigrant backgrounds and from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa revisiting their identity through a post-colonial discourse," calling this identity practice "a form of self-hatred" (quoted in McAuley 2020, p. 1). Here, we can see how identity and memory within the Algerian community becomes, from a French perspective, an indicator of community pathology – the Algerian War is not in the past, it continues on in both French and Algerian identity practices.

Some of my research respondents asserted the superiority of Algerian-origin peoples over the *français de souche*[9]. For instance, Lakhdar, a 48-year-old café owner, living in the 10th arrondissement, holds strong opinions about the differing work ethics he perceived between French and Algerian (particularly Berber Algerian) workers. Lakhdar hesitates to elaborate but admits that he does not typically hire French people to work in his café because "they are lazy" and unreliable. In Lakhdar's experience, his Berber employees work harder, stay longer, do not call in sick, and are reliable and easygoing. This positioning of himself (and his fellow Algerians/ Berbers) within French society is part of the relational process of identity formation.

Lakhdar identifies strongly as Algerian and feels disdain for the French. Lakhdar moved to France as an adult, after his parents and other siblings had immigrated to France. When asked about his identity, he says, "My name is Lakhdar, not François" and explains that he is always working to defend and take pride in his Algerian heritage. When Lakhdar was in his 20s, his father offered to help him file paperwork to change his name to something more French (a practice that Lakhdar says was common), but Lakhdar had no interest in becoming "François or Pierre" he says. Yet Lakhdar also shows a willingness to forgive, explaining that even though there was a war between his countries of France and Algeria, "the enemy is our friend."

In fact, Lakhdar sees Algerians as holding a privileged place in French society because of their victory in the war: "We have a special history with France, Algeria has made France what it is [today]" he says. Lakhdar offers examples of how he perceives Algerian immigrants to be more accepted in French society than Tunisians or Moroccans: "In Paris, more of the hotels and bars are Berber, the Moroccans are only butchers. Algerian people, we can do anything, but Moroccan and Tunisian people cannot." In these ways, Lakhdar understands his position as an Algerian in French society as subordinate, but he contextualizes his social position within an immigrant hierarchy where Algerians are placed above other immigrants. From Lakhdar's example, the tension between being at once privileged and disadvantaged is real; his practices of exclusion of other immigrants (and in some cases, the French) in a way that replicates the practices of exclusion by French society show the nuanced ways that Algerians occupy social positions of power and disadvantage simultaneously.

Lakhdar's identity practices follow anthropologist Michael Herzfeld's (2005) understanding of "cultural intimacy," which he describes as "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (p. 3). Herzfeld further understands stereotypes, woven into the social fabric of a society, as generalizations that are "by definition reductive, and, as such, always mark the absence of some presumably desirable property in its object." For Herzfeld (2005), stereotypes are "a discursive weapon of power" that inform how individuals articulate who they are in a wider social milieu (p. 202). Cultural intimacy can, in part, explain why Algerian immigrants and their descendants chose to migrate and live in France—there is a common sociality between French and Algerian individuals that ties them together. From an outside perspective, they systemic racism and exclusion experienced by Algerian immigrants and their descendants can be interpreted as a reason to live elsewhere, but when interpreted from within the paradox of France and Algerian relationships, it is a factor of cultural intimacy that ties these groups (and identities) together.

Algerian Identity: Exclusion from 'Frenchness'

The examples described thus far demonstrate how Algerian immigrants and their descendants continuously reproduce stark binaries between Algerian and French identities, indicating a pronounced sense of alienation from French society. The constructs of Algerianness (e.g., hospitality, dedication to family, revolution) become meaningful to individuals in their everyday lives. Identity formation is taking place relationally, with Algerian-origin individuals formulating a sense of who they are through interactions with fellow Algerian-origin people and with non-immigrant French people. This involves a degree of self-stereotyping, as well as a stereotyping (both positive and negative) of other groups. A key point is that the Algerian identity expressed by my respondents, while drawing on historical memories of Algeria and performed through visits to Algeria or the replication of "typical" Algerian behaviors, is not a simple 'carry-over' from the 'old country.' It involves an active production of community and belonging and the attribution of meanings to one's own behavior and experience. This becomes especially evident in cases where respondents have "failed" in their efforts to be French and have made a conscious choice to identify more closely with their Algerianness.

To elaborate, some of my respondents described their efforts to be French and to conform with the expectations of membership in French society, only to be rejected and rebuffed. For some, then, the adherence to an Algerian identity and an explicit rejection of French identity comes from tangible reminders that they are not French, rather than an incapacity to assimilate, or a choice not to assimilate. Some of these respondents viewed education or social status as their tickets into the majority French identity but found themselves reconnecting with their Algerian identity in the face of discrimination and exclusion. For example, Sakina, a 31-year-old daughter of immigrants, living in the 20th arrondissement, has developed a strong association with her parents' homeland over the course of her child and adulthood. Growing up, Sakina excelled in school, often despite discriminatory treatment from her teachers for being Algerian. Sakina explains that she was expected to work harder in school to prove herself next to her French peers, and she finished high school second in her class. She earned her bachelor's degree in Lille before moving to Paris to find work. Though she is from a working-class background (her father was a manual laborer, her mother stayed at home), Sakina has achieved a tenuous status within the middle-class with her job at an advertising firm in Paris.

Sakina describes that while she presents herself as (and feels) French (e.g., "French" clothing, French language without accent, etc.) she is still frequently singled out as "Algerian" by her name and skin color. Sakina describes the inhospitable environment in France for people of Algerian descent and her personal experiences of racism, stating that she has "experienced racism all my life." She describes times during her childhood, growing up in Lille, where she felt more racism than in metropolitan places (e.g., Paris). People would regularly yell at her, "You're not in your country!" When she was growing up, if her father was late coming home at the end of the day, she assumed it was because the police stopped him, as this was just a normal part of her life.

Sakina told me of an experience when a French coworker was surprised that she spoke so many languages (she speaks six languages); Sakina took offense to this perception, feeling that people assume she is uneducated because she is of Algerian descent. In another example from work, she says that she is not included in what she perceives as the "French" social groups – she describes her cohort (women around the same age, also single, etc.) who regularly go out for drinks after work – an event that Sakina is never invited to: "Maybe it's because I don't drink [alcohol] that they don't ask me [to join them]", she says. Many interview participants identified drinking alcohol[10] as a marker of difference between Frenchness and Algerianness. Sakina's exclusion from socializing with her coworkers, and the social networking benefits within that everyday activity speak to the settings in which these experiences of exclusion occur.

Sakina, in some ways, is an 'ideal' second-generation immigrant who tries to "earn her Frenchness" through hard work in school and her career. Yet though she possesses the degree and the career, she has still experienced rejection in these areas, causing her to turn toward her Algerian roots and become involved with the local Berber Cultural Association in Paris, where she spends most of her free time. Sakina had always felt alienated from French society, yet it was not until adulthood that she developed, and began to act upon, a stronger attachment to her Algerian roots. Having once identified as French, she now distinctly claims an Algerian and Berber identity.

The feelings that Sakina describes of being excluded from French society are echoed by Ferhat, a 45-year-old son of immigrants, living in the 19th arrondissement. Initially in our interview, he proudly declared "I am French!" However, he followed this by discussing his struggle with identity. Like Sakina, Ferhat spent his younger years in pursuit of Frenchness, yet, over time and after experiences of exclusion, he admits, "When I look in the mirror, all I see is my parents' Algerian son." Consequently, his feelings of Frenchness are countered by his feelings of rejection from French society. Ferhat speaks of childhood experiences at school when he found himself only around other children of immigrants. He grew up in the *banlieue* and does not have memories of "French" classmates. When he went to university in Paris, he, like Sakina, was not included within the social activities of his French classmates. Ferhat talks indirectly about desperately wanting to acquire more "Frenchness" because he is French. For example, from the time he arrived as his university, he was drawn to French philosophers' work, "especially if they do not believe in God," because it provided a perspective that he did not get from his Muslim upbringing. Ferhat's attempt at gaining Frenchness through embracing French philosophy and gaining expertise in French subject matter did not achieve the desired result of acceptance within French society. As much as Ferhat tries to fit in as "French", he has repeatedly fallen short of his goal and describes painful experiences of exclusion from French society.

Though he grew up around other immigrant families, Ferhat's childhood experiences were different from others in his generational position in that he has only been to Algeria twice – once at age 16 and again at age 24. His family does not make the typical yearly trip to see his extended family and he does not feel a connection to Algeria in the same way that other participants describe. Most notably, he does not have Algerian citizenship, only French.[11] Further, Ferhat does not speak Arabic, though he understands a little bit of the language. His parents spoke Algerian Arabic sometimes when he was a child but wanted him and his five siblings to speak only French. Here, Ferhat represents a sort of 'double-exclusion' where he is not accepted within 'French' society and has not fully developed a connection to "Algerian" identity, thus, he experiences feelings of isolation between his French and Algerian identities.

Algerian Identity: Identity and Social Categories

The examples presented thus far from interview participants highlight the complexity of cultural identity and social categories. My interviews with individuals of Algerian origin reveal a wide variety of values and meanings attached to their identity practices, as well as many contradictions and ambiguities in their understandings of self and other. Being an immigrant in a nationally defined polity requires the comprehension of categories and hierarchies as well as navigation of membership within these categories. Despite adopting a somewhat combative stance toward France and French identity – treating Frenchness as the opposite of Algerianness – many of the research respondents do incorporate French identity into their own identities and reconcile what might otherwise seem like mutually exclusive constructs. My study participants may see themselves as Algerian, but they also understand that being Algerian does not mean that they are completely isolated from Frenchness. In this way, being "Algerian" or 'French' is a matter of degree, content, and situation rather than a static or zero-sum state of being. As might be expected, my second-generation respondents consistently displayed an increased capacity to explore different identities and to challenge or reject certain elements of identities. Engaging with multiple identities destabilizes the assumed boundaries between "Frenchness" and "Algerianness" and, paradoxically, also works to reinforce them.

In other words, "paths of integration" are neither clear-cut along generational lines nor unambiguous in their endpoints.

First- and second-generation respondents alike embraced and rejected both French-coded and Algerian-coded norms and values. What is clear from the narratives in this chapter is that that French national identity, despite the pretentions of French national discourse, is not universal, but particularistic. While my respondents vary in their attitudes and stances toward Frenchness, the fact of their need to consider how or whether they can be French tells the lie of French cultural neutrality.

DISCUSSION

In the previous sections, I have shown how Algerian immigrants and their descendants in France draw on multiple, intersecting, and sometimes contradictory identities simultaneously, and how identities emerge from interactions with others in particular settings and contexts. Acts of negotiation and arrangement of identities vary within the study population; the constructs of French and Algerian identities work together for some individuals and collapse for others. The ways that different components of identity work together for individuals are indicative of the intersectional quality of Algerian identity in France. The meanings attached to certain identities reflect stereotypes and prejudices, impressions and experiences; thus, contradictions are woven throughout the identity expressions presented in this article.

This article argues that the socio-cultural norms that define French identity and that form the basis of membership in the French polity took shape through the colonial encounter. After the 1789 Revolution in France, the term “empire” “...came to denote the personality of the entire French nation” and the “unification of disparate local groups into a single whole” (Pagden 2001, p. 132). However, for immigrants to enter the national community of France, it has been necessary to master the attributes, habits, dispositions, and mores of French society and culture, as defined by the French political elite (Fogerty and Osborne 2003). When the French empire undertook their *mission civilisatrice* to civilize the native people of its colonies, concepts of “civilized” and “uncivilized” were created with reference to an idealized, universal French culture. Historically in France, there have been clear lines to distinguish those “who did and did not have the right to be seen, and see themselves, as French” (Welch and McGonagle 2013, p. 3).

French racism has continued to deepen the divide between people of Algerian descent and other post-colonial immigrants, on the one hand, and European-origin French citizens on the other. This racism has been self-sustaining: “once anti-Algerian racism had been established and consolidated it, like anti-Semitism, was able to take on a ‘life of its own,’ a kind of autonomy, and to reproduce itself through time regardless of changes within the economy and regardless of the degree of Algerian incorporation/integration into French society” (MacMaster 1997, p. 222).

Throughout the Franco-Algerian relationship, notions of “us” and “them” show up again and again, and like their predecessors, contemporary French governments continue to draw lines between “those they deem unworthy of, or unable to access, “Frenchness,” and those who are seen as properly “French” and “Republican” (Tchumkan 2015, p. 1). The polarization of official rhetoric in France between ‘us’ and ‘them’ reveals that the notion of Frenchness continues to be highly selective and is developed to keep Algerian immigrants and their descendants out of socially accepted concepts of Frenchness. Citizenship and belonging for those of Algerian origins has been, and continues to be, tenuous and partial. Social alienation of Algerians is occasionally attributed to intentional acts of Algerian-origin individuals to differentiate themselves from French society (cf., Costelloe 2015; Driggers 2018); my findings indicate that more often, intentional acts of separation are only taken after the failure of attempts to join or be included within French society.

Still, there is further need to look beyond the historical drama of colonialism and structural racism and consider in more detail the ways that immigrants themselves negotiate membership in contexts of settlement and origin. To understand the experiences of Algerian immigrants and their descendants in France, it is necessary to contextualize their experience within a historical-structural framework that includes postcolonialism. The grand narrative of colonial and postcolonial analysis can erase the individual agency of immigrants and the fluid co-production of contemporary national societies. To avoid the decontextualized analysis that assimilation studies are often faulted for, this research seeks to engage not only with the global level of postcolonialism, but also with the more intimate scale of individual existence and experience – to consider what race, identity, and the postcolonial mean in the innumerable encounters between immigrants and non-immigrants that occur in everyday places and spaces. This research aims to understand integration by bridging the scalar gap between global postcolonialism and personal everyday politics, and by exploring social interactions that take place simultaneously across urban landscapes and nation-state borders.

This approach asks how relationships of power and domination persist over time and how politics interfere in the efforts of immigrants to seek entrance to national society. In the case of Algerians, dominant constructions of French society can be subverted by referencing Algeria’s rebellion against and defeat of French colonialism. This shared sense of solidarity among a “victorious” Algerian population is sometimes shared with immigrants from other former colonies. Yet, despite memories of French defeat, immigrants find themselves in a subordinate position to their former colonizer, which frames its particularisms as the universal traits of belonging. This can motivate some racialized immigrants and minorities to adopt assimilatory behaviors (i.e., conformity) rather than experience marginalization and exclusion from the spheres and spaces of mainstream French society. Others, of course, might bristle against dominant constructions of host-society identity. In either case, postcolonial scholarship urges us to recognize the political acts involved in the everyday life of immigrants.

I have explored the experiences of Algerian immigrants and their children, examining how they enact identity and belonging in French society, and how they navigate systems of racialized exclusion. The narratives of my study respondents reveal the varying ways that formerly colonized people structure their interactions and engagements with people and institutions who once subjugated them and who largely continue to view them as outsiders and foreigners. These narratives show how, in such circumstances, former colonial subjects might exercise some agency in formulating their identities and their sense of community within the former metropole. Untangling colonial histories is key to understanding the immigration politics in France today, and in many other postcolonial contexts. France and Algeria are forever imbricated, and the colonial past continues to haunt the presence. Violent events in the French colonial past have led to feelings of distrust toward Islam in French society (Bancel et al. 2005). At the same time, memories of the Algerian War and of the highly discriminatory treatment of Algerians both before and after independence inform my respondents' understandings of their position in France and of the possibility (or lack thereof) of equality. French society has unquestionably been (and continues to be) influenced by transnational historical forces that alter the ways in which immigrants integrate into, or experience exclusion from French society.

ENDNOTES

1. All names of interview participants are pseudonyms.
2. The terms integration and assimilation have been used and criticized in academic and public discourses. Integration is often viewed as a less-aggressive form of assimilation where an immigrant is incorporated into the host society without forced cultural homogenization, whereas assimilation demands immigrant sameness with the host society by abandoning cultural traits from the home-country. In this article, I treat the concepts similarly as they are concerned with the extent to which immigrants come to resemble society at large.
3. *Maghreb* is an Arabic term that references a region in Northwest Africa stretching from Mauritania to Libya (Maghreb Studies Association 2021). General use of the term (from colonial times to the present) refers to Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. 'Maghrebi' refers to a person with North African heritage.
4. According to Loïc Wacquant (2007), the term *banlieue* technically refers to a "peripheral urban county or township administratively attached to a larger urban center" (p. 32). However, since the 1980s, the term has come to denote any working-class area with high densities of deteriorating public housing and is considered "prime breeding grounds for urban ills such as crime, physical dilapidation, economic deprivation, and immigration" (Wacquant 2007, p. 32).
5. The *mission civilisatrice* was a secular notion that rested upon certain fundamental assumptions about the superiority of French culture and the "perfectability of humankind," and it implied that the French were particularly suited to carry out this task by temperament and by virtue of their revolutionary past and their industrial strength (Conklin, 1997, p. 1).
6. Snowball sampling is a technique for finding research subjects where one subject refers the researcher to another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Vogt, 2005).
7. The FLN is the *Front de Libération Nationale* (The National Liberation Front), established in October of 1954 (Stora 2001).
8. By 1962, there were 1.5 million Europeans, *colons* or *pied noirs*, living in Algeria (Choi 2016, p. 1). For reference, there were just 500,000 Europeans living in colonial Morocco (de Azevedo 1994, p. 25).
9. The term *français de souche* translates to 'native-born French' or 'ethnic French.' The term is used to delineate those with a dominant group (French) ancestry and those without (immigrant) (Décimo, 2013).
10. Participants also identified drinking alcohol as a marker of integration, such that, if a person drinks alcohol, they are 'integrated.'
11. Ferhat is the only second-generation Algerian who did not hold dual citizenship in France and Algeria from the group of research participants interviewed for this research.

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