

Franco-Maghrebi Students' Negotiation of
Identities in a Rural French High School

by

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Abstract

This dissertation draws on a four-month ethnography in a rural French high school, conducted during a period of conflict in French society. Through analyzing ten Franco-Maghrebi students' communicative resources, narratives, experiences of schooling, and reactions to violent events on the national stage, along with teachers' and administrators' perspectives, this study examines how identities negotiated at school affect students' sense of selves. Practice Theory is used as a framework to account for the dynamic relationship between institutional constraints and affordances, and personal histories, experiences and actions. It examines how policies enacted at the national and local level to ensure the dominance of French culture and language have devalued the cultures and languages of its minorities, of which immigrants from the Maghreb constitute the largest and most marginalized non-European minority. The results show that the students' linguistic practices clashed with the school's monolingual and monoglossic discourses and policies. Students and school staff incorporated a subtractive view of multilingualism, wherein the students' home languages were targeted, rejected, and suppressed. Analysis of institutional and ideological factors (namely the *baccalauréat*, *culture générale* and *laïcité*) demonstrates how they contribute to an unequal and exclusive school environment. However, the results also indicate that these youth had a desire to maintain a link with their heritage language and culture, and that Islam—with its related socio-literacy practices—could represent an alternative discourse in which participants defined themselves in alignment with their peer group while diverging from the dominant discourses of the school. The data reveal that some participants' growing awareness of power dynamics and social structures may lead to social changes. Both on a practical and theoretical level, this research expands work on identity

negotiation in the school contexts and reinforces the need for change within the French educational system.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Over centuries, through its policies and discourses France reinforced a vision of its society as “monocultural, monolingual, monoethnic and monoideological,” (Doran, 2004, p. 93).

Writing forty years ago, Balibar—a French philosopher—argued that:

France is today the only nation in the world with legislation requiring (since 1794) the exclusive use of the national language in all public and private acts ... France is the most extreme case (*le cas limite*) of a nation totally identified with one language (1985, p. 9).

Since these words were written, France has remained an extreme case and it is not only protective of its language, but also its social, cultural, and religious practices. This can be illustrated by the law France passed in 2004 banning religious symbols and clothing, notably headscarves—or *voiles*—in public schools. More recently, during the 2017 presidential campaign Emmanuel Macron, the centrist liberal candidate who was elected President in 2017, sent a “letter to the French people” in which he shared his wish for French society to be “à nouveau fiers d’être français, grâce à notre culture, notre rayonnement international et notre langue” (once more proud to be French, thanks to our culture, our international influence and our language) (see Appendix A). Macron’s use of the singular form for both culture and language, reveals his vision of France as a nation-state associated with one language and one culture. This letter sets out a vision for what Anderson (1991) called an “imagined community,” in contrast with the reality that the population of France is culturally diverse and multilingual.

This national discourse plays out, at a local level, in very real and personal ways. French institutions have enacted this model of integration, wherein for example as explained below, school policies have reinforced the exclusive usage of French and have banned Muslim female students from wearing the veil. For these reasons, the French model is actually often referred as the “assimilation model,” (Simon, 2012), and language has played a major role in how this

assimilation is enacted. In the school where the present study was undertaken, for example, there was a French only policy in the school's "principes de vie" (life's principles) (out of 10 principles). Indeed, principle number 6 says: "l'élève doit parler la **langue française** en dehors des cours de langues vivantes" (Students must speak the **French language** outside of foreign language classes) (See Appendix B). The "French language" appears in bold letters, highlighting the importance of this message.

The aim of this study is to analyze the effect discourses and policies have on Franco-Maghrebi students' experiences of schooling and their negotiations of identities. By Franco-Maghrebi I am referring to students whose origins are North African, more precisely Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia—three former French colonies.

To introduce my research, I first set out a statement of the problem, by examining how languages policies and ideologies reflect the domination of the French language and culture. I also contextualize the work by examining key social, political and historical aspects of the relationship between France and the Maghreb. Following this, I outline the purpose of the study, exploring the realities faced by Franco-Maghrebi students preparing for the *baccalauréat*¹ in French literature in a rural French high-school.

Statement of the Problem

France and its monolingual tradition. The construction and maintenance of France as a nation-state lies on the values attributed to the French language and its role in achieving national cohesion. Key policies and institutions, which illustrate France's long monolingual tradition, are rooted deep in its history and national identity.

¹ The *baccalauréat* is a national examination taken by students at the end of secondary school, and it is the required diploma to pursue university studies.

The first relevant policy dates from 1539—the ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts posits that all legal, official, and administrative documents must be pronounced, registered and delivered in the French language only. This policy can be understood as an assertion of centralized authority, enacted in a context where there were many living regional languages and dialects, as well as the use of Latin in official and religious contexts. A century later, the *Académie Française* was created in 1636 to establish what is considered proper French, and to protect the purity of the French language especially against the influence of other languages. This institution, still active today, acts as the official authority and custodian of the French language. As Heller describes, it undertakes “the work of linguistic regimentation” and “the production and reproduction of linguistic norm” (2006, p. 11).

A century after the French Revolution, the policies of Jules Ferry² not only established compulsory schooling, but also ensured the supremacy of the French language. Indeed, from 1881, compulsory education was established solely through the French language, thereby imposing a monolingual policy throughout the nation.

The third policy I want to highlight is in the section 2 of the 1958 constitution: “La langue de la République est le français” (The language of the Republic is French). This section was then reaffirmed in the first section of the 1992 constitution, in the light of the Maëstricht treaty signed by the European members to further European integration. At the time, this policy came in response to the “threat” the English language posed to French within Europe, and its aim was to assert the position of the French language.

² Jules Ferry was a French statesman from 1870 to 1895. He is remembered for installing free, compulsory, secular education in 1882, and for extending the French colonial empire.

In contrast to this, Bernard Cerquiglini, a French linguist and the former director of the National Institute for the French language, was tasked with creating a list of languages that were commonly spoken in France at that time, in order to accurately depict the diversity of the linguistic landscape (Cerquiglini, 1999). This was completed in preparation for a vote to ratify the *European Charter for Regional and Minority languages*. In his work, Cerquiglini showed 75 languages actively in use in France at that time. However, when faced with this reality, the Charter was not ratified by France on constitutional grounds, because it was seen as “contrary to the ‘principles of indivisibility of the Republic...,’” and that it was “contrary to the rule established ... under which ‘the language of the Republic is French’” (Décision as cited in Moïse, 2007, p. 222). This decision again reflected a perception that the founding principles of the Republic are under threat from multiculturalism and multilingualism: in particular the principle that “La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale” (France is an indivisible secular, democratic, and social Republic)” Section 1 of the 1958 5th constitution (gouvernement français 1958).

In line with these practices, schools play a central part in ensuring the maintenance and dominance of standard French, that is to say a formal written form of the language. In doing so, they devalue the legitimacy of the language of its minorities, with Arabic being the second most widely spoken language in France after French (Talon, 2012). The French education system has indeed been a reproducer of the republican values and languages policies cited above. In his work, Pierre Bourdieu, denounced the role of schools in the reproduction of social inequalities, and according to Bourdieu, the education system “ne s’adresse en fait, sous les dehors irréprochables de l’égalité et de l’universalité, qu’à (...) des étudiants qui sont dans le cas particulier de détenir un héritage culturel conforme aux exigences culturelles de l’école” (in fact

only addresses, under its irreproachable appearances of equality and universality, students who are in the particular context to obtain a cultural heritage conform with the cultural requirements of the school) (1966, p. 337). As I demonstrate in this study, schools not only favor the language and culture of the dominant group, but also exclude and marginalize Franco-Maghrebi students.

In addressing these discourses, this paper sets out to show that the same policies and perceptions that have reinforced this monolingual view of French society, likewise are applied to the expression of culture, and resistance to diversity, with a strongly negative impact on students' expression of identity within the French public school system. By identity, in this case, I am referring to how individuals express—or are constrained in expressing—themselves through their linguistic, social and cultural practices.

Contemporary problems. By enforcing an ideology of linguistic and cultural uniformity—an imaginary homogeneous community—French society has denied its changing social realities and the cultural and linguistic reality of its diverse peoples, leading to exclusion and rising tensions. As a consequence, although immigrants from the Maghreb constitute the largest non-European minority (30% of the immigrant population in France, second to 36% of immigrants who originate from European countries), they are the most marginalized minority. Indeed, the statistics on inequality in relation to this population are stark. The latest national census (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques [INSEE], 2012) revealed that compared to other immigrants and compared to youth of French origins, the Franco-Maghrebi population has the highest rate of young people leaving school without a diploma (24% compared with a national average of 12%) and the lowest rate of success on the *baccalauréat* examination (60% compared with a national average of 90%). They also have the highest rate of unemployment five years after finishing school (39% compared with a national average of 18%).

Significantly, while 19% of French people admitted having been victims of discrimination based on their origins, this proportion reached 86% for people with Maghrebi origins.

Societal discourses and the living conditions of people of Maghrebi origin in France have led to increasing tension, and reactions both inside and outside that community—and, at times, violence. At the extreme, during the period of this study, French society was rocked by the series of attacks that have occurred on French soil, starting with January 2015 and *Charlie Hebdo* events, followed a few months later, on November 13, 2015, by a series of coordinated attacks throughout the night in Paris. In both cases, people of Franco-Maghrebi origin were involved in carrying out the attacks.

At the other extreme, in the recent decades, the Front National (FN)—France's extreme right party—has gained popularity, with its leader, Marine Le Pen, winning enough votes to pass the first round of election in the 2017 presidential elections. This rise reflects a strong rejection of diversity by a significant proportion of the population. This is especially true in rural France—in areas such as that in which this study is situated—where the FN came first in many towns and rural villages. Although, on the surface, this can be traced to the aftermath of 9/11, and the *Charlie Hebdo* and November Paris attacks, France has undergone waves of anti-immigrant movements and Islamophobia, which have aggravated the tensions surrounding the Franco-Maghrebi community in France. Though it has manifested directly in reaction to contemporary events, this tension is rooted in France's colonial past.

According to Mehta (2010), France's colonial past, and the fact its society has not adopted a postcolonial discourse, might be at the core of the issue; and the reason why France "locates Arab-Muslims as permanent outsiders [in] an attempt to disengage with its violent past"

(p. 175). Because of the violence of the historical relationship between France and its former colonies in the Maghreb, this research needs to be seen through the lens of postcolonialism.

France and colonialism. Algeria was the first country in North Africa to be colonized by the French, in 1830, followed by Tunisia in 1881 and Morocco in 1912. Morocco and Tunisia both established their independence in 1956, and Algeria in 1962. Although the French occupation and the wars of independence caused many deaths and great damage to the Moroccan, Tunisian and Algerian people, to their cultures and to their countries, Algeria lived under French rule for 132 years, longer than its neighboring countries Morocco and Tunisia.

The Algerian War of Independence lasted for 8 years. It was an extremely complex and violent conflict, where the French army commonly used torture, and which led to a civil war between different communities in Algeria. As we will see later in this dissertation, this longer and more violent form of colonization still has an impact on how youth of Algerian origin position themselves and are positioned by others in France. The Algerian War of Independence, and the moral implications of French colonialism, still remain a taboo in France. In February 2005, then-president Jacques Chirac tried to rewrite this colonial past by introducing a law that required teachers to teach students the “rôle positif” (positive role) of French colonial and military presence overseas³. Many French historians and teachers then condemned both the

³ “Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l’histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l’armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit..”

“School curricula will acknowledge in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, notably in North Africa, and will grant the history and sacrifices of the soldiers of the French Army who came from these territories the eminent place they have a right”). (Gouvernement Français, 2005)

government's intrusion in the classroom, and its attempt to erase colonial atrocities. After a year of virulent criticism, the law was amended in February 2006, to remove the controversial words "rôle positif."

During all my schooling years in France (between 1980 and 1993), the French colonialism of the Maghreb and the Algerian War of Independence were never mentioned—they were simply not in my history books. While conducting fieldwork, I noted that the French colonial past is now part of the history curricula, but as several participants reported, it is a "French version." The refusal to look into history plays out not only in the public discourse, but in private as well. Goellner (2018), wrote about her experience as a student abroad in Paris with her host father. While they were at looking pictures, she noticed one photo that stood out, a picture of "a young man (...) seated on a tank in desert fatigues, an indiscernible expression on his face" (p. 1). She recalled what happened when she asked her host father about this picture:

When I asked him about it, my question was met with an uncomfortable silence. He quickly turned the page, clearly not wanting to talk about it. I later learned that the photograph was taken when he served for the French in the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). According to other family members, he hardly ever spoke of his wartime experience. It was an uncomfortable moment of silence in a relationship otherwise characterized by open friendship. My host father's silence haunted me. (p. 1)

This silence haunted her to the point that, years later, she did her own research on the subject, leading to a book on *French Orientalist Literature in Algeria, 1845-1884*. Like Goellner, what I know about the atrocious events that took place during this war is based on my own effort to seek it out and learn. This public and private silence from the people who experienced the events, and the government's efforts to downplay the negative impact of its colonial history, together form a denial of culpability which affects French society.

A 2017 editorial *Le Monde*, described colonialism as "un blocage durable" (lasting block) of French history—France is still "malade de son passé" (ill from her past) (Propos de

Macron, 2017). Likewise, a debate which occurred during the presidential election campaign in 2016-2017 illustrates France's complex position on the topic of colonialism. On one side of the spectrum, in August 2016, François Fillon, a candidate from a right-wing party, declared that: "...la France n'est pas coupable d'avoir voulu faire partager sa culture aux peuples d'Afrique, d'Asie et d'Amérique du Nord" (France is not guilty of having wanted *to share its culture* with the peoples of Africa, Asia and North America) (italics added). Fillon's choice of words deliberately reframe the violent invasion and brutal, prolonged colonialization of these countries as "sharing culture," implying a benevolent motivation, and benefit for the colonized. On the other side of the spectrum, Emmanuel Macron, the centrist candidate, now president, said in a television interview in Algiers, that:

La colonisation fait partie de l'histoire française. C'est un crime, c'est un crime contre l'humanité, c'est une vraie barbarie et ça fait partie de ce passé que nous devons regarder en face en présentant aussi nos excuses à l'égard de celles et ceux envers lesquels nous avons commis ces gestes"

(Colonization is part of French history. It is a crime, it is a crime against humanity, it is genuinely barbaric and constitutes a part of this past that we must confront by apologizing towards those against whom we have committed these acts). (Berdah, 2017)

Macron was the first French politician to publicly denounce colonialism in such strong terms, and to call for France to apologize for this crime. Tellingly, however, whereas François Fillon's speech raised little concern amongst the French people, Macron's criticism of colonialism caused an uproar amongst his rivals, and many French people accused him of dividing the country by attacking its history and image abroad. Faced with a storm of criticism, and a loss of popularity in polls, Macron caved in to the criticism and withdrew his comments. Macron having to backtrack from denouncing colonialism clearly shows how, for many French people, it is still a topic they are not ready to confront.

According to Begag (2007a), while decolonization in the Maghreb ended “institutionalized racism” in this region, “no comparable measures were taken to address racism in the North, in France itself” (p. 27). Indeed, when immigrants started to move to France during the 1960’s, as Begag wrote, French politicians “denied or minimized the existence of ethnic discrimination” (p. 27) and as a result, colonial relations of power were reproduced.

The present study will confirm how this denial reinforces a damaging power dynamic which continues to exclude and diminish people from the Franco-Maghrebi communities from expression of their identity, and full and equal participation in French society.

Purpose of the Study

My interest in Franco-Maghrebi youth started the year I went to teach French as a foreign language in Morocco. The same year, a close friend started teaching French in a community college in one of the poorest suburbs of Paris, where a high proportion of her students were of Maghrebi origin. When comparing our teaching experiences, we realized that although our students had similar cultural backgrounds, their behavior and participation at school was quite dissimilar. While my students in Morocco were serious, keen, and invested in learning French, my friend's students—of immigrant origin—seemed rebellious and difficult, rejecting anything that had to do with school. Their linguistic practices were also different: while my students wanted to learn standard French, hers often used *Verlan*⁴ and Arabic. This difference in attitude towards learning led me to hypothesize that the impact that the social and political environment had on the students had to be taken into account to understand their experience of schooling. During my further studies, I have connected this to the *social turn* in Second Language

⁴*Verlan* is a contemporary French sociolect, mostly used among multiethnic youth populations. It features inversion of syllables and borrowings from minority languages of its community, mostly Arabic, Portuguese, and Romani, but also English.

Acquisition, (Block, 2003), in which theorists have pointed to the need to integrate the identity of individual language users in a larger social world (Firth & Wagner, 1997), while showing how relations of power can affect language learning and usage (Norton Pierce, 1995, Norton 2000, 2013; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

In order to assess how these broad social, political and cultural factors impact and are embodied in the lives of individuals, I have focused my study on the experiences and narratives of 10 Franco-Maghrebi teenagers in a high school in rural France, along with their teachers and the school administrators' perspectives. Through a 4-month ethnography, I show how these issues, though rooted in the socio-political climate and historical contexts, manifest in the lived experience of these students, as they work their way through a critical year in their education. The purpose of my study is to analyze how Franco-Maghrebi students negotiate their identities within the French education system; that is to say how they identify themselves and how they are identified by others within this system. First, I analyze what their communicative resources are, how they deploy them in the classroom and in the community. Second, I describe the students' experiences of schooling, and finally, I study how their participation in schooling impacts their negotiation of identities. To draw these broad, societal issues into an analysis of the experiences and practices of individuals, I have anchored my analysis in Practice Theory.

Reflecting on how the students negotiate their identities, this framework allows me to describe the dynamic relationship between the constraints and affordances of the school; French socio-political history and events in France, and the individual experiences and actions of the participants. In other words, as Ortner (1986) wrote, this theory accounts for "the ways in which a given social order mediates the impact of the external events by shaping ways in which actors experience and respond to those events" (p. 200).

This study contributes to the discussion in applied linguistics pertaining to the connections between language use, schooling and identity negotiation. In addition, I make recommendations for teachers and administrators in the French education system, as the data emphasize the exclusive and stigmatizing practices of the system, and point to the need for change.

In this chapter, I have provided information specific to the French context within which my study is situated and I have identified some key issues this study will further explore. Next, I report on the main contributions of work on identity as well as studies in the French context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review of Main Works and Findings

In this chapter I argue that an identity approach provides a necessary framework for integrating language users with sociopolitical and cultural contexts. First, I situate this framework in a review of issues of identity in the fields of second language acquisition and, more broadly, applied linguistics. I talk specifically about studies focusing on identity work at school and ways in which research has been conducted in the French context. I conclude by highlighting gaps in the literature.

Identity Work in SLA and Applied Linguistics

Norton Pierce's 1995 article, "Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning," could be considered as the first major call to introduce identity in SLA (Block, 2007b, p. 2). Norton Pierce wrote that theorists in this field had not yet "developed a comprehensive theory of social identity which integrates the language learner and the language learner context" nor had they "addressed how relations of power affect interaction between language learners and target language speakers" (p. 9).

As Block (2007a) remarked, "before the 1990s there was little or no research examining identity" (p. 866). This is partly due to the fact that mainstream SLA researchers, while accounting for acquisition, had mainly focused on language development of learners, which they perceived as an individual, internal cognitive process. What's more, according to Ellis (1997), the main concern for researchers was to find the internal conditions that lead learners to "change their grammar from one time to another by adding rules, deleting rules, and reconstructing the whole system ... as they gradually increase ... their L2 knowledge" (p. 33). The context in which the language developed, or not, was not seen as a relevant factor, nor was the learner as a complex individual. Many researchers (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Young & Astarita, 2013) have

warned against the dangers of such a narrow focus on language, in line with Bourdieu's (1991) comment about structural linguistics:

Bracketing out the social which allows language or any other symbolic object to be treated like an end in itself, contributed considerably to the success of structural linguistics, for it endowed the 'pure' exercises that characterize a purely internal and formal analysis with the charm of a game devoid of consequences. (p. 34)

As part of a more general move in SLA towards socially informed theories, known as the "social turn" (Block, 2003), sociocultural contexts as well as the learners' multiple identities, have been incorporated into the field and in the case of identity work, they have become the topic (Firth & Wagner, 1997) of inquiry as researchers have tried to explore the relationship between identity and SLA. In their seminal paper, Firth and Wagner (1997) called for a reconceptualization of the field, pointing at the lingering imbalance between overwhelming cognitive approaches to SLA and social ones. They questioned many fundamental concepts in the field and their most controversial point came to be the prioritizing of "the individual-as-nonnative speaker/learner" over "the participant-as-language-user." In other words, Firth and Wagner critiqued "the SLA's general preoccupation with the *learner*, at the expense of other potentially relevant social identities" (p. 288). In 2007, Firth and Wagner got the opportunity to go back over this distinction and a debate ensued, which they saw as a "symptom of the cognitivist, reductionist mind-set that prevails in mainstream SLA" (p. 806) and a way of erecting barriers between the cognitive and social approaches and not wanting to expand the theories of the field. In my study I refer to the participants as users or speakers (as opposed to non-native speakers or learners) first because, in alignment with the sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) I believe acquisition cannot occur without use. More specifically, according to Lantolf and Thorne, SCT is a "theory of mind [...] that recognizes the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play

in organizing uniquely human forms of thinking” (p. 1). Second, because I view the student participants as legitimate users of the various languages that constitute their linguistic repertoires, and finally as my data illustrate, labels such as “non-native speakers,” “first vs. second language” do not reflect the participants’ reality.

Due to both Firth & Wagner’s call for a more social approach to SLA and Norton’s call to address issues of identity, in the last two decades identity work has gained more recognition in SLA. Block (2007a) pointed out “a marked increase in the number of publications” (p. 863), which Norton and Toohey (2011) referred to as “an explosion of interest in identity” not only in SLA but in the broader field of applied linguistics. Other authors have point out both the relevance and increase of research on identity. According to Zuengler and Miller (2006) “language and identity, has gained footing in the field and become a research area in its own right” (p. 43), and Ortega (2009) claimed “the study of identity and L2 learning is one of the most vibrant research areas in the wider field of applied linguistics” (p. 241). Duff (2012) shared this optimism when she predicted that “research on identity and agency in SLA shows every sign of becoming a more significant aspect of SLA theorizing” (p. 23) and “with future research combining approaches to identity [...] SLA research will be enriched and transformed” (p. 26).

Finally, two decades after Norton began publishing her research on identity, the 2015 *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* was dedicated to studies of identity with contribution of major theorists in the field. Of particular interest are Block’s article on “Social class in Applied linguistics,” Creese and Blackledge on “Translanguaging and Identity in Educational Settings,” Duff on “Transnationalism, Multilingualism, and Identity,” and Darwin and Norton on “Identity and a Model of Investment in Applied Linguistics,” in which the authors revisited and updated Norton’s initial model.

How does identity research differ from other approaches thereby highlighting its unique contribution? Researchers who have focused on issues of identity operate largely within sociocultural perspectives: They see both language and learning as social and co-constructed among participants where learners are historically and socially situated agents. When identifying differences vis-à-vis other approaches, Norton and McKinney (2011) claimed that “an identity approach has most in common with the language socialization approach” (p. 87). This approach conceives language as a social practice that constitutes particular communities, and learning occurs when a learner gets to participate in the community. Access and participation are seen as central to language learning, because, as Duff and Talmy (2011) claimed, “if students are made to feel outsiders and illegitimate users of a language, their prospects for long-term language learning success are compromised” (p. 105).

However, the identity and socialization approaches differ in many ways. First, in the socialization approach, relations of power might not always be acknowledged, and as Duff & Talmy pointed out, “language socialization models tend to imply that the appropriation of target culture norms and practices is *always* desirable, virtuous, inevitable and complete” (p. 87). Ortega (2009) also mentioned the risk that socialization theory could be “just a more fashionable guise of the dangerous ideology of assimilation” (p. 241). However, she recognized that this was not the researchers’ intention and that this can be avoided if “identity, ideology and power are brought to the fore” (p. 241). In my own study, notions of ideology and power are central to the entire research process. Indeed, I contextualize the participants’ experiences in the larger social world thereby recognizing the impact that the socio-politico context and relations of power have on their practices and sense of identity. This is a crucial endeavor in the field and one that identity theory aims at achieving, as illustrated by Ortega’s claim that this “irrevocable centrality

of power in language learning, which surfaces only optionally in studies conducted under the purview of other alternative theories, becomes the most unique contribution of identity theory to SLA studies after the social turn” (2011, p. 172). In the following section, I review research on identity focusing on studies relevant to my own project.

Symbolic power in language classrooms. Showstack (2012) examined classroom discourse in Spanish language courses for Spanish-English bilingual students in order to investigate the ways students used language to construct their linguistic and cultural identities. Using Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic power,” she found that students’ identities were affected by socially constructed discourses on the legitimacy of different language varieties, and that students legitimized and sometimes “delegitimized” a “monoglossic view” of Spanish. This resulted in a construction of their linguistic skills either through a “deficit model where they view themselves as deficient speakers,” but also “a value-added model, which recognizes the value of minority language skills” (p. 7). She concluded that bilingual and bicultural students construct multiple discourses depending on the classroom contexts, therefore supporting the view that identity and language ideologies are constructed in interaction in specific social contexts. Because students tended to legitimize a monoglossic language ideology, Showstack suggested that a pedagogical approach is needed to “deconstruct these discourses making them less opaque and thus creating the possibility for the construction of empowering discourses” (p. 21).

Similarly, Heller conducted multiple studies (1982, 1992, 1995) in Francophone Canada focusing on the role of language in the construction of social inequality and, more specifically, on the symbolic domination exercised by social institutions and language ideologies. In her 1995 ethnographic study in a Franco-Ontarian high school Heller focused on the micro-processes of “symbolic domination” (Bourdieu, 1977b, 1991). She found that the school was reinforcing a

“monolingualizing” ideology in support of Francophone nationalism through various practices where French was imposed as the norm and only legitimate language. I have observed similar practices while observing classes, and my research could lead to a deeper understanding of the relation between ideology and school practices but also the effect on literacy practices. Other researchers in SLA have also shown how school discourses impact learners’ identity and ultimately their learning by focusing more specifically on the relation between discourses, power and identity.

Positioning discourses. Several researchers have applied social positioning theory (Davies & Harré 1990) to the analysis of classroom discourse (Harklau, 2000; Hawkins, 2005; McKay and Chick, 2001; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Rubdy & McKay, 2013). Menard-Warwick (2007) studied how classroom discourses, more specifically the material and activities of ESL classrooms, could position adult immigrants as aspirant to low-skill jobs and reproduce these “disempowering societal tendencies” (p. 284). Similarly, McKay and Chick (2001), still looking at discourses and positioning (but this time in the multilingual context of South Africa), identified school discourses that marginalized students by viewing their language and culture as a deficit. This had an impact on which languages were used and how they were used. Ultimately, these discourses resulted in a subtractive approach to bilingualism as they helped to “maintain the existing power relationships, providing native speakers of English with a distinct advantage in the educational realm” (p. 401). What’s more these discourses kept minority speakers in a socially inferior position.

Harklau (2000) conducted year-long ethnographic case studies following three U.S. immigrants in their last year of secondary school and first year in a community college. Harklau was able to contrast prevalent institutional discourses of what it means to be an English language

learner in these two educational settings, where learners went from being seen as “the good kids” in main stream education to “the worst” in the technical one. Indeed, in the community college ESL learners were typically labeled as culturally alien and socially handicapped. While Harklau wrote that learners did have agency; that is, they could either comply or resist these discourses. However, the more they opposed these labels, the more their teachers saw them as failures, which had serious consequences, with one participant eventually dropping out of the program.

On a more optimistic note, May (1995) argued for the need to examine school discourses within broader societal discourses and power relations. Drawing on a critical ethnography conducted in a model school in New Zealand, May demonstrated how this school had successfully contested and resisted societal discourses, thereby fostering “alternative emancipatory discourses within education” (p. 1). This study illustrated that schools are influenced by many societal and institutional discourses, but they can also still “be pluralistic if they retain some degree of autonomy from the social formation and its dominant discourses” (p. 26).

Investment. Norton first coined the term “investment” (Norton Pierce, 1995), as she was dissatisfied with the notion of “motivation,” which, according to her, “did not pay sufficient attention to unequal relations of power between language learners and target language speakers” (2013, p. 6). Norton (1995) explained this construct with reference to Bourdieu’s economic metaphor of cultural capital that she defined as “the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms, with differential exchange values,” (p. 17). According to Norton, if learners “invest” in a second language, they do so with “[the] understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources [...] and material resources [...], which will in turn increase the value of their cultural

capital” (p. 17). This concept of investment allows me to conceptualize the participants as having multiple and complex desires towards their learning. With this angle, I acknowledge that the participants can be motivated in learning a foreign language or their parents’ language but may have little investment in the practices of the French classroom, especially if it is an exclusive environment.

The construct of investment has sparked considerable interest in SLA (Block 2007a, 2007b; Darvin & Norton, 2015; Kinginger, 2004; Kramsch, 2013; Norton, 1995, 2000, 2013; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Ushioda, 2006). Skilton-Sylvester (2002) focused on the experience of four Cambodian women in an adult ESL program in the USA, arguing that traditional views of adult motivation and participation are limited because “they do not address the complex relationships among adult learners’ identities, the social contexts of their daily lives, the classroom context, and investment in learning English” (p. 9). Therefore, an understanding of learner’s multiple and sometimes conflicting identities is needed to explain their investment in an ESL program. The author added a layer of understanding to this construct, showing that investment is shaped both by the learners’ identities and their social environments.

McKay and Wong (1996) used the concept of investment to illustrate how the complex needs and desires of four Mandarin-speaking Grade 7 and 8 students in California were integral to their investment in L2 learning. Indeed, they demonstrated how multiple discourses inherent to the school shaped students’ investment. They realized that various discourses (colonialist, model-minority, nationalist, and gender) impacted students’ investment in different language skills, which ultimately had a negative effect on their learning. Indeed, because of colonialist discourse, which placed a premium on spoken English as an indicator of functioning in society, a

student was not invested in acquiring written English. The authors saw this lack of investment as “self-destructive” (p. 594) because it held students back in their academic progress.

Studies about Negotiation of Identity in the French Context

In their edited volume *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) reported two studies in the French context. First, Kinginger’s case study (2004) analyzed the experiences of Alice, a working-class American student who studied abroad in France, where she had to engage in deep renegotiations of identity. I talk more about this study in chapter 4 because Alice’s story resonates with my own experience as a speaker of English.

Second, Doran (2004) conducted an ethnographic study among youths from various ethnic backgrounds in a Parisian housing estate. Her study illustrates how the local youth strategically used Verlan to negotiate a “third space” for identity, where they could “position themselves along an alternative identity continuum, outside the fixed categories available in the standard language” (p. 120). Doran found the use of this sociolect allowed these youths to “construct an alternative ‘universe of discourse’(...) distinct from those imposed on them by the hegemonic and assimilationist discourses in the main stream” (p. 17). Doran concluded, however, that the amount of room for agency “may depend on each particular situation, the social and linguistic resources available to participants, and the balance of power relations which sets out the boundaries for particular identity options” (p. 25).

Similarly, Sefiani (2003), a French scholar of urban sociolinguistics, analyzed the process of code switching from French to Arabic, which constitutes what she called “Franco-Maghrebi speech” (p. 56). She concluded that this sociolect was the result of a specific urban search for identity among third-generation youths, mostly teenagers coming from Maghrebi immigration, but also non-Arabic speaking youths. Sefiani’s study is uniquely relevant to my study because

she conducted her research amongst Franco-Maghrebi youth in a small town which shared similar characteristics with Vire.

Two French sociolinguists, Caubet (2001, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2013) and Barontini (2007, 2013, 2014, 2016) have dedicated themselves to the study of transmission of Maghrebi Arabic and Berber in France, its processes, its representations and its practices. The authors have highlighted the gap between the strong presence of these languages in society and the lack of recognition by the school and the government. Barontini and Caubet (2008) pointed out that while these languages have been adopted by the “civil society,” they have not yet received any “institutional recognition and valorization.” Recently, Barontini (2016) claimed the “mélange” of Maghrebi Arabic, Berber, and French was the norm because they have been in contact for so long and France should move away from the idea of purity of its language.

Similarly, Hélot and Auger, two scholars working in university teacher education departments, have studied the school context in France and highlighted the lack of recognition of home languages in schools and pervasive language ideologies and misconception about language learning and usage. Auger (2007) pointed out the need to better educate teachers who have many misconceptions about bilingualism, a major misconception being that teachers worry that their students’ plurilingualism and pluriculturalism will lead to “communitarisme” or (ghettoization in English). Hélot and Erfurt (2016) concluded for the need to promote bilingual education in France.

As will become clear later in this chapter, Franco-Maghrebi communities have been underrepresented in studies published in the social sciences. However, during the late 1980’s and

90's in postcolonial Francophone literature a movement emerged, known as *littérature beur*⁵, which provided a window into the lives of Franco Maghrebi youth. During the past three decades, this politicized literature of second-generation Maghrebi has gained recognition, and I will highlight its contribution.

***Littérature Beur*, an Emic Perspective on Franco-Maghrebi Youth.**

Beur literature is powerful, although very few studies have been conducted in social sciences among the communities of its authors. Azouz Begag, Farida Belgoug, Medhi Charef, and Soraya Nini, all children of immigrants from the Maghreb, have problematized issues of cultural assimilation through the teaching of republican values in French schools; being constantly labelled as foreigners, mostly by the media; and the myth of the French national identity.

Begag's autobiographical novel *Le gone du chaâba* (1986), translated as *Shantytown Kid* in English, and Nini's heavily autobiographical novel *Ils disent que je suis une Beurette* (1993), highlight the role of the education system as a part of the French assimilation process, which by excluding their cultural heritage from the school, excludes them from the school system. During my fieldwork, I witnessed several events that reminded me of scenes I had read in these novels. For example, Azouz—the narrator in Begag's novel—wrote how he felt his primary school teacher was always right, and that if “il dit que nous sommes tous descendants des Gaulois, c'est qu'il a raison” (he tells us that we all are descendants of the Gauls, he must be right,” then he added in a rather ironic tone “et tant pis si chez moi nous n'avons pas les mêmes moustaches”

⁵ The term “beur” is a verlan inversion of the word Arabe (Arab). Although many second-generation Maghrebi self-identified with this term, once adopted by the media, it became associated with banlieues and became a stigma. As a result, younger generations have rejected the term (Begag, 2007, p. 130).

(and too bad if we don't have the same moustache at home) (p. 60). During my fieldwork, I often observed similar tendencies from teachers to make assumptions about their students which did not match their reality, thereby contributing to increasing their sense of alienation and excluding them from the cultural majority.

This literature also raises question about cultural identity, belonging and labelling. In Nini's novel (1993), Samia, the narrator, feels like she is constantly being labelled or positioned as a "*beurette*" (a female Arab in Verlan), especially by the media. The novel starts with the sentence, "Je suis née au Paradis⁶ et il paraît que je suis une 'beurette,' ça veut dire une enfant d'immigrés" (p.90) (I was born in Paradise and it seems that I am a 'beurette,' (which means a child of immigrants). Although Samia was born in France, she is still seen by others as a foreigner, an Arab. Many of the participants who participated in my study felt that way. The majority were French by birth, but they knew that they were positioned by others as "Arabs" or "Muslims." In relation to this positioning, most of the participants and Samia commented about the media bias. While Samia was angered at how the media exaggerated the problems of housing projects, which often made headlines during the 1990's, the participants often expressed how tired they were of being portrayed by the media as terrorists, especially after an attack had occurred in France.

As my data demonstrate, over the past three decades the media have moved away from the housing estate issues of the 1980's and 1990's and now focus on the Islamic radicalization of Muslim communities in France. Portrayed either as "racailles" (scum) as Sarkozy—the French president between 2007 and 2012—often publicly called young people living in housing estates

⁶ Paradis in the novel is the name of the housing project where the narrator lives.

or terrorists because of their religious beliefs, these youths are aware of the way they are systematically stereotyped and labelled.

Furthermore, Begag (1986, 1989), Charef (1983, 1989), Nini (1993), and more recently Guène (2004), have all challenge the ambivalence inherent in the concept of French national identity that excludes its minorities by denying diversity. They also offer an alternative to the stereotypical views of children of immigrants being torn between two cultures, by introducing a much more complex and ambiguous sense of identity. Begag and Chaouite, in *Ecarts d'identité* (1990), while raising the question whether *littérature beur* was French or Maghrebi, wrote:

Les références imaginaires et les sources sont toujours marquées par des histoires spécifiques qui ne sont ancrées nulle part, sinon dans des situations sociales et spatiales périphériques. C'est là toute leur nouveauté, celle d'apporter un angle de vue décentré par rapport à tout ce qui est dit sur les immigrés et la société française. (p. 100)

(Imaginary references and sources are always marked by specific stories which are not anchored anywhere, except in peripheral social and special situations. It is their novelty, to bring a perspective which is decentered in contrast to what is said about immigrants and French society).

This idea of an identity being “peripheral” echoes Homi Bhabha’s theory of a “third space,” (1994) an in-between space through which cultural and social identities are negotiated. As I argue in chapter 8, this concept of “third space” is relevant to describe the participants’ sense of identity.

While no studies about the Franco-Maghrebi youth in the field of SLA have come to this specific conclusion, *littérature beur* provides an in-depth emic perspective of what these third spaces can be and the role they play in creating identities that clashes with the dominant discourse. In a sense, this literature reflects the social and political contexts these writers and other children of Maghrebi immigrants have been facing. Indeed, Mehta (2010), a professor in Francophone studies wrote that “literature and sociology intersect in these works to provide a

complex and creative sociopolitical document of lived experience” (p.174) and also “an important counter discourse” (p. 176).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this literature has been recognized and studied in French departments in the American universities more than in France. As a matter of fact, the two most renowned specialists on *beur* literature Michel Laronde (1993, 1996), and Alec G. Hargreaves (1991, 1997, 2007a, 2007b) are both professors in French and Francophone studies, respectively in the University of Iowa and the University of Florida. In the *French Review*, which is the official journal of the American Association of Teachers of French, 27 articles were published about *beur* literature between 1989 and 2015. I personally encountered Franco-Maghrebi literature for the first time in a course in Francophone literature, which I took in the French department during my PhD coursework in the USA whereas, during all my school years in France, I never read any texts from *beur* literature. I had several conversations with the French literature teachers in my study as to why, for example, there were no Franco-Maghrebi texts in the French *baccalauréat* list. We will see later in my findings how this might be interpreted as a way of preserving a Franco-French culture and the myth of a French national identity which leaves no room for minority cultures.

Gaps in the Research on Identity

I will now list and discuss two major limitations that I have observed in identity work. The first gap concerns Franco-Maghrebi youth as a population of interest, especially in rural areas. Second, I identify several contradictions about two key concepts: identity and agency.

Lack of empirical research on negotiation of identity amongst the Franco-Maghrebi youth. Most empirical research on Franco-Maghrebi youth has been conducted by sociolinguists or sociologists. Between 1980 and 2000, as reported by Doran (2004), several French

sociolinguists have researched Verlan in depth, which has then been largely associated with youth of North African ancestry. While most of these researchers (Azra & Cheneau, 1994; Fabrice, 1998; Goudaillier, 1998; Lefkowitz, 1989, 1991; Méla, 1988, 1991, 1997; Plénat, 1993, 1995; Sewell & Payne, 2000; Valdman, 2000, as cited in Doran, 2004) have described the linguistic codes and features of the sociolect and highlighted what distinguishes Verlan from Standard French, some have also raised the issue of identity. For instance, Bachman and Basier (1984) found that Verlan served an “identity function,” which they called an “instrument in the quest for identity” (p. 183), and Méla (1988) suggested it was “an important component of social identity (p. 59). However, while these studies suggest a link between the sociolect and identity, identity and its negotiation are not their main focus. More specifically, as Doran remarked, “they do not include youth’s perspectives on their sense of identity” (p. 101). What’s more, within a poststructuralist framework, wherein identity is perceived as fluid, dynamic, and multiple, it is reductionist to equate Verlan with one identity and one ethnic group. I would like to add most of the research on Verlan have been conducted in Paris or other major French cities, where Franco-Maghrebi youth have stronger communities they can identify with than in rural areas like my study site.

More than 10 years later, Doran’s criticism of the lack of research among this population was echoed by Galland, a French sociologist and researcher in the CNRS⁷, who specializes in French youth. Indeed, in light of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, Galland (2015), wrote an article entitled “*Les jeunes musulmans et la République: L’angle mort des sciences sociales,*” (“Young Muslims and the Republic: The Blind Spot of Social Sciences”), which could be seen as a

⁷ CNRS stands for Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique (National Center of Scientific Research), and is the biggest French public research center.

manifesto addressed to researchers in social sciences to focus on the second and third generation of immigrants, more specifically on Muslim youth. This lack of research may largely be due to the fact that France passed a law in 1978 called *loi information et liberté*⁸ forbidding data collection and analysis related to ethnicity, race and other demographic information (sexual orientation, religion, political opinions...).

For Begag (2007a), who at this point was the French Minister of Equal Opportunities, and Simon (2012)—the director of INED—this lack of data on ethnic origins prevents France from dealing with inequalities and providing equal opportunities. Begag wrote that, “as victims of multiple forms of color-based discriminations, young ethnics will have to be identified statistically in terms of the features by which they are handicapped in the field of equal opportunities” and that consequently, France “needs the technical and legal means with which to compile statistics on ethnic origins” (p. 117). Although French researchers can obtain religious and ethnic statistics with special exemption from the government, as Patrick Simon, Director of Research at the Institut national d’études démographiques noted, “l’interdiction de principe a réussi à imposer l’idée que vouloir mesurer les conséquences de l’origine ethnique dans une étude est sulfureux” (the ban in principle has managed to impose the idea that wanting to measure the consequences of ethnic origin in a study is dangerous) (as cited in Faure & Vécrin, 2015). Simon claims researchers self-censor or resort to approximate methods, thereby hampering efforts to combat discrimination.

⁸ *Loi informatique et liberté* (January 6, 1978) states, “il est interdit de collecter ou de traiter des données à caractère personnel qui font apparaître, directement ou indirectement, les origines raciales ou ethniques, les opinions politiques, philosophiques ou religieuses (...). (it is forbidden to collect or to process personal data, which directedly or indirectly make apparent, the racial of ethnic origins, political, philosophical or religious opinions (...). (Gouvernement français, 1978)

As a consequence of this ban and lack of data, Galland (2015) pointed out the urgent need for more reliable and impartial research in social sciences on this population because according to him, the current lack of understanding “laisse champ libre aux interprétations et aux solutions simplistes” (leaves the door open to simplistic interpretations and solutions). In reference to a large-scale quantitative study conducted by the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) and the Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED) in 2008 with a sample of 22,000 participants, Galland lamented that it actually revealed very little useful information. This survey— Trajectoires et Origines (*TeO*)—which relied on self-reporting by respondents, focused on the impact of origins on living conditions and social trajectories in response to social debates over integration and discrimination. It further analyzed identity patterns of immigrants and their descendants, focusing on how these relate to French national identity, including questions about their sense of national belonging, such as, “je me sens français, algérien...,” (“I feel French, Algerian...”) (Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, 2008).

For Simon (2012)—one of the main investigators of *TeO*—this is the largest survey ever conducted in France on ethnic minorities. While Simon believed that the *TeO* survey led to some very valuable information, Galland (2015) claimed that the study only managed to “réduire les immigrés à la position de victime conduit finalement à leur dénier toute capacité d’agir” (reduce immigrants to the position of victims, which eventually led to denying them any capacity to act). Instead, he suggested that the themes of French *laïcité* and ethnic-religious identities be at the center of our questioning, because they are precisely what is tormenting and tearing French society apart from the inside. About *laïcité*, Galland remarked that both left and right wing parties defend this principle that is specific to the French context without actually questioning its

impact. While Galland's motivation for understanding this youth is related to preventing terrorism not identity, his point of view is relevant for my research. As a matter of fact, he calls for the need to collect the perspectives of Franco-Maghrebi youth, while questioning the education system and its dominant discourse, legitimized through the concept of *laïcité*.

Contradictions about key concepts: Identity and agency. Within the field of applied linguistics, there has been a lot of confusion about the construct of identity and agency. The question of free choice is central to the discussion of agency: Do we consider that humans are free to resist any discourse and identity? Or do we perceive humans as trapped within institutions and structures with no power to resist and change them? These inconsistencies echo the debate which took place in social sciences in the 1970s and, as I explain in my theoretical framework, Bourdieu's Theory of Practice aims at bridging this tension. However, this debate has been identified and addressed by very few scholars in applied linguistics (Block, 2007a, 2007b, 2013; Kubota, 2016; Menard-Warwick, 2005)

One of the issue is that some scholars focusing on identity (Norton in particular) have borrowed concepts from different movements such as poststructuralism (Foucault, Giddens, Bourdieu), postfeminism (Weedon) and have incorporated these concepts in their work, regardless of the fact that some of these concepts contradict each other. Borrowing concepts from such various movements to define single constructs is bound to result in an imbalanced theory. Indeed, Menard-Warwick (2005) remarked that Bourdieu and Foucault's theories have been used in selective rather than systematic ways in SLA. I acknowledge Norton's major contribution to identity research, but I am also aware of the fact that she used concepts from Practice Theory in a selective way, and thereby failed to address some of the most profound divergences in the field. Indeed, Norton drew on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to develop her construct of

investment. As I explained earlier in this chapter, this construct has allowed scholars in the field to go beyond the concept of motivation, which put too much emphasis on psychological and internal factors, by including the social context within which language acquisition and use are taking place.

However, this construct implies that learners' investment is the result of a conscious decision, that is to say that learners are free to invest or not in their learning. Kramersch remarked that "Norton's notion of investment [...] accentuates the role of human agency and identity with the task at hand" (2013, p. 195), and I would argue that it does so in an idealistic and naïve way, ignoring the constraint of the social environment. As Block (2013) remarked, overemphasizing agency is a superficial approach to identity and ignores the omnipresent social constraints and preexisting relations of unequal power.

What's more, in her attempt to theorize the concept of identity, Norton departed from Bourdieu's work and instead she used Weedon's (1987) concept of "subjectivity," which Weedon defined as "precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (p. 32). Norton (1995) thus argued that "social identities are complex, multiple and subject to change" (p. 26). This poststructuralist perspective of fluid, ever changing identities clashes with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which emphasizes how identities are the results of a long process of social inculcation. I will further define the concept of *habitus*, but I want to point out how I believe Norton's concept of subjectivity oversimplifies and overestimates people's ability to negotiate their identities. While explaining why Norton departed from Bourdieu's theory, Menard-Warwick (2005) speculated that it was maybe "Weedon's greater optimism about social change (...) that leads Norton to tacitly reject Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*" (p. 259). When Menard-Warwick made this comment, Norton had not yet explicitly

referred to the concept of habitus, whereas in her more recent work with Darwin, Norton has incorporated the concept. Indeed, in their new model of investment, Darwin and Norton (2015) opted to “elucidate further that identity is a struggle of habitus and desire” (p. 45). They defined habitus as “the system by which people make sense of the world” (p. 45). On the one hand, they claimed that Bourdieu “viewed habitus as a set of disposition that are durable and shaped by history” (p. 46), on the other hand, they cited Bourdieu (2000), who also recognized that:

guided by one’s sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and distastes, one makes for oneself an environment in which one feels at home and in which one can achieve that fulfillment of one’s desire to be which one identifies with happiness” (p.150).

The last part of this quote (one’s desire to be which one identifies with happiness) constitute a pivot in the Norton and Darwin’s understanding of the concept. Indeed, in their following comment, they conclude that even though “learners’ desire can also be shaped by habitus” (p. 46), in the end, “it is through desire that learners are compelled to act and exercise their agency” (p. 47). The authors ignored the beginning of the quote where Bourdieu stated how people are guided by “sympathies, antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and distastes” in other words what defines the concept of habitus. They instead, focused on the idea of desire and claimed learners “have the agency to assert their own identities” (p. 47). It is interesting to notice that McCloud (2016)—in his contribution to Hurst and Nenga’s volume *Working in Class: Recognizing How Social Class Shapes our Academic Work*—used the same quote from Bourdieu, but that the authors’ interpretation varies greatly.

While Norton and Darwin saw in this quote a reason for optimism because ultimately people are free to act by adopting new subjectivities, McCloud’s understanding is much more realistic and reflects a darker side of society. McCloud argued that “while habitus is adaptable, any possibilities of change must battle a social and psychological inertia that tends to keep things

as they are” (p. 17). I think that these two interpretations embody the debate over human actions, agency, and identity, and that Bourdieu’s words need to be read in a more nuanced way. Bourdieu (1977a) himself claimed that we ought to “abandon all theories which . . . treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions,” but also that we should not “bestow on some creative free will the free and willful power” (p. 73) to account for our present actions. I agree with Kutoba’s (2016) claim that an “unqualified optimism” over people’s agency alongside with a “postmodern affirmation of fluidity” of identity can “obscure actual struggles and inequalities” (p. 490) and the fact that as I demonstrate in this dissertation not all positions are equal in power.

For a deeper understanding of the complexity of identity formation within society and more specifically within schools, I further explore Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and his theory of practice. This allows me to account for the dialectical relationship between social structures and human agency as well as the tension between an identity that has a core and that is ever changing through interaction. Young and Astarita (2013) claimed that “Practice Theory goes beyond the introspective focus of identity theory and the cultural perspective of language socialization.” For them, “the implications of Practice Theory for language learning are clear” (p. 187) because they see in this theory a way of overcoming many of the tensions between structure and agency, and identity as fluid and fixed which I have referred to.

Having identified the contribution of research on identity as well as the gaps in the literature I will now identify and explain some concepts that constitute the theoretical basis for my work.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

As I explained in the literature review, numerous scholars (Block, 2007b; Duff, 2012; Norton, 2013; Ortega, 2009) have agreed that since the 1990's there has been increased interest in identity research in SLA. This has resulted in a stronger focus on the sociocultural and political contexts of language use and the impact these contexts have on identity. However, this shift of focus was the result of debates in other social fields and, as Block (2007b) cautioned, this did not happen just "because applied linguistics suddenly began to talk about identity in the 1990s" (p. 2). Indeed, although Norton (1995) was one of the first among SLA researchers to foreground this issue, she mostly drew on previous work by social theorist Weedon (1987) and sociologist Bourdieu (1977a). More recently, researchers have expanded their sources of inspiration to include anthropology, sociology, and cultural psychology, all of which have been influenced by the philosophical movement of poststructuralism, which Duff (2012), defined as follows:

Poststructuralism is an approach to research that questions fixed categories or structures, oppositional binaries, closed systems, and stable —truths and embraces seeming contradictions (...) Poststructural researchers examine how such categories are discursively and socially constructed, taken up, resisted (the site of struggle), and so on (p. 412).

Within poststructuralism, social theorists have moved away from a vision of structures and humans as stable and have attended to the dialectical relationship between individual agency and structures. Within this framework, SLA scholars have recently envisioned identity not as a fixed trait but as a complex, fluid, and unstable process. But again, the rise of identity in SLA has been "a question of catching up with developments in other social sciences" (Block, 2007b, p. 2).

I will now define my theoretical framework in three main sections. I begin by recounting a moment in my research which illustrates why Practice Theory is the most suited framework. I then explain the genesis of Practice Theory and define its key concepts. Additionally, I define

key concepts in research on identity. Other concepts will be explored during my analysis but in this chapter I want to make explicit the framework within which I collected and analyzed the data. Finally, I introduce the research questions that will frame the study.

Practice Theory

In line with other researchers on identity, I will be using concepts borrowed from other social science fields such as anthropology and sociology and my framework will be mostly influenced by Practice Theory.

As I began my fieldwork journey, I was inspired by the claim Bourdieu (1988) made about sociology: “la sociologie détruit les idées reçues” (sociology destroys preconceived notions). Indeed, according to Bourdieu (1998), Socrates was the first sociologist: When he went in the street to interview people, he did not merely take for granted what people answered, he questioned what they said and what he saw. In other words, he went beyond appearances. In applying the approach that Bourdieu thus describes to my data collection, I have tried to observe everyday behaviors with a questioning eye. This entailed, first, not taking for granted what could be seen as a mundane act, and further, being aware of the structural and social conditions which defined the participants’ reality and actions. I wanted to adopt a balanced approach of “objectivation” between what Bourdieu referred to as “l’expérience savante” (the expert experience) and “l’expérience naïve du monde sociale” (the naïve experience of the social world) (1972, p. 241). I was in a good position to have this perspective because I grew up in the region of my study, I was familiar with the area and the school system in France. Nevertheless, at the time of my study, I had lived outside France for 20 years. I was also not familiar with the regulations of the school that was my research site and, significantly, although I knew about the 2004 law banning the *voile*, I had spent little time France since this law had been enacted. I had,

therefore, never seen this principle, which has become so central to contemporary discourse on *laïcité*, put into practice. As a result, I had never been able to observe how it affected the people directly concerned by this law.

To show what Practice Theory can reveal and how it can apply to my research I will start by recounting a story—‘un moment précieux’—which took place at the beginning of my fieldwork.

Sofia in between two worlds. During my pilot study I had agreed to meet Sofia, a participant, in front of the school after her last class at 5:00 pm. That same day, I had already interviewed several participants in a room that the principal’s secretary let me use. The room was private and I had full use of it. It was warm, quiet, never used during school hours, and conveniently situated just by the school entrance. For all these reasons, I did most of the interviews in this room. Although Sofia and I had agreed to meet outside the school, in front of the gate, and then go to the public library, I decided that it would be more convenient to stay where I had spent most of my day where I had set up my computer and recording device.

At the agreed time, I walked out of the school and saw that Sofia was waiting for me on the other side of the road. I asked her if she would not mind coming back inside the school. She said it was fine. Sofia was wearing a *voile*. I noticed it as soon as I saw her but I had not thought about what it would entail for her to reenter the school. We crossed the street together and because it was late in the day, the main school gate—a big iron gate—was closed. I pressed a button and the guard opened the side door to the main gate. Once we passed this door, Sofia removed her *voile*. Till that point we had been talking, walking side by side, and it took me by surprise that suddenly she was no longer next to me, but behind me, busy removing her *voile*. I stopped and waited for her. I had nothing to do but wait and watch her. I felt uncomfortable and became aware of my privilege of being able to enter the school without having to remove an item

of clothing. This was a rather long process because Sofia had to remove first a colorful, loose veil on the outside and then a white tight headband underneath. She had to do this in haste because she had a limited amount of time, dictated by the distance between the main iron gate and the glass sliding door, which was only about 30 feet. Once she had uncovered her head, we walked through the main entrance of the school which was a big glass sliding door. We were then ready to go to the room and start the interview.

Sofia had come from Algeria with her family and she had only been in France for a few months. We had a difficult time communicating because both her French and my Arabic were not up to the task but we still managed to talk for an hour. Sofia was in her final year of high school, which meant that she would not be able to take part in my study, which would start the following academic year. Still, I enjoyed meeting Sofia, and she seemed to be happy to have taken part in the interview. We laughed a lot at ourselves and the fact that we were not always sure we understood each other. When we were done talking, it was six o'clock. My day had been a long one, and I was done with interviews for the day, so I decided that I would leave with Sofia. We walked out of the room together, through the glass sliding doors, and there we paused so that Sofia would put her white tight headband and loose headscarf back on. When she had covered her head, we then pressed the button and the guard opened the door on the side of the main gate to let us out of the school, onto the street, into a different world, where Sofia could dress as she chose.

That evening I reflected back on my day. Watching Sofia removing and replacing her *voile* had definitely been the most intriguing and disturbing part of it. I wrote down in my field notes that the closest image I could come up with to describe the space between the gate and the school door—where Sofia moved between wearing her *voile* and being forced to remove it—was

an airlock. The French word is “sas” and its definition on the online Larousse dictionary is as follows “enceinte ou passage clos, muni de deux portes ou systèmes de fermeture dont on ne peut ouvrir l'un que si l'autre est fermé et qui permet de passer ou de faire passer d'un milieu à un autre en maintenant ceux-ci isolés l'un de l'autre.” (enclosure or close passage, equipped with two doors or closing devices from which we can only open one if the other one is closed and which allows one to go through or to make something go through from one environment to the other by maintaining them isolated from each other). This image fits well because we first had to go through one door and wait for it to be closed before we could walk through that space (the airlock) and then have the other door open. Another meaning of “sas” is “compartiment étanche qui sépare des milieux où la pression n'est pas la même” (an airtight compartment that separates fields where the pressure is not the same). It is therefore a space which allows for adjustment to a new environment. In this case, this space in between these two environments was the space in which Sofia had to change her personal appearance, what she wore, how she looked to others, to me and more than that, she had to change who she was, her faith, her belief, who she had chosen to be and to be perceived by others. As one of the participants said in an interview, she had to “laisse sa personnalité dehors” (leave her personality outside).

What's more, this mundane behavior illustrates how her habitus, as a veiled female Muslim, had to confront and adjust to a new social environment or 'field,' where a regulation was directly in contradiction to her habitus. What Sofia was used to doing several times a day, I saw as an extremely violent act—or what Bourdieu called an act of symbolic violence—imposed on her and many other female students who, as we will see later, were forced to remove the *voile*, or not to wear it at all, against their desire to do so.

I draw a parallel between Sofia's story and the story about "The Woman Who Climbed up the House" by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998). In this story, Holland et al. explained that they had been conducting research in Nepal, in a village where people of lower caste were not allowed to enter the house of a higher cast person. The reason was mostly because the lower cast person would have to come through the only entrance, which tended to be where the kitchen was, and thereby were seen as increasing the risk of food and cooking being polluted by their presence. The researchers had invited Gyanumaya, a woman of a lower caste, to take part in an interview in a house belonging to a woman of a higher cast, who did not enforce this practice in her own house and welcomed people of lower caste.

When it was Gyanumaya's turn to be interviewed, because of her habitus— that is, because all her life she had seen herself and had been positioned by society as a lower caste person—she could not walk through the main entrance as a person from a higher caste would have done. Instead she came up with "a spectacular improvisation in the face of a problematic situation" (p. 15) and climbed up the wall onto the balcony on the second floor where Holland and Skinner were conducting interviews. The authors defined "improvisations" as "impromptu actions that occur when our past, brought to the present as habitus, meets with a particular combination of circumstances and conditions for which we have no set response" (p. 15). The authors also remarked that "women and other oppressed people are especially subject to situations like Gyanumaya's situations replete with contradictions" and that as a result "oppressed people are constantly climbing up houses" (p. 16). Sofia removing her *voile* may not have seemed as spectacular as Gyannumaya's climbing up the wall, but both behaviors are illustrations of how social structures forced these two women to improvise. In Sofia's case, however, the action occurred at the point of access to public education at an institution to which

the person has every right to attend but as we can see in this case only if she is willing to conform to an 'imposed identity.' I go back to Bourdieu's call for objectification in order to uncover "les mécanismes gnoseologiques qui contribuent au maintien de l'ordre établi" (the epistemological mechanisms that contribute to maintaining the established order) (1972, p. 241).

When analyzing Gyannymaya's behavior, Holland et al. compared both extremist culturalist and constructivist interpretations, thereby showing the limitations of both. As they pointed out, from a culturalist perspective, Gyannymaya was the "'bearer' of 'culture'" (p. 14), that is to say, her action was the result of social beliefs and discourses that she had internalized. These cultural principles were so ingrained that she might not even have been aware of them because they "transcend" (p. 14) her. On the other hand, from a constructivist perspective, her behavior would be interpreted as the acting out or refusal as she was forced to act while facing a situation of unequal power. The first perspective emphasizes the role of culture and the second the role of the individual subject. The authors argued that one should not have to choose one or the other since they both are valid, nor should they be separated, and suggest instead to use both in a dialogic frame. They agreed that in his contribution to Practice Theory, Bourdieu "has made one of the most significant efforts" in his attempt to "connect culture and subject position conceptually in order to understand people's behavior" (p. 17).

I will now briefly summarize the genesis of Practice Theory before introducing its main concepts that are relevant for this research.

Genesis/Emergence of Practice Theory. Practice Theory emerged in the late 1970's with a desire to transcend antinomies in social sciences and philosophy, such as for example, the tension between culturalism and constructivism as discussed by Holland et al. (1998), but also the opposition between, on one side of the spectrum, existentialists like Sartre, who believed in

human freewill and ability to take control of their lives and on the other side, structuralists like Lévi-Strauss, who highlighted the sociopolitical power of structures over humans, ruling their lives and actions. Ortner, (2006) discussed this “old” philosophical and epistemological dilemma which she claimed “had been plaguing the field” of social science.” (p. 3). Practice Theory took up the challenge to overcome these oppositions by showing that they actually do not have an oppositional relationship but rather, a dialectical relationship. By “dialectic,” I mean that those relationships may go in either direction: social structures influence human actions and at the same time those actions change the social milieu in which they occur. Practice Theory, thus, explicates the dialectic between social structures and culture on the one hand and human actions on the other hand and how they affect each other. In other words, Practice Theory allows us to understand that “history makes people but people make history” (Ortner, 2003, p. 277). Applying Practice Theory to my way of conducting research means that I had to attend to two worlds, the objective and subjective ones, keeping in mind that these worlds are not in opposition. As Ortner (1989) wrote, Practice Theory is “a theory of translation between an objective world and a subjective one” and it “has always two moments, one largely objectivist and one largely subjectivist” (p. 18).

This resonates with my experience in the field. Indeed, at the beginning of my research, what struck me first was the structure, the rules in the school, and how the participants had integrated them in their daily lives. Subsequently, I became more aware of how the participants created, interpreted, and changed this world with their own values, meanings, and action. Practice Theory allowed me to account for the dynamic relationship between the constraints and affordances of the school as an institution, French socio-political events in France, and the individual experiences and actions of the participants. In Wacquant’s (2004) words, I was able to shift my focus “from structure to strategy” or “from the mechanical mental algebra of cultural

rules to the fluid gymnastics of socialized bodies” (p. 389). It is precisely at the interface between the objective and subjective worlds that my research questions were formed; that is to say, it is at the point of contentions between the two worlds that I was able to see how identities were negotiated, rejected, and recreated.

Now that I have explained the rationale for the theoretical framework and my understanding of Practice Theory, I will define some major key concepts I use to analyze the data: first some concepts specific to Practice Theory and second concepts borrowed from research on identity.

Key terms in Practice Theory

Field and capital.

In his framework, Bourdieu (1987) described the social world in terms of fields or microcosms in which agents and institutions interact with each other according to field-specific rules. Each field has its own tacit rules, which makes it autonomous. The goal of the game in any specific field is to acquire more capital. However, we all start the game with different amounts of capital and these kinds of capital are “powers which define the chances of profit in a given field” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 230), which means a social field is a “locus of struggles” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 19). Bourdieu (1977a, 1984, 1986, 1993) established there are three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social.

“Economic capital” is the most material type as it refers to the actual financial wealth people possess through their “patrimoine”—everything a person owns, either through inheritance or acquisition in life—and their various earnings, which ensure them the security and the growth of their “patrimoine.”

“Social capital” refers to the social network a person can mobilize when they need to. This network is also partly inherited and can offer certain advantages, which in turn can ensure the accumulation of more economic capital.

“Cultural capital” constitutes resources or assets which allow a person to be a fully functioning participant in a particular field and to mobilize cultural authority. This is the form of capital most relevant in the field of education and therefore the one I draw on most in my study.

Cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1979). First, *embodied cultural capital* refers to “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (p. 82) or *habitus*. The accumulation of this form of capital requires time and personal investment and, as a result, is always unique and personal, though it is determined and limited by the context in which it acquired, which is primarily within families. Therefore, cultural capital can represent “the ensemble of cultivated dispositions that are internalized by the individual through socialization and that constitute schemes of appreciation and understanding” (Swartz, 1997, p. 76). Second, *objectified cultural capital* refers to cultural assets, such as paintings, instruments, and books. These physical objects that can either be acquired or inherited and their value depend both on the embodied cultural capital—required to understand its significance—and on the particular field in which they are assessed. Indeed, the value of cultural artifacts’ can change over time and in different sociocultural contexts. Third, *institutionalized capital* refers to school qualifications like degrees and diplomas, which have the performative power to recognize and legitimize cultural capital because these they “confer on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 250).

Fourth and finally, there is *symbolic capital*, which is, “commonly called prestige, reputation, fame, etc. which is the form assumed by these different kinds of capital when they are

perceived and recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 231). Symbolic capital is not an independent type of capital but it consists in the acknowledgement of capital by all the agents on a specific field. This form of capital leads to symbolic power or domination, which Bourdieu (1991), describes as the power of:

making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thereby, the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force [...] it is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized* that is misrecognized as arbitrary. (p. 170)

To put this another way, this power influences people’s understanding of the world, but it relies on the assumption people will misrecognize it as power and, as Showstack (2012) noted, it often goes to the people who possess more of the valued capital in a particular field.

Coming back to the metaphor of the social world as fields and social games to know how to navigate a field, players need “sens pratique” (practical sense), in other words a feel for the game. The problem is that to know the rules of the game you need to have “been born to it.” Indeed, understanding the moves and anticipating them, depends on the players’ habitus—this set of dispositions, or predispositions that has been acquired since birth (Bourdieu, 1979).

Habitus. There have been numerous definitions of the concept habitus over the years. In his earlier work Bourdieu defined habitus as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of generation and structuring of practices and representations” (1977a, p. 72), and in his later work as “systems of schemes of perception, appreciation and action [which] enable [people] to perform acts of practical knowledge based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 138). Although these definitions are the most commonly used, I also refer to two definitions, which I have encountered only in French, but which I believe add to the understanding of the concept. The

first one is from the original French edition of an *Outline of a Theory of Practice (Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique)*. Bourdieu (1972) wrote in a note that the term “disposition” was particularly appropriate to express what the concept of habitus covers because:

Le mot “disposition” [...] exprime d'abord le résultat d'une action organisatrice présentant alors un sens très voisin de mots tels que structure; il désigne par ailleurs une manière d'être, un état habituel (en particulier du corps), et, en particulier, une prédisposition, une tendance, une propension ou une inclination.

The term disposition (...) first expresses the result of an organizing action introducing then a meaning very close to words such as structure; it also refers to a way of being, a habitual state (in particular of the body), and, in particular a predisposition, a tendency, a propensity or an inclination. (Note 39, p.393)

The second definition came 14 years later, in 1988, when Bourdieu responded to the criticism of habitus being too deterministic in an interview on France Culture radio. He clarified it as follows:

Mais l'habitus ce n'est pas un destin, un fatum, comme on me le fait dire, c'est un système de disposition ouvert qui va être constamment soumis à des expériences et transformé par ces expériences. Cela dit, je vais tout de suite corriger... Il existe une probabilité que les expériences confirmeront l'habitus, autrement dit que les gens auront des expériences conformes aux expériences qui ont formé leur habitus.

(But the habitus is not a destiny, fate, like people claim I say, it is an open system of disposition which will constantly be subjected to experiences and transformed by these experiences. That said—I'll correct this right away—there is a probability that experiences will confirm the habitus, in other words that people will have experiences consistent with the experiences which have shaped their habitus.) (Bourdieu, 1988).

Based on these two definitions, my understanding of habitus is a set of structured dispositions that orient the way a person acts, dresses, speaks, or thinks. These dispositions are acquired through a process of inculcation, that is in some ways, socialization, and are therefore structured by the social environment or fields in which they are acquired. As a result, a person who acquires dispositions in a working-class environment will have different disposition than a

person who acquires them in a middle-class milieu. Bourdieu believed that habitus is durable, fixed in the body throughout life but also generative and transposable, in the sense that it can generate a great variety of practices and, in a new context, it might even differ from the dispositions acquired in the original context. However, previous experiences will influence a person's way of reacting. In other words, habitus influences a person's actions but it does not strictly determine them (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1991).

Further to this, the concept of habitus highlights the connection between our past experiences, present interactions and future actions because as Hall (2013) pointed out, "it is through our lived experiences as individual actors that our habitus is continually being reconstituted" (p. 36).

Finally, Bourdieu (1972) highlighted the dialectic relationship between structure and agency that is manifested in the habitus. On the one hand the habitus is the result of social structures, and the rules of the game on the field. On the other hand, the habitus also structures practices and reproduces social fields.

Language as symbolic power. Language plays a central role not only in shaping our sense of ourselves—our identities—but also in defining institutional practices. As mentioned in the introduction, France is an extreme case, where law regulates the use of the national language in the public sphere. Given this context and in order to understand how, when, and why Franco-Maghrebi students use French, Arabic and other languages, it is important to refer to the symbolic values attached to these languages and how the school recognizes these resources as legitimate. Bourdieu (1991) refused to believe in the neutrality of language as conceptualized by Saussure (1916) and claimed that we "should never forget that language (...) is no doubt the principal support of the dream of absolute power" (p. 42). Indeed, according to him, linguistic

competence represents a form of capital in relation to the social context of interactions or fields. Within these fields, certain ways of speaking and being have more values than others or are more legitimate than others. These legitimate ways of speaking and being become forms of “cultural capital.”

Bourdieu’s (1991) model of symbolic value of one language over another rests on his notion that both the symbolically dominated group and the dominant group “misrecognize” that language as a superior one. One language gains legitimacy through “the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (p. 164). The concept of symbolic power, as explained above, reveals how official languages become the language of hegemonic institutions, and it could explain the making of language ideologies and discourses I witnessed in Charles Dupuy school, my study site. For Bourdieu (1977a), this misrecognition of the legitimacy of a language ensured the “reproduction of existing power relations” (p. 30), and I would add to this the production and maintenance of dominant societal and intuitional discourses.

Key Concepts in Research on Identity

Identity. In her attempt to theorize identity, Menard-Warwick (2005) recognized that “there is a lot of definitional confusion in the literature” (p. 254), which is not surprising given the complexity of the concept. As Block (2007b) suggested, “identity is a multilayered phenomenon and it is well-nigh impossible to arrive at a definition or list of perspectives that will hold up for very long” (p. 187). Many researchers have pointed to the tension between identity as a fixed reality and a more fluid state (Block 2007a, 2007b, 2013; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Davies & Harré 1990). Nevertheless, I have selected concepts to illustrate the most relevant aspects of identity to my study and my own understanding of the concept.

First, poststructuralist approaches to theorizing identity reinterpret the view of identity as a stable and consistent concept and shift this to the idea that identity is an emerging and changing construct always socially situated. According to the cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1992), this view “accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (p. 17). Hall focused on identity in-process, the discursive aspect of identity construction and the multiple ways in which identities are constructed and expressed.

This means speakers may shift positions in discourse, and it is also through the way they position themselves in an interaction that others are positioned as well. Davies and Harré (1990) described this process through the theoretical construct “positioning,” which they defined as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines” (p. 48). The “discursive process” in question involves not only language but also other semiotic practices, such as how people dress or move... For Davies and Harré, *interactive* positioning assumes one individual positioning the other, while *reflective* positioning is the process of positioning oneself. Indeed, it is important to highlight how selves can both position themselves but also be positioned by others, thereby leading to the process of negotiation of identities.

Although I do not see identity as stable, I believe that the way we position ourselves and are positioned by others are mediated by our habitus and dependent on our position and access to capital in a specific field. The quote which best encapsulates how I envision the concept of identity comes from Tracy (2002), in her book *Everyday Talk: Building and Reflecting Identities*: “identities are best thought of as stable features of persons that exist prior to any particular

situation, *and* are dynamic and situated accomplishments, enacted through talk, changing from one occasion to the next” (p. 17). On the one hand, I believe that we have what Tracy called “master identities,” which are “presumed to be relatively stable and unchanging” (p. 18) (for example, age, national origins, and more debatably, ethnicity); and “personal identities,” which are expected to be relatively stable and unique (for example, ways of talking, beliefs, attitudes). On the other hand, I see the contribution of poststructuralist approaches as valid and necessary to fully encompass the construct of identity. I also agree with Block (2007b, 2013) and Kubota (2016), who argue that some authors have put too much emphasis on agency, seeing people as free agents. For example, Giddens (1991) suggested that “even in the most extreme of life conditions, there is some space for individual choice and the reflexive constitution of self-identity” (p. 86).

However, not everything can be negotiated: race, cast, and gender, for example, may be imposed and “coercively applied” (Young, 2008, p.120). Moreover, the range of choices may differ from one person to another and is always dependent on the sociocultural context in which these choices are made. Indeed as Hawkins (2005) claimed, “one cannot be what one does not know exists” (p. 62). Similarly, Bourdieu (1991) noted, “the capacity to manipulate is greater the more capital one possesses” (p. 71). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) also cautioned that agency “is never a property of a particular individual; rather it is a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large” (p. 239). Related to the concept of agency is “identities as sites of struggle;” that is to say, how people negotiate the multiple ways they position themselves and are positioned (Block, 2007a, 2007b, Norton & McKinney, 2011).

Negotiation of identities. During my fieldwork, I often witnessed a clash between Franco-Maghrebi students' perception of themselves and the way they are positioned by others, more specifically within the French education field, where power is unequally distributed and with some discourses being more powerful than others. In their edited volume, *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) suggested a framework based on a poststructuralist approach to identity which, on the one hand, acknowledged the complexity of hybrid identities in post-modern societies, while taking into the account cultural, political and historical contexts with unequal relations of power in which these identities are negotiated. For these reasons, this framework allows me to account for many aspect of tension I observed during my study.

Based on “positioning theory” as described above, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) posited three types of identities, namely, *imposed* identities (which are not negotiable in a particular time or place), *assumed* identities (which are accepted and not negotiated) and *negotiable* identities (which are contested by groups and individuals). Imposed identities are the ones that cannot be resisted or contested because the people being positioned do not have the social power to do so. For instance, in my study, female Muslims could not resist the imposed identity of being a student in a French school. In turn, assumed identities are those that many, even if not all, individuals are comfortable with. For example, In my study most of the students assumed their religious identity. Finally, negotiable identities refer to those which are contested and resisted by individuals and groups, as illustrated in my research in the way some students contested their nationality and ethnicity.

These definitions of identity indicate an understanding of identities as being in the process of negotiation, an “outcome of the interplay between reflective positioning, that is, self-

representation, and interactive positioning, whereby others attempt to reposition particular individuals or groups” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 20). What’s more the authors stress that these three categories of identities yield particular status within unique sociohistorical contexts or discourses.

This leads me to explore the concepts of *discourses* and *literacies*, which in the field of education can have similar constructions and functions.

Discourse and literacy. First, I will introduce definitions of discourse, the evolution of this concept and its relation to identity. Then, I will demonstrate how in the school context both discourses and literacies share similar social construction and have similar impacts on the students’ identities in my research.

From a purely linguistic definition, discourse is traditionally associated with the study of written and spoken texts (Winndowson, 1978). However as Block (2007b) stated, in social sciences over the past 20 years many scholars have adopted “an interpretation of discourse which is not just about the nuts and bolts of written or spoken text” (p. 15) but also the process of knowledge production. Paul du Gay (1996) defines discourse as “both to the production of knowledge through language and representation and the way that knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and setting new practices into play” (p. 43).

What’s more, in agreement with a poststructuralist interpretation of the term, Foucault claimed, “[D]iscourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (1981, p. 52-53). In other words, discourse not only indicates who holds the power, but it actually is in itself the medium of power: Who controls discourse also controls power. Based on this definition of discourse, but within the specific education field and therefore consistent with

my research, May (1995) argued, “traditional discourses of schooling are seen as not only instruments of communication or even knowledge, but also instruments of power which reduce, limit and, at times, foreclose the educational options of minority children” (p. 26). These definitions focus on the power of discourses to shape the social world, and thereby the way discourses are received and interpreted.

Other scholars, have envisioned this concept as a way of enacting an identity. For example, according to Hawkins (2005), discourses are “ways of communicating (through various semiotic modes, both verbal and nonverbal) that are specific to situated communities of practice” (p. 61). In this sense, discourses can be seen as a resources for identity construction (Block, 2007b).

Similarly, Gee (1989) argued discourses are:

ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities, and discourse is an “identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk and often write so as to take on a particular social role that other will recognize” (pp. 6-7).

In addition, for Gee, a discourse or identity kit, involves “ways of displaying . . . membership in a particular social group or social network” (p. 7). This means literacy practices must be considered within their contexts and within surrounding discourses. Indeed, in writing about the link between identity and literacy, Gee argued that literacy practices cannot be separated from these “ways of being in the world,” these discourses. I agree that the relation between literacy and discourse must be highlighted to understand the impact of schooling on students’ identity.

In my analysis of students’ practices, I use the term literacy to avoid distinguishing between reading and writing, which is problematic because as Kern (2002) remarked, “Literacy is about ways of creating and interpreting meaning through text—which is more than the ability

to inscribe and decode written language” (p. 21). Indeed, according to Kern (2000), literacy, is “the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. (p.16). This definition of literacy as social practices allows for a better understanding of the relationship between learning and sociocultural contexts. As I illustrated at the beginning of this section, social scientists have adopted a more critical definition of discourse. Similarly, scholars in New Literacies Studies posit literacy is a social practice, not a technical skill but rather a way of asserting power.

While questioning the “literacy myth,” Gee (2012) claimed that literacy has never been neutral and that history has shown that it had been used to ensure social hierarchies and empower elites more often than to provide human growth. Gee (2004) believed that literacy is “heavily tied at the outset of identity issues” (p. 94) in the sense that learners have to agree to step out of their daily world and their identity to participate in another identity, which always represents a certain degree of loss. He acknowledged that for “some people it represents a more significant loss in terms of a dissociation from and even opposition to, their home- and community-based cultures” (p. 94). I have observed this phenomenon during my study, which I will further discuss in my analysis of students’ schooling experience.

To conclude, Street’s words (2012), succinctly express my own understanding of literacy and how it is tied to discourses and identity:

Literacy [...] is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. It is also always embedded in social practices, such as those of [...] a particular educational context, and the effects of learning of that particular literacy will be dependent on those contexts. Literacy in this sense, is always contested, both in its meaning and its practices. [...] The argument about social literacies (Street, 1995) then suggests that engaging with literacy is always a social act imbued with power relations from the outset. (p. 29)

Framing literacy thus, as a “social act,” allows me to account for the dynamic relationship between the school institutional constraints and affordances, French socio-political events, and the individual experiences and actions of the participants.

In this chapter I have explained the choice of Practice Theory as my theoretical framework and defined its main concepts. I have also defined major concepts relevant to the study of identity. In the next three chapters I analyze my data, answering the questions below while applying a framework that accounts for the dialectic relationship between the school and its institutional discourses, the current sociopolitical context, and the individual experiences and actions of the participants.

Research Questions

In order to the expand body of published literature, this dissertation explores three aspects of Franco-Maghrebi’s negotiation of identities: (a) linguistic practices, (b) experiences of schooling, and (c) negotiation of identity and creations of new worlds. The findings address the following research questions in order to seek better understanding of the participants’ actions and perceptions found in the data.

1. What communicative resources do Franco-Maghrebi students have and how are they deployed in the classroom and in the community?
2. What are Franco-Maghrebi students’ experiences of schooling? How does participation in schooling impact the identity negotiation process; that is to say how do Franco-Maghrebi students position themselves within the school and how are they positioned by agents and discourses of the school?
3. How does this negotiation process, as described above impact their sense of selves? How do participants negotiate identities and create new worlds?

Chapter 4: Methods

In this chapter I explain my choice of paradigm and method of research. I introduce the site of my research and the participants and I explain the procedures, the instruments I used, and my analysis of the data.

Choice of the Methodology

Choice of paradigm. When advising researchers how to choose the most appropriate research paradigm, Dörnyei (2007) suggested the following criteria be considered: “(a) the research question/topic; (b) whether the investigation is exploratory or explanatory; and (c) the existing research traditions in the specific area” (p. 309).

Concerning the criterion (a), my main goal was to observe Franco-Maghrebi students’ communicative resources and identity negotiation within the French education system and how this negotiation process influenced their sense of selves. Because I was more concerned with a social construct and a process in a given social context rather than outcomes or products, I decided that quantitative methods would be appropriate for my research. As Dörnyei (2007) claimed, “quantitative methods are generally not very sensitive in uncovering (...) the dynamics underlying the examined situation” (p. 35). On the other hand, Bogdan and Biklen agreed that “the qualitative emphasis on process has been particularly beneficial in educational research” (2007, p. 6).

Regarding the criterion (b), the exploratory versus explanatory nature of my investigation, I wanted to explore a social phenomenon. I observed and listened: I wanted to report and understand without imposing a single explanation.

Considering (c), the existing research traditions in the specific area, the studies cited in my literature review that highlighted issues of identities all share ethnography as a common

research paradigm. As a matter of fact, ethnography has been the most common design used in research on issues of identity and power in SLA, sometimes with long time frames in order to provide more depth. For example, Hawkins's (2005) and Norton's (1995) ethnographies both lasted a year, McKay & Wong (1996) lasted two years, and Harklau's (2000), three years.

Similarly, while considering my theoretical framework, Practice Theory is a theory whose studies also rely on ethnographic work (Bourdieu, 1972; Ortner 1989, 2006). Bourdieu's seminal work on Practice Theory, *Esquisse d'une Théorie de la Pratique*, begins with three ethnological studies of Kabyle society. As Wacquant (2004) pointed out, Bourdieu's "hands-on training in empirical research was literally begotten 'in the field'" (p. 389). In fact, Bourdieu spent several years in northern Algeria, immersed in the everyday life of Kabyle farmers, to observe how the rise of capitalism in a postcolonial context affected this community.

To Dörnyei's list, I would add another consideration. Before starting my data collection, I did not speculate about what I was going to uncover beyond basic notions of identity negotiation and tension. As a matter of fact, numerous researchers (Dörnyei, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell 2013) have remarked on the *emergent* nature of qualitative research. From the beginning of my pilot study, I was able to get a real sense of what this meant. I had originally wanted to observe how the participants used both French and Arabic in their daily interactions at school. However, during my pilot study, I hardly ever heard the student participants use Arabic. The main reason, I discovered, was that speaking Arabic was not permitted in the school.

I therefore realized that my original focus, which had been on language use was not going to be fruitful and that I needed a broader focus on communicative resources that would go far beyond language. Indeed, communication, or creating meaning which others interpret, is never based on linguistic cues alone and, as Young and Astarita (2013) argued, "a myopic focus on

language ignores a broader field of human semiosis, of which language is only a part” (p. 172). As a result, I could not focus only on which languages the participants spoke but I needed to adopt a wider scope, by observing how they talked, how they dressed, how they behaved in class, who they associated with: in other words, the way they carry themselves in the world.

I took it as a sign that I had to adopt a more inductive approach and my research design would have to be flexible enough to respond to emergent findings during my investigation, allowing me to narrow down the focus during my research, rather than establishing a clear prior focus. In other words, like many researchers which have adopted a qualitative method, I hoped to “(construct) a picture that took shape as I collected and examined the parts” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6).

Choice of research design. I conducted an ethnographic study, a method borrowed from the discipline of anthropology, which according to Willis and Trondam (2002) in their “Manifesto for Ethnography” is “a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms the irreducibility of human experience” (p. 394).

The tasks of “respecting” and “representing” are central to ethnographic work, but they can only be achieved through what Geertz (1973) referred to as a “thick description.” Geertz believed that because the writing of anthropological data is “our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 9), participants’ actions, interactions, feelings, behaviors, and the social and cultural context of a study must be richly and thickly described to counter balance the researcher’s subjectivity. To ensure such thick description, researchers in fieldwork have often combined a wide range of data collection, including semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, field notes, transcriptions of

recordings, diary entry, and others. Relying only on interviews or observations would not have provided me with sufficient description and understanding of the context. However, being able to draw parallels between what participants had said during interviews and what I had observed in the school and official documents I collected ensured a thick description and a clearer understanding of the context. For example, I discovered that Arabic was not allowed in the school during my first interview with Nora. I was then able to find this information in the school regulations, and more important I was able to observe how this regulation was put into practice, and how it affected the participants in the school context.

Although a thick description aims at reducing researcher's subjectivity, several authors (Erickson 1984; May, 1995; Young, 2017) have argued that all research is value-laden and, more precisely, that ethnographers come to the field with previous experiences and feelings about their object of study. While Young (2017) wrote that "all research starts somewhere, from contacts that you have made, from your own personal history [...] your concern for people who are suffering" (p. 2), Erickson pointed out the lack of neutrality from ethnographers. Erickson simply made the case that "it was *I* who was *there* doing fieldwork, not somebody else. My fundamental assumptions and prejudices are part of me" (p. 8). To lessen the effect of their personal prejudices, Erickson suggested that researchers make explicit to the audience their point of view. I agree and although I went into the field without well-defined research questions, I did have my own beliefs about social issues and the context I wanted to understand.

What's more, during the data collection, as well as during the writing phase, I focused on certain aspects because they mattered more to me or because I could make sense of them, maybe more than someone with a different life experience. I believe, for example that given the same context of study, someone who had grown up in a different country, who had not been exposed

to the French socio-political context, who had developed different ideologies, this person's study would have gone in a different direction. Alexandra Jaffe (1999), in her book *Ideologies in Action: Language Politics on Corsica* admitted that; "there is an ideological dimension built in my decision to study Corsican, in that I came to Corsica with a bias in favor of cultural and linguistic diversity" (p. 5). I acknowledge this bias, which is a result of my own personal history. When I look back in my life at what might have triggered my desire to conduct this research, I can identify two key experiences.

Personal Dimension and my Positionalities

Tarek's story, becoming aware of prejudice. The first incident took place during my first year in a Catholic junior high school, in a small, rural town in France, about 20 miles from my research site. When I was in 6th grade, only one of my classmates was of Maghrebi origin. Tarek, was a second-generation immigrant from Algeria, growing up in a single-parent home. His mother worked as a cleaner in the school and as teachers often reminded him, she worked very hard to pay for his education. I do not recall if he spoke any other languages than French but he spoke French very well because I remember communicating with him without any difficulty. Tarek had a bad reputation at school and in the town: Students were scared of him, teachers were always scolding him, the hall monitors were merciless with him, and members of my own family warned me to stay away from him. He was frequently in detention, humiliated daily, and often slapped⁹. I would not say that he was my friend, probably because I was worried that being seen with him would look bad in the eyes of my teachers and family. I was not a very focused student

⁹ Slapping was illegal in French schools at the time, but because we were in a private school it was allowed, or rather, over-looked.

at the time, however, and I remember laughing with him and fooling around at the back of the classroom.

When I think about Tarek, I recall two specific events that really made an impression on me, when I was 11 years old. One day, the school principal, who was also our math teacher, was writing on the board, and he must have heard someone talk, which we were not allowed to do in class. He turned around, his face red with anger and started screaming. He was shaking, and suddenly he threw the chalkboard eraser across the room right at Tarek's face. The eraser struck Tarek with force. He was covered in chalk and his head seem to hurt because he was holding it in his hands. The principal then started shouting at Tarek, telling him he was trouble to the school and to the world, that he would never achieve anything in life, that he would end up being a loser, even a beggar in the street. The rest of us students were in shock but nobody said anything. I did not know if it was Tarek who had spoken. Tarek cried and we resumed the lesson.

Another day during study hours after class, I was sitting next to Tarek, laughing and whispering to each other so that the hall monitor would not hear us. He then handed me a piece of paper on which he had written a beautiful poem for me. Although I kept it for a long time, I don't remember what he wrote, except that he compared me to a flower. I thought it was very sweet. Tarek did not finish 6th grade. He was expelled for reasons unknown to me. I saw him a few times after he left the school because he would come to the school gate after classes were over. Tarek died a few years later. At the age of 16, he was shot by a drug dealer to whom he owed money. To this day, Tarek is the only classmate that I am aware of who is dead. I felt Tarek had never been given a chance and yet he wrote beautiful poetry. I have often made a connection, maybe a simplistic one, between the school principal's prophecy and Tarek's fate.

How did those words affect him and his sense of self? My memory of Tarek made me question the role of the institution in constructing students' identity.

Experiencing identity negotiation. The second key experience happened the year I worked as a French assistant in a college in Northern Ireland. This was my first time living and working on my own in a foreign country. One of the first things that struck me as I was navigating new surroundings, was that people were positioning me in ways I had never experienced before. I come from a small village in rural France. I grew up poor, in a single-parent family with two older brothers. My grandparents on both sides were farmers, and my mother found small jobs like cleaning houses to make ends meet. I am a first-generation college student and the only female in my entire extended family pursuing a doctorate. But when I left France I left this identity behind.

Because of my French accent, my French clothes, my French appearance, people I met in Northern Ireland immediately assumed that I was well educated, cultured, that I was stylish, and chic. Strangers would start talking to me about Proust, who I had never read or directors of intellectual movies I had never seen. They would talk to me about different places in Paris, a city I had only visited a couple of times. I felt I had moved up the social ladder just by coming to a different country or what Bourdieu (1977a, 1991) called a different cultural and linguistic "market." The way I was positioned had an influence on how I positioned myself, and I believe that at this time I became more cultured. Indeed, in order to meet these new expectations, I started to learn more about my own culture. I watched some of the intellectual movies people had mentioned, I read more authors to be sure I could take part in conversations about French literature. What was more, becoming fluent in English gave me access to another culture, another society in which I entered at a different social level.

In many ways, my experience in Northern Ireland was similar to Kinginger's (2004) case study of Alice, a working-class American student who, by coming to study abroad in Paris, was able "to upgrade her access to cultural capital, [and] become a cultured person" (p. 240). Indeed, becoming a competent French speaker freed her from her former identity as a working-class American girl and transformed her into an "intellectually more sophisticated French-speaking person" (Block, 2007a, p. 871). Since that year in Northern Ireland, I have lived outside of France and I have been aware of what Bourdieu (1977b) called the "symbolic capital" of French, which tends to be associated with fine art, intellectual life, and Paris; that is to say, mostly positive images.

Having now lived for many years in English-speaking countries, I have become bilingual and I have mostly felt a "legitimate speaker" of English (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1991). Of equal importance, I never felt I had to give up my heritage culture or language. I realize that this is a privilege which comes from being French, though not all languages and cultures have the same symbolic capital. These experiences triggered my curiosity about the relationship between language, identity and power, and I wanted to explore this amongst the population and context that I felt most concerned about: Franco-Maghrebi youth in French schools. I wanted to design a study that would first allow me to study the participants over time in the school context but I also wanted to represent their perspectives, their voices, as accurately as possible. I decided that ethnography was the best suited design for my research.

My positionalities. Although my experiences described had an impact on the topic of this research, I want to address my positionalities as a researcher. As a non-Muslim French woman who grew up in a rural area, I recognize that my positionalities do not align with those of the participants. However, I moved away from France more than 20 years ago to live and work

in many countries, including Morocco. I had been living in the US for 5 years when I began this research. To some extent this halfie status, which Abu-Lughod used to describe the identities and experiences of researchers “whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, parentage” (1991, p.137), allowed me to identify more closely with some of the participants, especially the students of Moroccan origin. Indeed, when I asked which towns in Morocco their families were from, and when I could say that I had been there, lived there and that my first son was born there, it always felt like a big icebreaker. My familiarity with both the French education system and the community in which they lived and where I grew up brought me some of the advantages of “insider” status; at the same time, having lived outside of my culture of origin had sensitized me to new aspects and dynamics of this familiar context, which had also changed with time. The fact I lived outside of France for so long allowed me to adopt a more critical stance because I was able to distance myself from principles that are often held sacred by French people and ethnographies that address issues of power often call for critical research.

A Critical Stance

Several authors have explicitly used critical ethnography (May, 1995; McKay & Chick 2001; Menard-Warwick, 2007). When making the case for school ethnography, Erickson (1986) claimed that when “describing institutions [...] the ethnographer must adopt the critical stance” (p. 10). I agree with this principle because it is the only way to challenge what has been taken for granted, particularly in school context, by all the agents of the institution, which included the teachers, the administrative staff as well as the students. When doing my interviews at first, I felt that the participants were merely repeating dominant discourses. For example, many of the participants would say that *laïcité* was a fair principle which ensured that all students were equal

and that the ban on the *voile* was therefore good and necessary. I wanted to go beyond these discourses and to challenge what had become obvious, almost invisible, to them but that I, an outsider, could not really comprehend. For this reason, I am aware that some of the questions I asked the participants could be categorized as “leading questions,” for example: in my second round of questionnaires in order to challenge the participants’ opinion about *laïcité*, I asked the following questions: What is *laïcité*? Why is it important? For whom? Who defines what it is? Who does it concern? How is it interpreted in your school? What are some of its practical applications? How does it affect students? Does it concern all students? Does it affect all students in the same way? Do you agree with the principle? Why? Why not?

I justify my way of leading, or rather probing, because I wanted to give the participants an opportunity to open up without fear and to challenge their own thinking. It was especially crucial with students who were not in a position to freely criticize their institution because they were afraid of doing so or simply because they had never been given the opportunity to talk about their school experiences. Actually, during an interview on the radio in 1988, Bourdieu argued that:

Il y a toujours quelques imbéciles, enfin, à toutes les époques, pour croire que le peuple dit plus vrai que les autres (...). En fait, le peuple étant particulièrement dominé, il est particulièrement dominé par les mécanismes symboliques de domination et par exemple, (...), on pense qu’en mettant un micro devant la bouche d’un mineur, on va recueillir la vérité sur les mineurs. En fait on recueille des discours syndicaux des trente années précédentes. Le sociologue écoute, interroge, fait parler, etc etc, mais il se donne aussi les moyens de soumettre à la critique tout discours.

(There are always a few stupid people, well, in every era, who believe that the people speak the truth more than the others (...). In reality, people who are particularly dominated, are particularly dominated by the symbolic mechanism of domination and for example, (...), we think that by putting a microphone in front of a miner, we will collect the truth about miners. In fact, we collect trade-union discourses from the past thirty years. The sociologist listens, questions, makes people speak, etc. etc., but he gives himself the means to subject any discourse to criticism.)

This resonates with my experience of interviewing some participants who, for example, when asked for their opinion about *laïcité*. I felt I had to be critical of their discourse by helping them question their own assumptions and by convincing them it was safe to talk to me. Reflecting on Bourdieu’s comment, we could say that this critical stance is fully part of an ethnographic research and not specific to critical research. Similarly, Young (2017) stated that “all ethnography is critical” (p. 28). For these reasons, I will not label my ethnographic study as a critical one. Having given the rationale for my choice of methodology, I will now explain how I designed my study.

Design of the Study

I conducted my study in a high-school in France during three separate trips totaling four months, over the course of a year and a half. During those four months, I observed French literature classes taught by two different teachers, interviewed teachers, students, and administrators, and conducted focus groups. Table 4.1 below indicates my fieldwork’s timeframe, tasks and type of data.

Table 4.1

Summary of the design

Time frame and dates	Tasks and goals	Type of data collection
Two weeks in January 2015	Contacted school and French teachers. Conducted pilot study to test the instrumentation.	Observations, field notes and interviews.
Six weeks in September-October 2015	Re-established contact with school and teachers, recruited student participants and started data collection on site.	Classroom observations, interviews with students and with instructors, field notes.

Eight weeks in April- June 2016	Continued data collection, followed up emerging themes from previous trip.	Same as above, plus focus group interviews. Interviews with administrators.
Total number of weeks: 16 weeks/4 months.		40 pages of field notes 43 hours of classroom observation 46 interviews 3 focus groups

The research site.

The town. I conducted my research in a town of about 36,000 inhabitants (L’Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques [INSEE], n.d.), which I will call Vire. Vire is the largest town in an otherwise rural department one hour from Lyon, the second biggest city in France. Vire is therefore strategically situated close to a major city while providing the characteristics of a more rural lifestyle. Between the 1940’s and the 1970’s it had a thriving textile and military industry, which then went into decline in the post-industrial phase. During those years, the biggest employer was a factory manufacturing military vehicles that employed 17,000 workers at the end of the 1980’s but only 3,000 in 2000 (INSEE, n.d.). Most of its workforce was of immigrant origin and the economic decline had a notable socio-economic impact on this population.

In 2014, the inhabitants of Vire elected a right-wing mayor and the extreme right party (*Front National*) got 15% of the votes. In the latest presidential election, Le Pen—the candidate from the *Front National*—came second after Macron, with close to 22% of the votes. The school where I did my research is near the town center. To get to the school I walked from the train station through the town center and passed the general headquarters of the Front National; a

building recently painted white, with two video cameras on each side to ward off any attempts to vandalize it. This building was only two minutes away from the school and many students walked past it every day on their way to and from school. I had often wondered how the participants felt while walking past this place till one morning, I met Azouz as I was walking to school. We were just a few feet from this building, I told him how much I did not like to walk passed it. He immediately started talking about the upcoming presidential election in 2017, and shared his fear that Marine Le Pen, the Front National candidate might win and become the next French president. I could really feel his level of anxiety go up as he explained that some of his friends who did not have the French nationality might have to leave France. I then realized that this building was probably a reminder for some of the participants that they were not always seen as belonging to the community.

My choice of the town was primarily a practical one. Vire is about 30 miles away from where I grew up. Although I did not go to school in Vire, I am familiar with its culture and I had several contacts there. Additionally, the common features of Vire represented another criterion for selection: Vire is a typical, nondescript market town in rural France, it is neither a tourist attraction, nor thriving, nor particularly well-known. The town center is pedestrianized and has one long stretch of small boutiques, typical chain stores and restaurants, where the participants would spend a lot of time during breaks or after school. Like many towns in France, apartments in the town center tend to be expensive and owned by the upper middle class or what I would call in French *bourgeoisie*. In the case of Vire, the upper-middle class is mostly comprised of well-to-do families whose money has been passed down from generation to generation. The town center is surrounded by *banlieues*—poorer neighborhoods with subsidized housing where most of the student participants lived, reflecting different social and cultural backgrounds. Since I was

a child, when I heard the name of a neighborhood, I could picture who was living there. This was especially true when my brother used to play football. If his team played against a team from a less privileged part of town, I remember him and his friends saying that the match was going to be France versus Algeria.

The inhabitants of Vire would agree that it is just another average town in France, and I thought that this was an important characteristic. Indeed, several researchers (Doran, 2004; Killian, 2006; Mehta, 2010) have previously studied the Franco-Maghrebi population in Parisian suburbs often referred to as “banlieues” the best translation of is “ghettos,” and those researchers have ignored the rest of France. In France, for people like me who live in “the provinces” which is the name given to anywhere in France outside Paris, there is a strong sense that Paris is the main economic, cultural, and political focus, and that the rest of the country is ignored. I myself noted this gap during my background research and I wanted to address it. Several of the participants made comments about how living in a small town is harder than a bigger one, because they could not identify with a community and that they felt more isolated in Vire.

The school. My study site, which I will call Charles Dupuy, is a high-school that prepares students to the mainstream *baccalauréat général* (the national exams students take at the end of high-school) as well as a community college, in the sense that it also offers technical *baccalauréat* and pre- and post-*baccalauréat* technical courses. There are about 800 students, who are typically aged between 16 and 22. It is a public mixed school with the reputation, according to the principal, of having the most ethnically diverse population of students of all the schools in Vire. No statistics were available to confirm this, however, the principal claimed that 28 nationalities were represented in the school. It also has a very high rate of failure on the *baccalauréat* and other national exams, again according to the principal.

Getting In. I conducted a pilot study in January 2016, and one of my major goals at this stage was to make first contact with a school that I could use for my dissertation research. I contacted three schools; two declined, and one principal—M. Leroy—replied that he would be happy to welcome me to his school—Charles Dupuy. M. Leroy then put me in contact with a French teacher that he referred to as “la meilleure de notre école” (the best in our school). I contacted this teacher—Mme. Richard—and she agreed to let me observe her class. As I will explain in greater details later in my thesis, this was the beginning of a very fruitful and insightful collaboration.

I made announcements at the end of lessons, after the teachers had left the room so that the students would not feel obliged to participate just to please their teacher. During these announcements, I talked about my project and gave out my contact information if anybody was interested in being interviewed.

At the end of the first day recruiting students in Mme. Richard’s class, I had just walked out of the school gate when a young female student came to me. I recognized her straight away: the student, Nora, had taken part in my pilot study. She said: “salut Sandrine, c’est ça? Je vous ai reconnue ce matin dans la cour. Vous êtes là pour les entretiens?” (Hi Sandrine, is that right? I recognized you this morning in the school yard. Are you here for the interviews?) I answered: “oui, je suis là pour mes recherches” (yes I am here for my study) she then quickly asked: “vous faites les premières aussi, j’aimerais bien refaire l’entretien” (you also work with 11th grades, I would like to do the interview again). I explained that I actually was specifically interested in students in her grade. She gave me the name of her French teacher so that I could contact him. She added: “j’ai plusieurs copains comme moi dans la classe et je suis sûre qu’ils voudront aussi

faire les entretiens avec vous” (I have several friends like me in class and I am sure that they will also like to do the interviews with you).

I knew that the first challenge often faced in fieldwork is gaining access to the group to study, especially when the researcher, as is my case, does not belong to this cultural and ethnic group. After talking to Nora I knew that I had found what Creswell (2013) referred to as my “gatekeeper,” that is “the individual in the group that would allow the researcher in” (p. 94).

I then contacted Nora’s French teacher, M. Lambert, who responded positively to my request of both coming to present my project in his class, but also observing his classes during my fieldwork. When I went to Nora’s class, hereafter referred to as ES (Economie et Sociale), six students agreed to take part in my research. There was a total of eight Franco-Maghrebi students in M. Lambert’s class. I also went to a class taught by Mme Richard, hereafter referred to as STMG (Sciences et Technologies du Management et de la Gestion). There were six Franco-Maghrebi students, of which four agreed to be the participants. This meant that out of a total of 14 Franco-Maghrebi students who were asked to participate, ten had agreed to do so.

Participants. The students of Maghrebi origin represented my main focus for this study because I wanted to hear their own perspectives. I also wanted to get their French instructors’ point of view as a way of comparing these perspectives to better understand the context. Further, I was interested in talking with the school administrators about the school policies and their general attitudes or concern towards Franco-Maghrebi students, but as it is often the case with an ethnographic study, we cannot predict who will be willing to take part in our research.

Participants other than students, such as the principal, M. Leroy, and the French as a Foreign Language teacher, M. Jahid, were added during my fieldwork.

The students. I will introduce the student participants and the two teachers in greater details at the beginning of my analysis chapters. In the following section I am only giving some basic information.

Students in STMG were preparing a technical *baccalauréat* in management and administration, meaning that they had all taken (voluntarily or not) a different track from the general *baccalauréat*. The technical *baccalauréat* is seen as less prestigious than the general *baccalauréat* because it does not allow students to go to university. Mme. Richard informed me that during end of year staff meetings, where teachers discussed the orientation of students for the following year, it would be typical to hear: “un tel il est bon, on va quand même pas l’envoyer en STMG” (this one is good we shouldn’t even think of sending him to STMG). Usually, students who can continue in the general track do so. This class had four hours of French per week with Mme. Richard. There were 30 students in this group, 21 females and nine males. Six were of Maghrebi origins.

Students in ES were studying in the general track in social and economic sciences. This is where students who get better grades can go, and it is the track necessary to access university. This class had three hours of French per week with M. Lambert. There were 37 students in this group, 20 females and 17 males. Eight were of Maghrebi origins. I have summarized the demographics of each class in Figure 1 below.

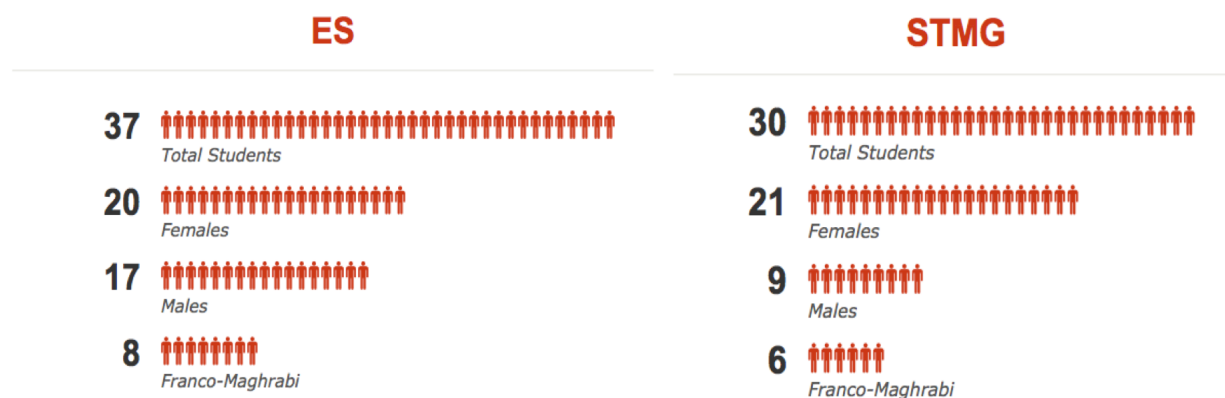


Figure 1. Demographics of both classes by gender and origin.

The first criterion to select participants amongst students was their cultural background. I wanted them to be Franco-Maghrebi. Although I acknowledge the historical and cultural differences between Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, I believe that there are several valid reasons to refer to people of Maghrebi origin collectively in the French context. In 2009, *Le Courrier de L'Atlas*, an online magazine designed for people of this community living in France, raised the issue of *Maghrebinité*. The article (Branine, et al., 2009) concluded that although the three countries had their own history and culture, once their inhabitants had immigrated to France, they shared similar experiences. Indeed, after the 1976 law that allowed the former French colonies in North Africa to apply for “*regroupement familial*,” (family reunification) many families moved from the Maghreb to France. There, they gathered around shared values like religion, and feelings of belonging to the “*nation arabe*” but more importantly they shared common living spaces, in the *banlieues*.

In addition, I am aware of the French discourses with which I grew up; that is to say, the discourses which label this minority as Maghrebi, and the participants seemed to have also interiorized this as a label with which they identified. I will thus refer to students of Maghrebi origin as a unit, but I will be responsive to any obvious trend in my data that calls for finer

distinctions amongst the participants given their countries, or even regions, of origin. I will also make an effort to account for the differences between first, second, and third generation immigrants.

A second criteria was that they were all in *Première* (11th grade) and were getting ready to take their *baccalauréat* in French. *Première* is the year before last in high school. *Terminale* is the final year and it is the year students take their *baccalauréat* in all the other subjects.

My premise was that the year when students are preparing for a national exam assessing their competence in French creates a particularly complex context, fertile in identity negotiation relating to teaching practices and school experiences in general. Similarly, it is an intriguing time to observe and interview teachers who have to comply with strict national requirements to prepare their students for the French *baccalauréat*, while still facing issues of identity and power relations. I wanted to observe how these teachers managed to teach the imposed curriculum and the pressure to prepare for the exam with students of different cultural backgrounds.

I have summarized the information about the student participants in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Summary of students' background information by age, gender, generation, origin and track.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Generation	Origin	Track/classroom
Khaled	16	M	1 st	Morocco (Berber)	Technical/STMG
Leila	18	F	2 nd	Algeria	Technical/STMG
Jasmine	17	F	2 nd	Algeria (Kabilie)	Technical/STMG
Azouz	18	M	3 rd	Algeria	Technical/STMG
Asmae	17	F	1 st	Morocco	General/ES
Abdel	16	M	1 st	Morocco	General/ES

Nora	17	F	2 nd	Morocco	General/ES
Salima	16	F	2 nd	Algeria	General/ES
Farid	15	M	2 nd	Morocco	General/ES
Soukaina	16	F	3 rd	Morocco	General/ES

I recruited a total of ten student participants, six females and four males; four were of Algerian origin and six Moroccan. Three participants were first-generation immigrants, five second-generation and two third-generation. Two participants were 18 or older, eight were younger. Six were in the general track and four in the technical track. Abdel and Nora had also taken part in my pilot study. This will be relevant when I compare my interviews with them at different times, after major events in France.

This brings me to the importance of contextualizing my first encounter with them. I interviewed both Nora and Abdel for the first time on Thursday, January 8th 2015. This was, by coincidence, the day after 12 people were killed in a terrorist attack on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*. The gunmen, two brothers, were both French citizens born in Paris of Algerian immigrants. This event affected everybody in France and particularly the Muslim community.

When I arrived at the school early in the morning the day after the attack, the gates were not yet opened yet and students were gathered outside. I could hear their conversations while I waited. Almost everybody was talking about the previous day's events. A group of male students were making machine gun noises as they mimed the scenes that had been made public on television the day before. They were speaking in Arabic and I could not understand what they were saying but I could understand other groups and I gathered that they were mostly saying how horrified they were, but also debating if *Charlie Hebdo* had not gone too far by publishing the cartoon of the prophet.

Several of the participants cried during the interview that day and reported being very much affected. I think that it is fair to say that the emotions on this particular day were very intense and might account for some of the most extreme comments students made.

Instrumentation.

Interviews. I conducted a total of 46 interviews, which took place in French and varied between 15 minutes to an hour, but typically lasted 30 minutes. I interviewed the students in a small private room inside the school, called “parloir” (visiting room) designed to receive parents when teachers or administrators needed to talk to them. On the last day of my fieldwork, some of the “exit” interviews took place outside the school on a park bench. I met students during school hours, when they had a gap in their schedule or sometimes we met when they had finished their classes at the end of the day. I conducted the teachers’ interviews in their classroom after their class, in the staff room and once in the “parloir.” I interviewed the administrators in their offices.

Although I acknowledge the emergent nature of qualitative research, I was also aware of the danger of not being rigorous enough and getting too much data, and I therefore wanted to delimit the nature of my observations. Dörnyei reported the “lack of plans for data reduction” as “the most common problems in qualitative data collection” (p. 125). In order to seek better alignment between my data collection measures, my research questions and the theoretical key concepts, illustrated the connections in a chart (Appendix D and Appendix E). I updated this chart as I designed follow up interviews and classroom observation protocols. These charts illustrate how my research questions evolved in the field. The first two rounds of interviews I conducted with the students and the teachers were semi-structured interviews. All the questions in the interviews were not systematically asked in order, nor were they answered within a single

interview. The subsequent interviews were unstructured and based on what I had observed in class or what the participants wanted to share.

Instructor interview protocol. The first semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) consisted of two major themes with several sub-questions for each theme. The first theme was about students' linguistic resources and practices and the second was about teaching this population of students. In the first set of questions, I intended to get the teachers' perspective on their students' linguistic practices: in other words, I wanted them to tell me what languages they thought their students used in different contexts. I wanted to hear their assumptions and representations, to match them against the students' own perspectives and practices. I also asked the teachers to evaluate their students' linguistic resources. In the second set of questions, my goal was to collect the teacher's stories about teaching this population. I asked them to report positive experiences as well as challenges. I then directed the discussion towards the school, and the institution at large, including the exam system and the syllabus. Finally, I opened the debate over the pedagogy that is currently predominant for teaching French, asking if they thought it was appropriate and effective.

The second interviews with instructors were designed after my first round of data collection, after I had identified some recurrent themes that I wanted to follow up, like *laïcité* and *culture générale* (see Appendix E).

Student interview protocol. Similar to the instructor interviews, the first two student interviews were envisioned as semi-structured with major themes and several sub-questions for each theme. During the first interviews, the major theme was languages, the second was schooling and the third was future/past (see Appendix D). With the first set of questions, I wanted to ask the participants about their linguistic resources and practices and how they viewed

their own bilingualism. I also wanted to know how they identified with their languages and cultures. In the second set of questions, my goal was to learn about their experiences at school, how they positioned themselves, and how they felt they were positioned within the school system. The last set of questions was aimed at discovering their future plans, and how they saw themselves as adults in society. The questions were purposefully open, for example “*quels sont vos rêves?*” (What are your dreams?), to leave room at this stage for more open-ended comments. At the end, the participants were asked to reflect on their lives compared to their parents, more specifically on their sense of identity and belonging, which was all the more relevant for second or third generation immigrants.

During the second interviews as explained above in the section on instructors’ interviews, I had identified “*culture générale*” and “*laïcité*” as themes that I wanted to further explore (see Appendix E). I wanted to hear their perspectives on these concepts, especially in order to draw a parallel with the instructors’ answers.

Administrators interview protocol. I interviewed the two administrators, M. Leroy and Mme. Durantet only once, but it was towards the end of my fieldwork, after I had spent close to four months in the school. By this time, I had a clear idea about what issues I wanted to raise with them. I had heard the Principal mention the number of different nationalities represented in the school and I wanted to ask him and his colleague how they felt about diversity in the school. I then narrowed down the discussion about Franco-Maghrebi students, the most represented minority in the school and my population of interest. I asked if they thought these youths were positioned as different and if they positioned themselves as different. Then I opened the debate about “*laïcité*” and what it represented for them. I finally inquired about the rule number 6 (see Appendix B) in the “*Principes de Vie dans l’Établissement*” (Life Principles Within the School),

which stipulates that “l’élève doit parler la **langue française** en dehors des cours de langues vivantes” (students must speak the **French Language** outside of foreign language classes).

Focus Groups. Morgan (1996), described focus group as “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (p.130). By using focus groups, I wanted to see the participants interact among themselves, I did not want to always be at the center like I was during interviews, so that the participants could share some of their concerns and compare their experiences. When listing reasons for using focus groups, Morgan noticed that “an important theme that reappears in many of these uses of focus groups is their ability to “give a voice” to marginalized group” (p. 133). This was what I was hoping to achieve by using this technique, and we will see later that the results were mixed.

To begin with, focus groups were very difficult to arrange because it meant that several of the participants had to be free at the same time. Because of this scheduling constraint, I conducted only three focus groups, with participants from the ES class and none with the STMG class. I was able to conduct these discussions because their French teacher had been required to grade national exams in another town, which meant that their French classes had been canceled for a week. I then suggested that we met during the time they usually had French so that I could help them prepare for their coming exam. I had tried to arrange the same with STMG, but students could not find a time when they were all free. Asmae, Nora, Abdel and Soukaina attended the first focus group which lasted 30 minutes. The second one also lasted 30 minutes and Farid, Abdel and Soukaina took part. Salima, Nora and Asma participated in the last focus group, which lasted one hour, because I also included questions from the exit questionnaire. This meant that Soukaina, Nora, Abdel and Asma took part in two focus groups.

During these focus groups, I wanted them to share their feelings about the French *baccalauréat*, whether they felt prepared or not. They then had an opportunity to share some of their strategies to prepare for the “big day.” In addition, I wanted to provide some help, as a way of thanking them for the time they had devoted to my study. Participants had ten minutes to prepare and then they presented their work to the group, after which we all gave some feedback. Although we were mostly preparing for the *baccalauréat*, during these focus groups, participants talked among themselves about other issues, sometimes just sharing their experiences, and sometimes arguing.

Observation protocols. I observed 43 hours of French lessons, 20 in STMG and 23 in ES and followed the same protocols. My intentions during my first round of observations were to identify the following elements: (a) how students mixed with other students; (b) how they communicated among themselves and with the teacher; (c) how speech was distributed and who initiated it; (d) What languages and linguistic registers were used, (e) what the students were asked to do by the teacher; and (f) the general learning atmosphere.

Field notes. In addition to classroom observations, I kept a diary every night after I left the school, writing what I had observed, either in the staff room, the school yard, or at the school gate. During the day in the field, I sometimes recorded comments to myself on my recorder and then wrote them down in my diary. Very often these comments had been made by the participants, after I had stopped the recording device. I wanted to make sure that I would have a trace of these very often interesting remarks. I wrote a total of 40 pages of field notes.

Documents. Finally, I collected the following documents within the school context: (a) a copy of the parent-teacher contact book, which contains the “règlement interieur” (the school’s rules and regulations), the *laïcité* charter (see Appendix C), and pages for teachers and parents to

communicate about students' absence, late arrival in class...; (b) Pedagogical material handed out during the classes I observed; (c) The students' reading lists for the French *baccalauréat*; (d) A student exam with the teacher's comments; (e) The school's "Livret d'accueil," which translates as "welcoming booklet" and which is given to every incoming student. It contains a welcome note from the Principal, the yearly calendar, a description of the school (its staff, its organization...), its records on national exams, its rules and regulations, similar to the ones published in the parent-teacher contact book but in more details.

These documents help to describe a more complete picture of what the participants faced within the school context, and illustrate the unequal relations of power. Indeed, as Lindlof and Taylor wrote, official documents are "a site of claims to power, legitimacy and reality" (2011, p. 232).

Most of them have been included in the appendices and will be detailed in the following chapters where I analyze my data.

Leaving the field. I became close to some of the participants, I feel they shared with me some intimate stories. When I started my research, I had told them that I would like to help them get ready for their *baccalauréat*, I did this during the few focus groups that I managed to organize, but there were fewer than I had planned, and I only did them with one class. I felt that I had let down some of the participants. As Figueroa (2014) pointed out, it is common for researchers who are leaving the field to ask themselves the following questions: "Have we acknowledged and fulfilled our responsibility to the communities who have welcomed us? Have we—in both our own opinion and the opinion of the participants—fulfilled the commitments we made at the beginning of our study?" (p. 129) as she noted, courses prepare you for how to gain access, and how to protect anonymity, but no one talks about "the politics of maintaining or breaking

relations” with participants with whom researchers have been involved (p. 143). I still have mixed feelings when I think about the participants and I ask myself: Did I use them? Did they get anything in return? Will writing their perspectives be a sufficient payback? I partly answer this question in my third analysis chapter when I explore some of the effects taking part of my research had on the participants. I will now describe how I analyze this data.

Data analysis

Transcribing and translating. I recorded all the interviews, which I then transcribed using verbatim transcription, making notes of non-verbal communication such as laughter, pauses, and expressions of emotion. Transcribing all of my data was a considerable investment of time but it was an important step in my analysis, I would say that it was my first cycle of analysis because it helped me remember the interviews as they took place, in some ways it brought me back in the room with the participants. I felt I was able to relive much of what I had experienced, but with the advantage of having gone through all of it. That is to say when I listened to the recordings and transcribed them, I was equipped with all the insight, understanding and awareness of the context that I acquired during my fieldwork. My hearing was especially acute to comments with underlying meanings, to hesitations, to long pauses, to the tones of what was said, and more importantly to what was not said. I wrote memos with these remarks while transcribing.

Translation being a very laborious process, I made full English translations of interviews only when reference to the specific wording of the interview significantly added to the depth of the analysis. For these key transcripts, given my ability to function in both languages, and the fact that I have often worked as a translator, I consider my own translations to be accurate and therefor my translations were not verified by a certified French-English translator. While translating, I was aware issues of faithful representations of the participants’ words in another

language. Bucholtz (2007), reflected on the process of “entextualization” and “recontextualization” of speech, that is to say what researchers do when they transcribe participants spoken language into a written text that can be analyzed. Bucholtz then highlighted the power of researchers who “portray and circulate speech and speakers as entextualized entities” and the fact that transcription is “inherently and unavoidable sociopolitical act.” Translation adds another complexity to this process of linguistic representation and for this reason I strived to be faithful to the participants’ discourse. For this reason, when translating the participants’ words, I did not correct language that was not grammatically correct because I wanted the English translation to be faithful to the speakers’ grammar, tone, speech style and register, which I believe embody their identities and habitus.

Coding using MAXQDA. Once my notes and interviews were written and organized, I started the analysis through several cycles. First I printed the interviews and my fieldnotes, I read them several times, I highlighted what felt worthy of attention, wrote preliminary jottings and memos by hand. This cycle of analysis was crucial to get more familiar with my data in a more tactile way and to build *data intimacy* with the participants’ words (Saldaña, 2011). After this, given the amount of data that I had collected, I used MAXQDA an analytical software for qualitative, quantitative and mixed research projects. This software helped me to organize and analyze the data by precisely recording code properties based on the themes identified and categorized. During the first cycle of coding using MAXQDA, I coded chunks of data as opposed to a line by line method. Saldaña (2016) called this method “holistic coding,” and recommended its uses especially for researcher with large amounts of data, and also for researchers who have a general idea of what to expect in the data. By first coding chunks, I was preparing for a more detailed analysis.

The codes at this stage were themes that were discerned during the fieldwork, including my pilot study and initial analysis, such as “laïcité,” “home practice,” “school practice,” “monolingual bias.” These themes were a reflection of what had started to emerge in the interviews and my observations, such as patterns, constructs, beliefs, practices... I decided that using “big” themes, would then allow me to present a more wholesome and coherent final analysis because “a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (Desantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362). What’s more, a thematic analysis was an effective and strategic approach as part of my research design which fitted well with the research questions and theoretical framework. Indeed, because I had designed the first questionnaires after my pilot study, these questionnaires were based on themes that had already started to emerge. I carefully designed questions to allow the participants to construct meanings around these broad themes. These initial themes were the premises for later cycles where I was able to detect processes, tensions and similarities.

Before my second cycle of coding using MAXQDA, I looked at all the codes that emerged from the first cycle, and I organized them under bigger categories, and repeated this till these categories were further condensed in central themes or concepts, in alignment with the research questions and theoretical constructs. At this stage, I had to alter the research questions so that they would better reflect the findings of my study. Seven central themes emerged from the analysis: background information, communicative resources, perceptions of languages, identity, dominant discourses, counter discourses and French literature class. After these categories emerged, I used “pattern coding” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236) as a method to examine social patterns and processes and to form theoretical constructs. In other words, I combined these categories in a way that would be more meaningful, I looked how they were connected, what

were their relationships. I searched how the individual components could be integrated or weaved together to create a narrative based on the data. This process yielded three themes: (a) Expression and perceptions of communicative resources; (b) Schooling experience and negotiation of identities, and (c) Changes and negotiations of identities and creations of new worlds. These themes align with the three research questions, although some codes overlap.

The limitations of using MAXQDA. I want to share some insight from my experience using a software. Although using MAXDA helped me organize the data and identify recurrent themes and patterns, I was aware of the risk of turning qualitative data into quantitative data, in other words, thinking that some data were more significant than others because they appeared more frequently. I tried to balance what is meaningful even if it occurs only once with patterns that appear all across the data. As Martha Bigelow (2017) said during a presentation, “N. Vivo is your best friend, but then there are these key moments...”

Indeed, MAXQDA can primarily provide information about frequencies of individual words or word combinations, this is a useful feature, but it does not show contradictions nor irregularities in the data. Frequency is important to identify a pattern, however, as Saldaña (2016) wrote, a pattern can also be characterized by (a) similarity; (b) difference; (c) sequence; (d) correspondence; (e) causation (p. 7). Coding for all these different characteristics prevented me from having too narrow a focus and from oversimplifying the analytic process. It also allowed me to account for codes that did not quite fit anywhere but that were still significant, for as Saldaña claimed “it is not always the regularities of life but its anomalies and deviations that intrigue us, that stimulate us to question and to investigate why they exist concurrently with the mundane and normative” (p. 7).

In addition, coding is not the only method I used to make sense of my data, I relied on my experience of the field, what I remembered as standing out, the emotions the participants expressed. What Spindler & Spindler (1992) wrote about human's unique capacity as observer to "be alert to divergences and subtleties that may prove more important than the data produced by any predetermined categories of observation or any instrument" (p. 66) resonates with my experience and feelings about data analysis. Indeed, I felt that the many hours I spent in the field and the amount of data I collected could not be reduced to numbers and had to reflect the complexity of the context. I still believe that MAXQDA made the coding process easier, but I would warn against the danger of relying too heavily on its main features.

In this chapter, I explained my choice of ethnography, I acknowledged the personal dimensions I brought to the field as well as my positionalities as someone both familiar with the research site but also capable of taking some distance and being critical. I then described the design of the study and the process of analyzing the data. In the next four chapters, I share the analysis of the data.

Chapter 5: Participants' narratives

I start the analysis chapters by introducing the participants, giving details about their personalities, lives, experiences, and struggles, so that I can paint a vivid portrait of each of them.

The students

Abdel. Abdel is a 16-year-old Moroccan student in the General/ES class. I first met Abdel during my pilot study, the day after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack of January 7, 2015. Even though most of the students and teachers were letting their emotions out on that day, Abdel remained composed. I learned later that his resilience and composure are some of his most salient features. Abdel was one of the most engaged participants—he came every time we had agreed to meet, and took part in two focus groups in addition to five interviews. Talking with him felt easy and we often chatted about world issues, moving away from my questionnaires. I felt he saw me as someone he could trust. I did not feel there was a big divide between us, like I did with some participants. Once, I was to meet him in the students' room; when I arrived, he was playing foosball with his friends, he asked me if I wanted to join. I did and we had a lot of fun.

As I got to know Abdel, I came to realize that he is an incredibly smart and inspiring young man. His parents were born in Morocco. He was born in Italy and lived there till he was 10 and he had been in France for 5 years when I first met him. He was proud to be able to speak French, Arabic, and Italian and to have had such diverse experiences. He kept links with Morocco and Italy because he still had family members in both countries. This allowed him to continue using his Italian and his Arabic. Being able to speak Arabic was important to him because in his faith in Islam. He often talked about religion; he went to the mosque every Friday and said that he was Muslim and that “l’assume” (he accepts it, or is happy with it). He had

never lived in Morocco but he was a Moroccan citizen and he and his family were planning to move there after he graduated from college. Abdel dressed formally, especially compared to his male classmates. He looked smart, mature, and serious.

During our focus groups with his classmates, he often took the lead and offered suggestions. He was hardworking and took school seriously. He was active in his French class. I really enjoyed our conversations, I found him thoughtful, critical, knowledgeable, and philosophical for his age. This could have been due to the fact that he was the eldest of a family of six and had to be responsible and set a good example.

Abdel was well read and he was interested in world events. On many occasions, he made connections between historical events that took place in other countries and the current situation in France, which implied a certain degree of critical thinking on his part.

In addition, he loved proverbs. I remember one in particular during our first interview, when he tried to translate an Arabic proverb that meant that “quand quelqu’un dit quelque chose sur toi, ça va pas rester sur toi, le vent, le vent il ...” (when someone says something about you, it is not going to stay on you, the wind, the wind, it...)” I could see what he meant and asked if “fera s’envoler” (will make it fly away) was the meaning he wanted to express. He said yes it was exactly the image the proverb conveyed. I thought it was a beautiful image, and unfortunately one of which he had to remind himself several times in his life. Indeed, he told me about his hard life in Italy, how people had been racist, about how hard it was when he first arrived in France and did not speak any French.

Abdel gave me the impression of being steady and grounded but he was struggling with several issues. He was upset that he could not be as articulate in French as he was in Arabic. He mentioned several times how sorry he was for not being able to win debates in French, the way

he would in Arabic, because in Arabic if he were asked to give a speech he would be confident to the point of “tout exploser” (blow everything up or be extremely successful). We often joked that he should be a politician because he was often diplomatic and understood so much about society and current issues. What impressed me the most about Abdel was his optimism. He worked hard in his French class and never gave up, even when he received low grades and negative feedback from his teacher. He mentioned several times that he did not mind being criticized for his mistake because “au contraire, grâce aux erreurs, et ben j’apprends” (on the contrary, thanks to mistakes, well, I learn). When he expressed his worries about the French *baccalauréat* he would say: “faut pas abandonner, faut pas avoir les mains croisées, faut pas rester avec les mains croisées, faut faire quelque chose” (you must not give up, one must not do nothing, you must not remain without doing anything, you have to do something), showing that he would do whatever it took to do the best he could. I learnt a lot from Abdel, about his life, his religion, his outlook on life, he shared a lot with me, always in a thoughtful, respectful, and insightful way.

Asmae. Asmae is an 18-year old Moroccan student in the General/ES class. She was an active participant in my research. She took part in two focus groups and four interviews. She was Nora’s friend (my gatekeeper), which might explain her involvement, but I think that she was often happy to be able to talk about her struggles and to have an opportunity to talk about issues she had never been asked about before. Asmae was feminine, fashionably smart, and modest at the same time. Although Asmae was only 18 when I met her, she had already had an incredibly rich life. As she mentioned several times, she had “fait trois pays, trois cultures différentes, trois langue différentes” (done three countries, three different cultures, three different languages). Indeed, her parents were born in Morocco, but her father came to Italy when he was 18 as a “sans papier” (without papers, or as a clandestine). She was born in Italy and she lived there till she was

nine when she and her family moved to Morocco. From what she said about Italy, her life there was not easy because “c’est tous des racistes” (they are all racist). She lived in Morocco for four years before moving to Vire with her parents and two brothers. She had been in France for five years when I met her.

During her time in Morocco she learned to write in Arabic and learned French as a second language, but she said it was not “approfondi” (in-depth). However, because she had learned some French before coming to France, she had never had any classes in French as a Second Language in France. As a result, she was insecure about her French and she would often criticize her way of speaking. This was actually a source of anxiety—an inferiority—complex and she mentioned several times “je bug” (I freeze up), because she was too worried about how she sounded or making mistakes.

In class, she often took part, but then as she said herself, any time she would not understand the meaning of a text she would give up. I never felt though that she had given up on school; she came every day and always tried her best. She was interested in languages, especially English and Italian. She did worry, though, that her English was not good enough, because she wanted to become a flight attendant either in Morocco or Dubai. She said several times that she had no intention of staying in France, probably because after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks she felt scared and threatened. She made it clear that she was not in France by choice and that the only reason she was in France was because her parents wanted her to study here. She then expressed how desperate she was to go back to Morocco “j’en pleure pour retourner au Maroc, j’en pleure” (I cry about going back to Morocco, I cry about it). Despite all her struggles and anxiety, she was a warm and caring person. Asmae, Nora, and I had some intimate conversations, mostly talking about boys, and we giggled a lot. It was hard to say goodbye to her, we had become close and I

felt that she enjoyed the time we spent together probably because, as she said during our last interview, taking part in my research made her feel “valorisée” (valued), because she was able to share her “vrais problèmes” (real problems).

Khaled. Khaled is a 16-year old first-generation student from Morocco who identified as a Berber¹⁰. He was in the STMG class preparing the technical *baccalauréat*. He was not an easy participant to interview because he seemed wary of me and was often unwilling to share his opinion. In my notes, just after my first interview with him, I wrote the following comments:

Young man, rebellious attitude, he was outside sitting across the road waiting for me, smoking. He never really looked me in the eye and was even balancing his chair away from me during the interview. His way of speaking is rather informal, with a lot of syllable omissions. He also was rather reluctant to share any personal details with me. His tone of voice was often defensive, critical, at times he sounded a bit arrogant. He made me feel that my questions were not relevant, or that they were too obvious.

My first impression prevailed during the rest of my fieldwork. Khaled was born in Morocco and came to live in France when he was two. He was a single child. One of his first sentences to me was, “ben moi je suis marocain, en fait ch’suis pas marocain, ch’suis berbère en fait” (well I’ Moroccan, actually I’m not Moroccan, I am Berber). This clarification seemed important to him. He reported speaking Berber and French equally well but not Arabic although, in another interview, he said he could read and write Arabic, and I realized after reading all the interviews with him, trying to put the pieces together, that this was probably for religious purposes. Indeed, it was only in his last interview that he talked about religion and that he explained the important role it played in his life. He told me then his religion was part of his personality and was what kept him from “les mauvaises fréquentations” (hanging out with the wrong people).

¹⁰ Berbers are the descendants of pre-Arab inhabitants in North Africa, and the dominant ethnic group in the Saharan region, where Khaled is from.

In class, he often sat next to a male student of Tunisian origin. Outside of school he told me most of his friends were from his soccer team, which is the best team in Vire.

Khaled had a rather negative attitude toward school, although he participated in class and said that he liked his French teacher and her class, his grades tended to be low, for example: he got 5/20 in his mock French *baccalauréat* French exam. He told me twice that he was not “un grand bosseur” (a hard worker). As I mentioned in my first note, he was not warm with me and he often made me feel that my questions were stupid. Often he would begin an answer with “ch’sais pas moi” (I dunno), and he would often end his sentences with “hein?” (eh?) as a way of sending the question back to me. Once I asked him if he felt he was the same person when speaking French and Arabic he said yes, but in a dismissive way, as though my question was not relevant. I then illustrated what I meant by sharing my own experience of how different my personalities were in French and English. I thought I could make him relate to my own experience but this is not what happened. His voice became even more dismissive, almost aggressive when he said, “ouais, mais moi c’est pas une langue que je voulais apprendre et que j’ai appris. C’est que j’ai appris comme ça” (yep, but for me it’s not a language that I wanted to learn and that I learned. It’s that I learned it like that). I felt resentment in his voice as he said this.

I then realized that his experiences with languages were different. Khaled moved to France when he was two, from a country that used to be a French colony. The context in which he learned and used languages could be qualified by what Ortega (2009) called a *circumstantial* L2 learning, where “members of a language minority must learn the majority language for reasons over which they have little choice ... such as immigration, economic hardship, postcolonial, war or occupation.” On the other hand, my own experience learning languages

would fit better in Ortega's *elective* L2 learning category, where people "learn a language from a majority position of equal power and hence with no evident or immediate power struggles" (p. 245). I felt embarrassed by my lack of sensitivity and after this incident I wondered if Khaled was going to continue participating in my study. He participated till the end, but he remained aloof.

Khaled had a rather rebellious attitude which he conveyed also through his clothes: He dressed rather informally, in sport clothes, trainers, and a leather jacket in winter. I never felt we had a close relationship, and I felt this probably had an impact on the kind of answers he was willing to give me. I had a feeling that he was holding back, that he did not want to discuss issues in depth with me. I wonder if our differences of gender, origin, religion, and age were too many and too hard to reconcile or if he saw me as a symbol of the institution and therefore did not trust me. Despite our awkward relationship, when we said goodbye, he shook my hand and brought his hand to his heart. I took it as a sign of respect and it felt good.

Farid. Farid is a 15-year-old second-generation student from Morocco. He was the youngest and one of the least engaged participant in my research. He took part in only three interviews and gave me mostly minimal answers. Farid was born in France and his parents were born in Morocco. When I asked him if he had any brothers and sisters, he said yes, but did not tell me how many. He wore mostly sports clothes, like soccer shirts and running shoes. Sometimes, he also wore more formal shirts. He looked fashionable, smart but casual. After our first encounter, I wrote:

Farid gave me the 'good immigrant speech' where he wanted very hard to let me know that he was very well 'integrated,' that he had no issues, that racism was not a problem. He also gave me minimal answers and seemed to be uncomfortable with some questions. I was surprised by most of his answers, because they did not reflect his behavior in class. In class, he spoke out very rarely, he talked only to his three friends sitting around him, who are all Franco-Maghrebi. He also acted less mature than other students and very playful,

sometimes writing on his friend's back, and giggling. I hope that next time he opens up more.

My first impressions may have been a bit unfair because, after getting to know him better, I do not think in retrospect, that he gave me the “good immigrant speech.” The real issue might have been that like Khaled, Farid always saw me as an authority figure within the school context and it was even more obvious with Farid. For example, he was adamant that he only spoke French in school. When I asked him what languages he used at school, he said that he spoke French all the time “tout le temps.” I knew that this was not the case because I had heard him speak a few words of Arabic, and Asmae and Abdel, the two classmates who always sat next to him, reported using some Arabic with him. I then told him that he could tell me the truth and everything he said would remain between us, but he insisted, “je parle français ici” (I speak French here). I felt maybe he did not want me to know that he was doing something which was not allowed in school. Similarly, when I asked him if he participated in his French class he answered, “oui pas trop trop, ça dépend des jours” (yes not too too much, it depends on the day). This again was far removed from what I observed. I only witnessed him talking in class when the teacher had explicitly asked him to answer.

During my fieldwork I must admit that my first impression prevailed: I felt we were connecting on a very superficial level, partly because I found him to be too immature. Now, looking back at my interviews with Farid, I realize that I was biased. I may have decided that he was not bringing much to my study because he seemed to overemphasize how everything was good, denying having any issues, even when I felt there were some. This should not mean that his participation was less relevant. I would now describe Farid as a happy, moderate, well balanced teenager who was comfortable navigating between languages and cultures. When I asked him if he had any bad experiences to share, he said that he had none, emphasizing: “moi

personnellement j'ai pas eu de problème" (me, personally I haven't had any problem). His use "personnellement" implies though that he was aware this was not everybody's case.

During another interview when he was to briefly introduce himself, one of the things he wanted to project about himself was that he felt really happy where he was: "Je me sens très bien ici" (I feel very well here). The fact that he was a happy, well-balanced teenager did not prevent him from being affected by the terrorist attack, and feeling that the people who committed these crimes were a shame to the other Muslims, and he included himself in this group: "ils nous font honte" (they bring shame on us).

I found several surprising elements in his interviews. For example, he came out strongly against the ban on the *voile* and expressed his views in a very articulate and direct manner. Indeed, he said that he did not understand "pourquoi il y en a qui pourrait porter des croix et que les femmes pourraient pas porter leur voile" (why some could wear a crucifix and women could not wear their voile). Later, he explained why he did not agree with the principle of *laïcité*, saying that "ça ne gêne personne si elles mettent le voile et je vois pas pourquoi on les interdirait" (it doesn't bother anybody if they wear the voile and I don't see why we should ban them). Finally, he remarked that if Muslims women could wear the *voile*, they would feel "un peu plus libres" (a bit more free), showing that Farid was aware and sensitive to what some of his classmates were going through. This is only a few examples of Farid's interesting take on his social environment. So, although Farid and I did not develop a memorable and deep relationship, probably due to our age gap, our gender and cultural differences, many of his answers are insightful and I am glad he remained a participant in my research till the end.

Jasmine. Jasmine is a 17-year-old second-generation student from Algeria or rather as she insisted, from Kabilia. She was in the STMG/technical class. Unlike some of her classmates in

STMG, Jasmine had chosen this course in the technical track because she was interested in business and wanted to work as a marketing director. As an adult, she was hoping to live in England because “on entend des choses bien là-bas” (we hear good thing over there). Jasmine had two brothers and a sister and she was the oldest. Her parents were no longer together but she kept in touch with her father, mostly by phone. Although she was born in France and had been speaking French since a very young age, she was very negative about her abilities to use French orally.

Jasmine went through a tremendous change during my research. When I first met her in September, a few days after the beginning of the school year, she appeared to be rather happy. She was quiet, and spoke with a soft, low voice but she was laughing and seemed confident. At that time, she could not think of any event to report that would have upset her, apart from the fact that sometimes she finished school at 6 pm, this answer made us all laugh, because we knew that it was not really a terrible issue.

At the beginning of the school year, she wore the *voile*. She was hoping that as an adult she would be able to work without having to remove it but she thought that the ban in school was normal and she respected this regulation. Even though she agreed with it, she still experienced several unpleasant events because of the *voile*. During our first meeting, before sharing any of her stories, she checked with me if she could “tout dire?” (say everything?). I explained that I would not share anything she told me with people in her school and that in my thesis I would try my best to protect her anonymity, only then, did she start telling me about what it was like for her to wear the *voile*.

Only six months after she had started wearing the *voile*, she was insulted on the bus and she was told to go back to her country. Similarly, one of her teachers had remarked on the length

of her skirts, which she thought was not logical since other students could come in mini-skirts, and what's more she had bought her skirt in H&M in Vire and, as she pointed out, "on va pas aller les acheter dans un magasin musulman, il y en a pas à Vire. Du coup je ne comprends pas." (We can't go and buy them in a Muslim shop, there are none in Vire. So, I don't understand).

She thought people were reacting like this because of the media and after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, "la tension est montée" (the tension rose). She reported being annoyed by the fact people thought she was forced to wear the *voile*, when in fact—in her case—her mother was not in favor of her wearing it. Despite her mother, and despite everything she had gone through, it was her own decision and she persevered with it till the November terrorist attacks, when Jasmine decided to stop wearing the *voile*.

When I came back in April she was no longer the happy young student I had met a few months prior but she still agreed that it was right for the school to ban the *voile*. She thought it was better, because of racism and assaults, she thought that if she were wearing the *voile* in school, she would be "mise à l'écart" (sidelined). In other words, because of the rise of racism, she felt safer in school without her *voile*. Sadly, Jasmine's story illustrates how the current sociopolitical crisis could affect a person and I was shocked to see how much she changed because of it.

Leila. Leila is an 18-year-old second-generation student from Algeria. She was studying in the STMG/technical class. From our first meeting, Leila gave me the impression of being an anxious and sensitive person with a difficult recent past. One of the first things she shared with me was that the previous year she had "été déscolarisée" (discontinued school) and that she had since changed school to come to Charles Dupuy. When I asked her if she wanted to talk about it, she said no, it was private, but from what she told me during other interviews, I gathered that she

had gone through a difficult experience in her previous school, partly because she felt judged. Indeed, she mentioned instances of racism, prejudices, and the fact that there were very few Maghrebi students: “on n’était même pas 10” (there were not even 10 of us).

Leila was born in France and both her parents were born in Algeria. They had come to France when they were young. She has two brothers and a sister. Her mother works as a cleaning lady in a bank, and Leila made several remarks that led me to believe that her family was short of money. For example, she said that she would like to take drama lessons but that she did not want to “endetter mes parents” (for my parents to go into debt). Leila had only been in Algeria three or four times when she was younger. She said her parents had spoken French to her since she was a child, but that more recently she had expressed a desire to learn Arabic.

Leila was insecure about her languages and her abilities to express herself in general, she said she felt “fragile” or “mal à l’aise” (ill at ease) when speaking Arabic and that it was “la honte” (shameful) when she was in Algeria and could not answer questions. She did not think she could express her feelings in French; either. When I got to know her a bit more, she continued to put herself down, which surprised me. First, because I did not see any problems with the way she expressed herself in French and secondly, she was doing drama and was passionate about it, to the point of dreaming of making a career out of it. Business was her plan B, and the one she thought would be more realistic.

Leila acted shy, she did not project a strong personality and seemed to lack confidence. She dressed in a modest way, she often wore jeans, T-shirts, and trainers. Once during a class, she was asked to come to the board and write down two verses from a poem and then to count the syllable in these verses. When she said that she did not know how to do this the teacher said “Ah bon, vous ne savez pas?” (Really, you don’t know?), which made Leila look very

uncomfortable. The entire time that she was in front of the class, she covered her mouth with a scarf. It was a warm day and I noticed when she went back to her seat that the female student seating next to her was wearing a sleeveless top. She mostly sat next to Franco-French students and did not seem to be very close to the other Franco-Maghrebi students in her class who tended to seat together.

She was serious at school, she sometimes participated in the classes I observed, but sometimes she also spoke and laughed with the student sitting next to her. She said that her favorite subjects were French and English and that she had not chosen the technical track. Instead, she had hoped to prepare the *baccalauréat L* (Literature), but had been told her results were not good enough. As she said, she was in this track “par dépit” (for lack of better choice) and she hated everything about it – the content and her classmates.

I valued Leila’s input in my research because she had a unique way of analyzing the world around her. Indeed, I thought that her perspectives on *laïcité* were enlightening. She explained how the principle of *laïcité* was important “pour l’humain en soi et aussi pour les personnes qui se sentent différentes par rapport à leurs origines” (for humans and also for the people who feel different in relation to their origins), which is not an aspect that I had ever thought about. Defending this principle did not prevent her from being extremely critical of the ban on the *voile*, which she characterized as stupid and wondered who could be bothered by the sight of a woman wearing a *voile* when “une personne qui a une mini-jupe c’est encore plus flagrant et on dira rien” (a person with a mini-skirt is even more obvious, but we don’t say anything). She did not wear the *voile*, her mother did, but she did not feel ready for it yet.

I would conclude by saying that Leila was not studying what she wanted, she was not where she wanted to be, and she did not appear to be a typical student for her age. She reported

not liking to go out, she did not have many friends, and her main hobby was to stay home and sing. She was somewhat somber, sensitive, and she felt judged. I think that she underestimated her talents, and even if she was usually shy or quiet, she made a big impression on me: helping me see the world through her perspective. I told her several times how grateful I was for her contribution to which she would answer “ben c’est normal” (well, it’s normal).

Nora. Nora is a 17-year-old second-generation student from Morocco. She was studying in the ES class for the general *baccalauréat*. Like Abdel, I first met Nora during my pilot study, the day after the Charlie Hebdo attack. That interview was emotional. We both cried, we were vulnerable and this brought us together. She was, indeed, the participant that I felt closest to during my fieldwork, not only because, as I have explained above, she was my “gatekeeper,” but also because on that day when emotions were very raw, we connected on a deep level. She opened up to me, and I was there to listen. This conversation took place during our last interview when I asked her about her experience taking part in my study and summarizes what happened on that day:

Nora : Ben moi je sais que je m’en rappellerai toujours, parce que je vous ai connu le jour de... enfin le lendemain de l’attentat, et j’étais pas bien.

Sandrine : et ça t’as fait quoi de me parler ?

Nora : ben du bien, j’étais énervée...

Sandrine : oui je me souviens tu pleurais, c’était dur.

Nora : c’était horrible, mais on a super bien parlé.

(Nora: Hmm me I know that I will always remember it, because I met you the day of... well le day after the terrorist attack, and I wasn’t well.

Sandrine: and how does it feel to talk to me?

Nora: well some good, I was angry...

Sandrine: yes I remember you were crying, it was hard.

Nora: it was horrible, but we had a great talk.)

Nora dressed modestly, she was feminine but maybe less than the rest of her female classmates, for example I never saw her wear a skirt or a dress. She often wore black jeans and sports shoes. Despite her modest appearance, Nora radiated an impressive amount of energy, she was always active and she was a natural organizer and leader: She took the initiative of planning our focus groups, she found a time when her classmates would be available, which was not an easy task given that they had different timetables. She was wise and confident: I often saw her giving advice about school to her peers. She was also one of the most active students in her French class. She was fun and liked to laugh. We often giggled together when we talked about more intimate topics, like boys that she had a crush on. She was ambitious—she applied to one of the most prestigious school for her higher education and she wanted either to be a manager in business selling luxury products or work in politics. She worked hard at her studies and she was getting good grades at school in general and especially in her French class.

There was however, another side to Nora, which her enthusiasm and energy could easily mask. Nora had a strong sense of justice and was outspoken. She was the first participant who told me about the French-only school regulation and she lamented Arabic was not taught in Vire while many Arabic speaking countries had become world powers. Similarly, she was not afraid to criticize what she felt was unfair in society. She reported that even her history teacher had said in class that France was “le seul pays qui avait dit à l’ONU de ne pas accepter un élève à cause des ses origines ou de sa religion” (the only country that had said in the UN they would refuse a student based on their origins or their religion).

During our interviews, she often talked about her religion; for example, she reported on several occasions having gone to the mosque. We had long conversations during which she pointed out how biased the French media were against Muslims. To counter these stereotypes, she would quote parts of the Qur'an, showing her deep knowledge of her religion and taking ownership of what was distorted in the media.

She explained that she would like to wear the *voile*, she actually used to wear it and decided to give up “là j'ai arrêté” (now I stopped) because of a frightening event that had happened to her and a friend, which I will talk about in chapter 8.

Nora's experience at school, that is her critical awareness of school regulations, alongside with her understanding of the media's biased, made her disgusted with France. She said once “j'en peu plus” (I have had enough) and she regularly expressed her desire to leave France to go to Dubai or Qatar.

I was moved by her story, and impressed by her intelligence, critical mind and enthusiasm. Her behavior changed over the course of my study, she acted rather differently each time I saw her after a long period of time. I felt that she seemed to be especially affected by the various attacks.

Salima. Salima is a 16-year-old second-generation student from Algeria. She was studying the general *baccalauréat* in the ES class. I remember Salima for her soft and gentle voice but also for her serious, almost somber personality. She was indeed shy or “réservée” (reserved) as she admitted herself. She was born in France, her mother came to France from Algeria when she was young. She used to live in Lyon and had been living in only Vire for two years. She said she had not met any friends yet, and she preferred living in Lyon because there was a bigger Algerian community with whom she could share “petits délires entre nous” (our own little jokes). Because

she often talked about her life in Lyon with nostalgia, and because she had been labelled as “racaille” (scum) by others in her new school, I had the impression that this move from a big city, with a large Algerian community, to a small town with no friends, had been a difficult experience.

She was serious in class, always on time and she was the only Franco-Maghrebi student who did not miss class for the religious festival of Aid. She said her father thought that now she was in high school, she could not afford to miss a day. This gave me the impression that her father was rather strict with her. Even though she took school very seriously, I never saw her participate in class, and she acknowledged that in the French class like in other classes, she rarely talked. Although she never took part in class, she listened and seemed to concentrate, and her grades were average.

There was a certain sensitivity in Salima that went beyond shyness, she had many struggles for a 16-year-old. During her first interview, she mentioned her interest in history, which led her very quickly to talk about the Algerian War of Independence and how it had personally affected her family. Salima explained that what was written about this war in her history course book was “une version française” (a French version) told by a French author, and that this was different from what her grandmother had told her. After this, Salima told me in vivid details some of what her grandmother had been through: “c’était terrible, qu’elle a perdu une amie et que en fait elle a failli mourir” (it was terrible, she lost a friend and in fact she had nearly died) because a bomb had landed next to them, and whereas her grandmother’s friend thought “qu’il fallait se mettre dessus, et que ça allait empêcher d’exploser” (you had to lie on top and that it would prevent it from exploding) her grandmother had “compris que ça marcherait pas et elle a couru et a perdu un œil aussi, enfin elle voit plus d’un œil” (understood that it would not work and she ran and she lost an eye, well, she no longer sees from one eye). Her

grandmother was physically marked and it was a constant reminder for Salima and her family of the conflict between France and Algeria.

Salima was religious, she said that her religion had “*appris beaucoup de choses*” (taught her many things). She wore the *voile* outside and she respected the law—she thought it was normal because “*c’est vrai qu’on est en France*” (it’s true that we are in France) and “*on n’a pas la même religion*” (we don’t have the same religion) even though “*ce serait bien*” (it would be nice) if she could wear it. Salima was feminine, she often wore colorful clothes and sometimes even lipsticks, which was rare amongst female students in general in the classroom.

Salima was often divided like this in her thinking. For example, one day she told her mother that she was going to be 18 and that in France “*on part, on prend un appart, on décide...*” (we leave, we take an apartment, we decide...). Her mother then reminded her that in their home “*il n’y a pas d’âge. C’est quand tu te marries que tu pars*” (There is no age. It’s when you get married that you leave). Although Salima tried to argue that they were in France, her mother ended the conversation by saying that since she was Muslim it did not apply to her. This illustrates how Salima had to navigate between these two cultures. Salima shared a lot of intimate stories with me, she opened up, and I realize that she was often in uncomfortable situations, but she also knew how to convey her opinion when she needed to.

Azouz. Azouz is an 18-year-old student. His grandparents came to France from Algeria during the war of independence. He had two younger sisters and his mother was divorced. He had been living in Vire for only three months when I first met him. Before this he lived in a bigger town 30 minutes away from Vire. This might explain why he had very few friends and did not seem to fit in as much as other students in the classroom. Leila reported not talking to him at all

while Jasmine said that they “se parlait bien avant mais maintenant il ne calcule personne en fait donc...” (used to speak well together, but now he looks right through everybody actually...).

Azouz was studying for the technical *baccalauréat* in STMG, he was one of the oldest student participants. He was also probably the most enigmatic one, as he remained mysterious and hard to portray, not because he was secretive or would not talk to me, but more because he was complex and going through a lot in his life outside of school. I wrote in my field notes that his French teacher admitted that she “did not know him but that he appeared to have some serious problems,” which confirmed my first impression. He missed school a lot, and he was absent for a full two weeks while I was there in early April. He was also often late for class and consequently he was sent to the principal’s office before he could enter class. When in class, he rarely participated and seemed to be bored a lot of the time. During one of the first classes I observed in September, his teacher, Mme. Richard, handed a piece of graded homework back. Before doing so, she announced that grades ranged between 4 and 16.5. When Azouz got his paper, he looked very upset and the teacher told him she wanted to see him after class. I knew then that he had got a bad grade, indeed, he told me later that he received a 4/20, the lowest grade of the class.

Despite his poor performance in his French class, Azouz did not seem to be too upset. He always looked relaxed. He was dressed in a rather informal way, often with a T-shirt, a pair of jeans, and trainers. When I came back for my second data collection I started by asking him how the school year had been so far and he said, “Ben j’ai pas beaucoup mis le nez dedans” (I didn’t stick my nose into it), and later when I asked how his grades in French were, he said they were average but that he had “pas travaillé non plus, ça ne me plaît pas” (not worked either, I don’t like it). I think that this could explain a lot of his behavior at school. He was not studying what

he wanted and expressed this very clearly: “je fais STMG par défaut j’ai pas le choix” (I do STMG by default, I have no choice) and although he was willing to give it a try at the beginning, he realized that “en fait non, ça ne me plaît pas” (in fact no, I don’t like it). He wanted to be a designer, he said that he “dessine bien” (can draw well), but there were only six schools in France offering the course he wanted to do and they were all too far away and too expensive. He mentioned financial difficulties on another occasion, when explaining that he had only been to Algeria twice because the flight had been expensive, especially for his single mother.

When I interviewed him all his family was living in France and he did not talk about living in Algeria. On the other hand, he named several other countries he would like to move to later in life (Japan, the US, the UK), he was fascinated by other cultures.

Thinking again of Azouz as being an enigma, while I am wary of putting labels, he reminded me of an artist that was misunderstood and did not fit in. Indeed, he often mentioned art. He talked about how he was good at drawing, but could not use this talent because he was not doing the right course. He also reported taking pictures that he put on his blog, he talked about his love for music, especially American R&B; and for poetry, some that he studied in class, for example he said that he like “Beaudelaire (...) parce qu’il parle de la vie parisienne” (Beaudelaire (...) because he talks about Parisian life). He also talked about how much he liked proverbs because “ça fait réfléchir” (they make you think).

I was touched by Azouz’s sensitivity, ability to analyze the society he was living in without judgment, but I felt he was lonely, he did not fit in and was not a happy young man. Azouz’s answers were often philosophical and original. I could see that he was thinking a lot but I did not realize what the effect our interviews had on him. Indeed, during our exit interview, I asked him if taking part in my study made him reflect and he gave a very interesting answer:

“ben, oui, comment je pensais et comment ça se faisait que je pensais comme ça et tout et qui je suis.” (well, yes, how I thought and how come I thought the way I did and all and who I am).

This implies a profound reflection, but I was not surprised that Azouz made this comment.

Soukaina. Soukaina is a 16-year-old third-generation student from Morocco. She was studying for the general *baccalauréat* in class ES. She was born in France, as were her parents, and her grandparents had come to France from Morocco when they were in their 30s, although Soukaina could not remember for sure. Soukaina, was a quiet person, not necessary shy, but calm. She seemed to be financially better off than other participants. She wore more expensive looking clothes; she also spoke and behaved as though she was from a higher social class and she did imply that her family had climbed up the social ladder. Indeed, when I asked whether she thought her life was different from her parents, she explained that her mother “peut m’aider par exemple en français, vu qu’elle a fait bac L” (can help me for example in French, since she did *bac L*).

She was the only participant who mentioned having a parent who had passed the *baccalauréat*. The fact that this came up during the first half of her first interview showed how proud she was of it. In class, she sat at the back, mostly with Franco-French female classmates. I wondered if that was the reason why, when I tried to make focus groups, Nora and Asmae said they would agree to take part in a group with Farid and Salima, but not Abdel and Soukaina. I knew that Asmae and Abdel used to be friends but that they had had a falling out. They had made up to a point because I saw them talk in class on a regular basis. But I never saw Soukaina communicate with Farid, Abdel, Asmae, or Nora, all of whom tended to sit close together, at the front of the class, far away from her. Did Nora and Asmae think that Soukaina was “too French,” or was it because she looked more well-to-do? I am not sure, but these two factors might have been part of the reasons why they did not get on well.

She said her friends outside of school were from her basketball team. Basketball was her passion and she played for the best team in Vire. She was serious in class, and listened, but did not participate. Her results in the French class were average. She reported speaking only French at home, and that she felt her French was good and that her Arabic was low.

I was confused by the fact that, though she appeared to be confident, Soukaina never expressed strong opinions about the topics we discussed. A lot of the time, actually, she was unsure, and would start her sentences by “je ne sais pas” (I don’t know) or “je suis pas sûre” (I’m not sure). If I were to describe Soukaina in a stereotypical and simplistic way, I could say that she was “well-integrated.” I imagine that this was how she was perceived by some of her teachers, because for example Mme. Richard mentioned that having more Franco-French friends was both a necessity for integration as well as proof of integration. However, I must say at this stage that Soukaina’s story and sense of self were much more complex than this.

Soukaina was warm to me and we had a friendly relationship. We spent a lot of time together mostly because she liked to talk and because she was interested in my research and she asked a lot of questions, which led to some interesting conversations. I remember particularly a lovely sunny afternoon where we did the interview outside, in the University garden opposite from the school, lying on long chairs enjoying the sunshine. We talked for so long that she missed her bus, but she said she didn’t mind, she could take a later one.

The Instructors

Mme. Richard. Mme. Richard had been teaching in the school for more than 15 years and had been specifically recommended to me by the Principal, M. Leroy, as one of the best teachers in the school. She was teaching in STMG, the technical class in management and administration. When I first met Mme. Richard, I perceived her as being aloof, strict, and impersonal with her

students. This impression may have come from the fact that she dressed in a smart and formal way. She often wore a black suit jacket, a white shirt, a skirt and high heels. At the beginning of each class, she waited for all her students to be in and then she asked them to stand up, which is culturally understood as a way for them to show their respect to her, and a way for her to assert her authority.

She rarely engaged in casual talk with students before or after class. Even the day they came back from a two-week break, she started the class without asking about their holiday. Mme. Richard did not perceive it as necessary and decided instead to talk about the new text they had to study. She also spoke in a formal way, always using the “vous” form (the polite form of “you”) to address me and her students. Although she did not smile a lot, she had a sarcastic humor which I understood, but I wonder to what extent students did. I would personally describe her style and mannerism as “BCBG or “Bon Chic Bon Genre,” literally “good style good attitude,” an expression used to describe the well-educated, upper middle-class.

While observing her teach, I noticed that she was very much in control of all the interactions taking place in her classes. After spending time with her during interviews but also during less formal conversations, for example while going out for lunch with her, I discovered that she was conscientious and devoted to her work and her students and she often questioned her own practices and the rules of the institution. As she told me during our last interview, taking part in my research made her question even more her practices and the rules of the institution, to the point that she contacted the inspector of the school academy¹¹ to ask if she could make

¹¹ France is divided in 17 academic regions. Several inspectors are assigned in each region and their duties are to observe teachers to ensure the quality of their teaching, that they respect the school policies, the objectives and the programs, which are defined by the government.

changes to the official list of texts for the French *baccalauréat*. Ultimately, I found Mme. Richard to be an inspiring teacher, and I was very grateful that she had let me in her classroom and had opened up to me.

M. Lambert. M. Lambert, was younger and had been teaching seven years, six of which in this school. He was teaching the ES class, the mainstream class in social and economic sciences class. From the start, M. Lambert was approachable, friendly, and easy-going. He dressed in a casual way, often wearing t-shirts, jeans, and trainers or sports clothes. I would personally identify him as being from the lower middle-class because of how he dressed, how he talked, and his hobbies; for example, he was a big soccer fan, a sport generally more associated with the lower-middle or the working-class. He also spoke in a casual way, using the “tu” form (the casual form of “you”) with me and his students. He often made small talk with his students before class, for example talking about sports, and he often made jokes during the class. At times his classes felt chaotic, in the sense that he did not always control interactions. Just like Mme. Richard, however, he was very conscientious and cared about his students. He wanted to prepare them to do well in the *baccalauréat* and was willing to offer all the help he could during and after class.

Although he cooperated with me by always making me feel welcome in his class, we interacted only on a few occasions and mostly during interviews. During our conversations, he did not seem to think that there were any real issues with the population I was interested in. As far as he could see, “nous sommes tous pareils” (we are all the same), and he felt the school and its staff were tolerant.

M. Jahid. M. Jahid’s perspectives were valuable for two reasons: First, he was born in France but his parents were Moroccan and he identified with the Franco-Maghrebi population. Second, his pedagogical training and practices were very different from the two French teachers

who took part in my studies. He had received a Master's degree in linguistics with a minor in teaching FLE (French as Foreign Language). Although I did not see him teach, we talked a lot about what he did in class to better support bilingual students. Probably because we had similar study backgrounds and because he had a first-hand experience being Franco-Maghrebi in France, he and I agreed on most issues. He understood why I was doing this research and he felt it was very much needed, especially for pedagogical reasons. For example, to counter the monolingual bias and to give the Franco-Maghrebi youth the opportunity to become or remain bilinguals, he explained that in class he relied "beaucoup sur leur langue d'origine, pour ... et on part aussi d'un système comparative" (a lot on their language of origin, for ... and we start too from a comparative system).

M. Jahid was warm, enthusiastic and willing to talk about controversial issues. He argued, for example, that school was valuing only the Franco-French culture, which he referred to as "la reconnaissance d'une seule culture (...) décidée par les faiseurs de programme." (the acknowledgement of a single culture (...) decided by the program makers). What's more he was aware from his own experience of France's exclusive system which had denied him "le droit d'un maîtrise parfaite de la langue parce que tu es d'origine machin" (the right of a perfect mastery of the language because you are of origin x), although he was extremely well spoken and well-educated.

The Administrators

The principal. My first contact in the school was through the principal, M. Leroy. He said that he would be happy to assist me in any way he could. I must admit that the collaboration and the welcome I received in the school were outstanding. I met him several times in the staff room or in corridors and we would always talk briefly. I had told him early during my fieldwork that I

would like to interview him; although he was extremely busy, he managed to find the time a few days before I left. We talked for over an hour.

M. Leroy was an imposing figure both by his height and his strong presence. He always dressed formally with a suit and tie and spoke in a formal way. Because of his way of dressing, of carrying himself, of talking, and of displaying his *culture générale*, I would identify him as belonging to the upper-middle-class. He had been working as a school principal for about 15 years and, when I did my research, it was his sixth year as principal in Charles Dupuy. From the beginning, he expressed an interest in my research topic, which he thought to be relevant and topical and as we will see later, his perspectives were insightful, especially in regard to the school policies and the wider French institutional school context. I was surprised by many of his comments when I transcribed his interview. I knew him as a warm and dedicated person, but he also represented the institutional voice of the French education system and defended its principle (*laïcité*) and regulations (language policy and ban on the *voile*), as a consequence, there was noticeable a tension between his personal voice and his voice as a principal, what Bakhtin (1981, 1986) referred to as “dialogism,” that is to say every word has two “sources,” one source is the individual person and the other one represents utterances that have already been given meanings by culture and history, in the case of M. Leroy, the second source was the French education system. He was often negative about Muslim culture, because he thought female students were forced to wear the *voile* or to marry young.

The surveillants. The main role of “surveillants” (hall monitors) in the school is to ensure that the school regulations are respected, they watch traffic in the school, help with discipline and generally make sure things run as expected between classes. This is a job done by university students, as a way of funding their studies. This is a low paying job seen as temporary, definitely

not as a career, because one of the requirements to be a hall monitor is to be enrolled in a university.

When entering and leaving the school gate or walking around the school yard and the corridors, I met several “*surveillants*.” The student participants often talked about them, especially when we talked about school policies and how they were enforced. What students said about them was often negative, and I had witnessed myself some interactions where Franco-Maghrebi students were being reprimanded or even humiliated. For example, during a focus group, Asmae and Nora were telling me that they had heard people tell them to go back to their country. Asmae then remembered that one of the *surveillants* had said something similar and asked Nora if she also remembered: “ben il y a une surveillante du collège elle a dit la même chose, hein. Tu t’en rappelles pas?” (well there was a hall monitor who had said the same thing, he. You don’t remember?) Nora did remember and repeated the exact words, “oui elle avait dit “retourne dans ton pays, t’es pas ici chez toi.”” (yes she had said “go back to your country, here you are not at home”). Asmae then remarked that despite having said this, this *surveillante* “est encore là” (was still here). I witnessed an event with a *surveillant* on the day of the Aïd, which made me aware of some tension between them and the students. I recorded the event in my fieldnotes below:

I went out for a walk and when I came back to the school there was a lot of people gathering in front of the gate and I could hear people shouting angrily. I saw that there was a group of students and a *surveillant* who was shouting at them, “Si vous faites la fête, c’est chez vous, pas dans la rue” (if you celebrate it’s at your house, not in the street). The students were laughing at her, one said: “C’est ça et Ramadan c’est chez ta grand-mère” (that’s it, and Ramadan is at your grand-mother). The *surveillant* repeated that she expected them to be at home and added “le mouton il est pas là” (the sheep is not here). Another student said “vas chier” (go shit, used as fuck you). The *surveillant* got very angry and asked who had said that. Nobody answered. She then asked people who were standing around (including me) to move away. I don’t know what happened next. I am hoping to follow up with the *surveillant*.

For these reasons, I was curious to hear their perspectives, and I wanted to interview one of them. Unfortunately, I was not successful in recruiting any of the *surveillants*. I was disappointed by this lack of opportunity, but it was interesting that the people who were asked to implement the school policies did not want to take part in my research. I wondered if they felt threatened by the topic of my research. Were they worried that I would judge them because they were the ones implementing school regulations? I would have liked to know how they felt about these rules. Did they agree with them? Were some of them critical of the rules but felt obliged to enforce them as part of their duties? Another explanation for their refusal to take part in my study could also be because they were at a significantly lower pay-grade, they might not have felt the same investment in the institution and willingness to give their time for nothing in return.

The school counselor. Mme. Durantet is a Franco-French middle-aged female who had been working as a school counselor for 16 years. Her main duties are to be a liaison between teachers and students in case of conflicts and also between the school and students' families about a student's behavior or poor results in school. During my interview with Mme. Durantet, it became clear that she was closer to students in many ways than any other staff member who took part in my study, including the student participants' teachers. Mme. Durantet had had opportunities to talk to them about their issues. She was warm and willing to share her experiences and opinions with me and she provided again a different angle from the Principal or the Instructors. However, I only met her once and I never saw interact with any of the student participants, so I did not get to know her very well.

After having introduced the participants, I now start the analysis of the data.

Chapter 6: Communicative resources and practices vs. Dominant Discourses and language ideologies

Language plays a central role not only in shaping our sense of ourselves – our identities – but also in defining institutional practices. As Bourdieu claimed, language is not neutral and language is no “doubt the principal support of the dream of absolute power” (1991, p. 42). Indeed, according to him, linguistic competence represents a form of capital in relation to the social context of interactions. As I explained in chapter 3, Bourdieu compared the social context to a market where certain ways of speaking and being have more values than others or are more legitimate than others. These legitimate ways of speaking and being become forms of “cultural capital.” Bourdieu’s model of symbolic value of one language over another rests on his notion that both the symbolically dominated group and the dominant group “misrecognize” that language as a superior one. One language gains legitimacy through “the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (1991, p. 164). The concept of symbolic power reveals how official languages become the language of hegemonic institutions, and it could explain the making of language ideologies and discourses I witnessed in Charles Dupuy school, my study site. For Bourdieu, this misrecognition of the legitimacy of a language ensured the “reproduction of existing power relations” (1977a, p.30), and I would add to this the production and maintenance of dominant societal and institutional discourses. In this first analysis chapter I answer my first research question: What communicative resources do Franco-Maghrebi students have and how are they deployed in the classroom and in the community? By doing so, I highlight the contrast between the students’ communicative repertoires and these dominant discourses, in other words the contrast between the students’

multiple ways of using languages, to their teachers' perceptions of these practices. First, I summarize the students' communicative practices they reported using at home and in the school contexts, second, I describe the dominant school and societal discourses and beliefs about these communicative practices, and finally, I demonstrate how the use of linguistic resources can be constrained by language ideologies.

What Communicative Practices Franco-Maghrebi Students Say They Have

The first question I asked the students was “what languages do you use, where and with whom do you use them?” The answers to that question varied greatly according to their family histories and current circumstances. The two main criteria that affected their linguistic practices were the length of time they and their families had been living in France and the link they had kept with their countries of origins. Indeed, there was a noticeable difference of practices between the students of first, second and third generation, even though there were no absolute correlations between this criterion and their language practices.

Before I interviewed the students, I had already observed them in their French classes and spent some times with them outside the classroom. During all this time, I had only heard them speak a few words in Arabic with their Franco-Maghrebi friends but these were rare occurrences, which only took place during recess. The rest of the time they spoke French, which explains why before asking them this question, I did not know that they were able to use any other language besides French. I was then impressed by the linguistic diversity and the students' wide communicative repertoires, which I understand as “the collection of ways individuals use language and other means of communication (...) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate” (Rymes, 2014, p. 4). Indeed, the majority reported moving between languages, which they strategically deployed according to their communicative

needs and their interlocutors; what Garcia referred to as *translanguaging*, and which she characterized as the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (2009, p. 45). This was especially the case for first-generation students.

Translanguaging practices. Abdel and Asmae’s family histories have a lot in common: both their families are of Moroccan origins, though they were born in Italy, where they had spent their childhood. Abdel lived there till he was 10 when he and his family moved to France. Asmae lived in Italy till she was 9, but unlike Abdel, before coming to France, she spent four years in Morocco. When I met them, Asmae had been living in France for 5 years and Abdel for 6 years. Both Asmae and Abdel reported using multiple languages: French, Italian, Arabic and Darija – or what the students referred to interchangeably as “Moroccan” or “dialect,” which is a variety of Arabic and the most commonly spoken language in daily life in Morocco¹².

I met Abdel during my pilot study in January 2015. During this interview, when he talked about his linguistic resources he sounded confident, even proud. Indeed, he listed the three main languages, which constitute his repertoire, and which are a product of his family history: “je parle marocain, italien, français” (I speak Moroccan, Italian, French) (Interview 0, September 8, 2015). Abdel and his family were still using Italian at home because, as Abdel explained: “comme je suis né en Italie et mon père ça fait 28 ans qu’il était en Italie, ma mère 19 ans. On a cette habitude de parler...” (as I was born in Italy and my father had been in Italy for 28 years and my mother 19 years. We have this habit of speaking...) (Interview 0, January 8 2015). Abdel’s use of the term “habitude” conveys a sense of a deep habit or practice that has been

¹² According to Sadiqi (2006), Darija is the lingua franca in Morocco because it allows for inter-comprehensibility between the many Moroccan Arabic dialects spoken in different regions of the country.

acquired in his family over many years, one that he had inherited from his parents, but also one that has been part of his life and had become part of his habitus. After Abdel listed the languages he used, I asked him to walk me through a typical day of how these languages were deployed, he said:

Bon ça va être court, mais... heu... à la maison : arabe, enfin darija. Dehors : français. Ça va être comme ça... bon le matin, je me lève, heu... je fais mes ablutions, je fais ma prière du matin, je prends le petit dèj, je parle avec ma famille, toujours l'arabe, je sors, à partir de l'ascenseur : français. Quand j'ouvre la porte : « bonjour monsieur, bonjour madame ». Voilà je sors : « bonjour monsieur le gardien » et je prends la route et là et il y a mon copain marocain, toute la route en arabe, en arabe... après lui il est dans une autre école « As-Salaam-Alaikum, ça va à cette après-midi ». Moi je vais à l'école, parfois je rencontre des camarades de classe de français, j'arrive, Farid : « As-Salaam-Alaikum, ça va tranquille tout va bien » bon je rentre en cours, je vois des amis arabes, tunisiens, algériens, « ça va, tu vas bien... »

Sandrine : En français là ?

Abdel : Oui là en français.

Sandrine : Dans la classe tu parles en français ?

Abdel : Oui en français, après « bonjour, bonjour », après je suis le cours, heu... après midi je rentre chez moi, encore l'arabe et je sors de chez moi : français, je rentre chez moi encore l'arabe et c'est comme ça.

(Abdel: Ok, it's going to be short, but...hmm...at home: Arabic, well Darija. Outside: French. It's going to be like this... so the morning I wake up, hmm...I perform my ablutions, I do my morning prayer, I eat breakfast, I speak with my family, always in Arabic, I go out, from the elevator: French. When I open the door: "Good morning Sir, Good morning Madam." There I go out: "Good morning caretaker [Sir]" and I go on the road and there and there is my Moroccan friend, the entire way in Arabic, in Arabic... after he is in another school « As-Salaam-Alaikum, okay, see you this afternoon ». I go to school sometime I meet French classmates, I arrive, Farid: "As-Salaam-Alaikum, ok, cool everything is going well" so I go to class, I see Arabic, Tunisian, Algerian friends, "ok, you're well..."

Sandrine: In French there?

Abdel: Yes, there in French.

Sandrine: In class you speak French?

Abdel: Yes in French, after “good morning, good morning,” after I listen to the class, hmm... after I go home for lunch, again Arabic, and I come out of my house: French, I come back home again Arabic, and it’s like this.) (Interview 4, May 13, 2016)

This quote shows how skilled Abdel is at using his multiple discursive practices and captures the complexity of translanguaging, where from the perspective of a bilingual, languages are not bounded entities but constitute a unitary repertoire (Garcia, 2009). At the beginning Abdel implies that there is an easy way of summarizing his linguistic practices, that is: “Arabic at home and French outside.” However, when Abdel describes his daily routine it is much more complex than this. There are two points I want to discuss based on this expert. The first one is the varieties of language, which Abdel use without naming them. He reported using French, Darija, and Arabic, but actually, I identify more varieties of languages I will list as follows:

Table 6.1

Summary of the languages Abdel used in different contexts.

Context and Practice	Languages and varieties of languages
Morning prayers at home	Classical Arabic
Breakfast with family	Darija
Greetings to adults and caretaker outside	Formal French
Walk to school with Moroccan friend	Informal French and Darija
Meet with Franco-French friends	Informal French
Listen to French literature class	Formal French

As shown in Table 6.1, Abdel is constantly and simultaneously adapting to different contexts by using these languages or varieties of languages from his repertoire.

The second point is the sense of space, which is not as hermetic as Abdel implied: “Arabic at home and French outside.” When I asked Abdel to describe his interactions at home with the different members of his family in more detail, he reported using French with his little sister because she was born in France and was “plus vers le français” (more towards French), but “par contre quand on parle à mon père ou à ma mère, ou à un adulte, c’est en arabe” (but when we speak to my father or my mother, or to an adult, it’s in Arabic.) Within these different spaces, Abdel uses different varieties of language, for example he uses informal French with his friends outside the school and formal French in the French classroom. What’s more, once he leaves his home, he said that he suddenly switched to French but actually, depending on the people he met, he used different languages from his repertoire, adapting to different interlocutors. For example, he spoke French to the adults he met, but he spoke both Darija and French with his Moroccan friends.

As I pointed out, Asmae and Abdel share similar family stories and consequently, there are several parallels in their linguistic practices. When describing her home linguistic practices, Asmae reported,

Asmae : J’ parle Arabe, mais dialecte. Parce que y a l’arabe littéraire enfin voilà et y a le Darija. J’ comprends l’arabe littéraire mais j’ ai du mal à le parler.

Sandrine : Donc à la maison avec tes parents tu parles arabe?

Asmae : Ouais mais avec mes frères j’ parle français par contre.

Sandrine : Ah, et tes parents ils parlent français ?

Asmae : Non ils ont du mal. Ils parlent arabe, et des fois pour pas qu’ on comprenne ils parlent italien. Mais je comprends en fait.

(Asmae: I speak Arabic, but dialect. Because there is literary Arabic, so there, and there is Darija. I understand literary Arabic but I find it hard to speak it.

Sandrine: So at home with your parents you speak Arabic?

Asmae: Yeah, but with my brothers I speak French however.

Sandrine: Ok, and your parents they speak French?

Asmae: No they find it hard. They speak Arabic, and sometimes so that we don't understand, they speak Italian. But in fact I understand.) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015)

Asmae reported using several languages at home—Darija or dialect—with her parents, but French with her younger siblings who were born in France, the same way Abdel reported speaking French with his little sister because she was born in France and more “toward French.” Abdel and Asmae used the same expression “par contre” when listing their practices in relation to family members. This expression introduces a contrast, or a pivot in their narrative and it highlights how Abdel and Asmae had internalized the use of different languages with different members of their family. Her family had also kept Italian as one of their languages. Indeed, her parents would use it as a secret language so that their children would not understand but that Asmae actually did. She explained later, in another interview, that she was studying Italian at school and was doing extremely well in this subject. Because she had spent the first nine years of her life in Italy, Italian was also part of her communicative repertoires, which she was still drawing from either by listening to her parents' private conversations or by studying at school an additional language she wanted to keep acquiring. Asmae was proud to have all these resources and once she boasted because she had got a better grade in a test than a female student whose family was Italian. As a matter of fact, she had “battu une italienne qui vient d'arriver, elle a eu 17.5, et j'ai eu 18” (beat an Italian female student who had just arrived, she got 17.5, and I got 18) (Interview 2, September 28, 2015).

I now focus on Jasmine, a second-generation immigrant, who was born in France and her

parents in Kabylia, in North Algeria. Her language practices and sense of self resemble those of Asmae and Abdel. Indeed, although Jasmine was born in France and as a consequence had French nationality, she first introduced herself saying that she was Kabyle, illustrating that she strongly identified with the Kabyle language and culture. Jasmine said that she spoke Kabyle in her home and French at school. She had kept close link with her parents' country and went there every summer, when she only spoke Kabyle, "Ben en fait ma famille en Kabylie elle parle pas français du tout, et donc si je parle pas kabyle, ils vont pas comprendre, surtout ma grand-mère, elle comprend vraiment rien." (Well in fact my family in Kabylia they don't speak French at all, and so if I don't speak Kabyle, they won't understand, especially my grandmother, she really doesn't understand anything at all) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015).

In this excerpt Jasmine conveys how Kabyle is the unique and necessary language which allows her to communicate with her family in France and when she visits her extended family in Kabylia. However, when she talked more into details about her daily life in France, there was a sense that her practices were more fluid, that she was translanguaging a lot, that is she was constantly moving between languages and strategically tapping from her repertoire according to the context. For example, she said that in the morning when she gets up she speaks Kabyle to her mother but then she speaks "français-kabyle avec mon frère dans le bus" (French-Kabyle with my brother in the bus), and when her father talks to her on the phone they sometimes speak French and then she goes to school and speaks French and then she goes home and speak Kabyle with her mother. Jasmine said that she had some friends with whom she spoke Kabyle, but not at school because at school, "les filles avec qui je traîne elles parlent arabe, mais je leur répons en français parce que c'est pas pareil, mais je comprends l'arabe." (the girls with whom I hang out they speak Arabic, but I answer to them in French because it's not the same, but I understand

Arabic) (Interview 3, May 18, 2015). Jasmine’s description of her interactions with her Franco-Maghrebi friends captures the fluid practices of this youth: while her friends used a language she did not speak (likely Darija) she still could understand them and was then able to reply in French, a language they all had in common. To summarize Jasmine’s linguistic practices, her use of Kabyle and French was fluid throughout the day and she also listened to and understood Darija illustrating the width of her communicative repertoire.

Abdel, Asmae and Jasmine, strategically tapped into their rich linguistic repertoires in different situations and with different interlocutors, illustrating Wei and Garcia’s (2017) claim, that for multilinguals’ languages are not seen “as discrete and separated systems, but that form an integrated whole, a repertoire that is accessed for specific communicative purposes” (p. 12). I will now focus on Farid, Nora and Salima—second-generation participants who reported using mixed or hybrid language practices.

“Mélange” of languages. Nora, Salima and Farid are second-generation students and they all reported mixing languages. Nora said that at home with her family they “parle beaucoup français, mais enfin mélangé avec de l’arabe (...). En fait on se comprend parce que en fait on mélange tellement l’arabe et le français ben à la fin ça fait comme ça.” (speak a lot French, but in fact mixed with Arabic (...). In fact, we understand each other because in fact we mix Arabic and French so much that in the end it makes it this way) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). In this short excerpt Nora used the word “mélange” (mixture) twice. First, she used the adjective form “mélangé” to describe how her family used French mixed with Arabic, and then the verb form “on mélange” to explain how her family mixed these two languages to make it “this way.” I interpret her saying “this way” as “their way,” a repertoire they used between each other. Similarly, Salima described her home language as “moitié français, moitié arabe” (half French,

half Arabic), (Interview 1, September 21, 2015), whereas Farid reported using at home “un peu arabe et Français” (a bit Arabic and French), (Interview 1, September 17, 2015).

In Farid, Salima and Nora’s description of their linguistic practices, there is still that sense of fluidity, or translanguaging, but there were even more complex and hybrid uses of language resources. While mixing languages used to be considered as a sign of low proficiency, recent studies (Blommaert & Backus, 2013; Garcia, 2009; Grosjean, 2010) have highlighted how multilingual speakers, unlike monolinguals, can use elements from the different languages at their disposal, and that actually from a multilingual’s perspective, languages are not autonomous language systems as defined by linguists, but they all constitute available resources, a single repertoire they can draw from (Rymes, 2014). Salima, Farid and Nora do not report using French and Arabic at home as two distinct languages, or categories, but rather they use all the language features they share with their interlocutors to communicate. To complete this section describing the students’ linguistic practices, I will talk about those whose repertoires were narrower.

Language shift or loss. Leila is a second-generation immigrant, and Azouz and Soukaina are both third generation they reported speaking very little or no Arabic. When I asked Azouz what languages he spoke, he replied, “Ben je parle le français et je parle pas l’arabe, mais je le comprends en fait” (Well I speak French and I don’t speak Arabic, but I understand it in fact) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). Soukaina replied in a similar way, “Ben français déjà, c’est normal (laughs) Ben ça je parle tout le temps, même avec mes parents et mon frère on parle tout le temps français. Euh... arabe, mais franchement je parle pas vraiment arabe avec ma famille en fait” (Well French first, it’s normal (laughs). Hmm... Arabic, but frankly I don’t really speak Arabic with my family in fact) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015).

I see several similarities in how Soukaina and Azouz talked about their linguistic

practices. They both started answering with “ben” (well) in a tone which implied that them speaking French was obvious, Soukaina even said it was “normal” and then laughed. Leila’s answer was different, and from the beginning I understood that this was an emotional topic for her. Indeed, like Azouz and Soukaina, she started by saying she spoke “Alors Français ici avec mes amis et français chez moi” (so French here with my friends and French at home), but she quickly added the following comment, “mais j’essaie d’apprendre l’arabe” (but I am trying to learn Arabic) (Interview 1, September 17th, 2015), as though she was apologizing or making up for only speaking French.

During our interviews I asked these three students if they knew or understood why they did not speak Arabic. Azouz and Leila explained that they used to when they were little, that their parents talked to them when they were young but that once they started school their parents thought it would be better for their academic success to only speak French, therefore describing a clear sense of shift in time. Leila said she remembered that her mother used to speak to her in Arabic and that she “connais les bases depuis que je suis toute petite, donc elle parlait en arabe, mais on a pas beaucoup approfondi sur cette langue après avec l’école” (knew the basis since I was little, so she spoke Arabic, but then we did not broaden this language after with school) and Leila then clearly explained this shift, “parce qu’on était en France, qu’il fallait qu’on parle français à l’école,” (because we were in France, we had to speak French at school) (Interview 3, May 6, 2016).

In the same way, Azouz explained that he used to speak Arabic but no longer did, “quand j’étais petit et jusqu’à mes deux ans et après oui j’ai parlé français. Depuis que je suis à l’école en fait, depuis que je suis scolarisé. Mais avant non, ch’parlais arabe.” (When I was little and till I was two and then, yes, I spoke French. Since I am at school in fact, since I started school. But

before no, I spoke Arabic) (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). Azouz could put a definite date to when he stopped speaking Arabic, or rather when his mom stopped speaking Arabic to him, which is when he started school. Before starting school and after starting schools are clearly delimited with words like “when, till, since, before.” In all three cases, starting school meant stopping bilingual practices and shifting to monolingual ones. The students’ parents had incorporated the common myth that learning more than one language at a times can be confusing for children and that it is in their best interest (academic and later economic) to speak only the dominant language. Indeed, Azouz said his mother chose to speak to him only in French “pour mon avenir je pense, pour que j’ai plus de possibilités, et plus de portes ouvertes” (for my future I think, so that I would have more opportunities, and more open doors), illustrating the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), accorded to languages, with French being seen as opening doors. Unfortunately, this belief had not served Azouz as well as his mother had hoped. Azouz had repeated several classes, he was 18 when most of his classmates were 16, and he was in the technical track, not the one he had chosen, and one he even resented.

While Azouz was clearly aware of this language shift in his family practices, he did not express regrets. After I asked if he felt he had a choice over his language practices, he replied “Oui, je pense que j’aurai pu continuer à parler l’arabe, mais du coup j’ai préféré le français, ou je me suis habitué, je sais pas.” (Yes, I think that I could have continued to speak Arabic, but in fact I preferred French, or I got used to it, I don’t know) (Interview 3, May 13, 2016). Besides, Azouz said he was not at all interested in learning Arabic because “ça me motive pas en fait, ça me va de comprendre un peu.” (I am not motivated in fact, I am happy to understand a bit). In contrast Leila and Soukaina expressed regrets about this shift, and to them, it felt more like a loss. Soukaina responded with a quick and strong “yes” to my question “do you regret not being

able to speak Arabic?” She was also quick to blame her parents, saying several times that they had never spoken Arabic to her, whereas her grandparents had spoken Arabic to them, wishing they had kept the family practices.

Leila expressed similar regrets, “Ben oui, c’est vrai que j’aimerais vraiment bien savoir écrire et lire, et parler.” (Well yes, it’s true that I would really like to know how to write, read and speak well) (Interview 3, May 6, 2016).

Various feelings resulted from this language loss. Leila and Soukaina explained how difficult it was for them when they visited their families in Algeria and Morocco. Leila said she was often uncomfortable when someone spoke to her in Arabic and she could not answer she said: “ben par exemple quand je vais en Algérie, ben ne pas savoir répondre, ben c’est un peu la honte...” (Well for example when I go to Algeria, well not being able to answer, it’s a bit shameful...). When I asked her why it made her feel ashamed she said, “ben j’ai des origines...” (well I have some origins) (Interview 2, May 2, 2015). Leila felt that because her parents were born in Algeria, she should be able to answer when someone spoke to her in Arabic. We can assume that she felt an external pressure from people in Algeria who, because, of her origins expected her to speak Arabic. Soukaina reported the same phenomenon and explained that when she visited her family in Morocco she felt like a stranger. I asked her why and she said: “c’est la langue surtout. Des fois en arabe j’arrive pas à dire ce que je veux comme en français, ça m’énervé,” (It’s above all the language. Sometimes I can’t say what I want in Arabic like in French and that makes me angry) (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). For both Soukaina and Leila, this language loss prevented them from fully communicating with their families, and this situation creates some feelings which go beyond regret, to shame and anger.

There is one final point I want to make about the students’ communicative practices.

While discussing how her language practice shifted at home, Leila made a comment which illustrated first how difficult it is to label languages, and second, how bilingualism can be recursive (Garcia, 2009) that it when a community or individuals engage in effort to revitalize their language practices, which have been suppressed. In this extract we discussed about why her parents stopped speaking Arabic to her:

Leila : Peut être qu'au début c'était parce que on était en France et ils voulaient que je parle français, mais après vu qu'on a grandi c'est mieux d'apprendre une nouvelle langue. Enfin, leur, enfin ma langue maternelle.

Sandrine : D'accord. Donc tu penses que c'est quoi ta langue maternelle?

Leila : Ben, je sais pas trop. Je pense que c'est algérien.

Sandrine : oui, tu penses ?

Leila : Oui mais non parce que mes parents me parlent français. Non, donc français alors. (laughs)

Sandrine : d'accord. Ou alors l'algérien, parce que c'est la langue de ta maman peut-être, mais c'est pas la langue que tu .../

Leila : /que je veux parler avec ma maman.

(Leila : Maybe at the beginning it was because we were in France and they wanted me to speak French, but then given that we grew up, it's better to learn a new language. Well, their, well my mother tongue.

Sandrine : Okay. So what do you think is your mother tongue?

Leila : Well, I don't really know. I think it's Algerian.

Sandrine : Yes, you think so?

Leila : Yes, but no because my parents speak French to me. No, then it's French. (laughs)

Sandrine : Ok. Or then Algerian, because it's the language of your mother, and it's the language that you.../

Leila : / I want to speak with my mother.)

(Interview 1, September 17, 2015)

Leila's confusion about which language is her mother tongue highlights the fact that the terms we use to categorize and label languages are not helpful (Garcia, 2009) because these terms do not reflect the lived experiences of bilinguals' who grow up with two languages, learn additional ones at school or even stop using one (Garcia, 2009, Erfurt & Hélot, 2016). Her first instinct, which I think was her perspective, was to say "Algerian," but when I questioned her answer, that is, when I introduced an outsider's perspective, she gave a different answer based on the language which had become her dominant language—French. Leila expressed her desire to reconnect with the language of her parents, the language she stopped using when she started school. This echoes what Barontini (2016) referred to as "ressurgissement" (resurging) among young Franco-Maghrebi whose language had been "enfouie" (buried) or suppressed.

To conclude on the students' communicative practices, first, my data illustrate how translanguaging is the normal mode of communication among bilinguals and how they strategically deploy their communicative repertoires according to the context. What's more, the student's fluid language practices illustrate their family histories, circumstances and identities, or as Creese and Blackledge (2011) have pointed out, these "complex linguistic repertoires bear the traces of past times and present times, of lives lived locally and globally" (p. 1206). This includes Abdel and Asmae, both first-generation immigrants, who had transited through Italy and had therefore incorporated this language to their repertoires; and Azouz Leila, and Soukaina, for whom French had become the home language and the dominant language. Finally, when I list all the languages the students reported using whether they were 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation, there are progressively fewer and fewer from one generation to another and as Figure 2 below illustrates,

the linguistic repertoires the students reported having narrow down.

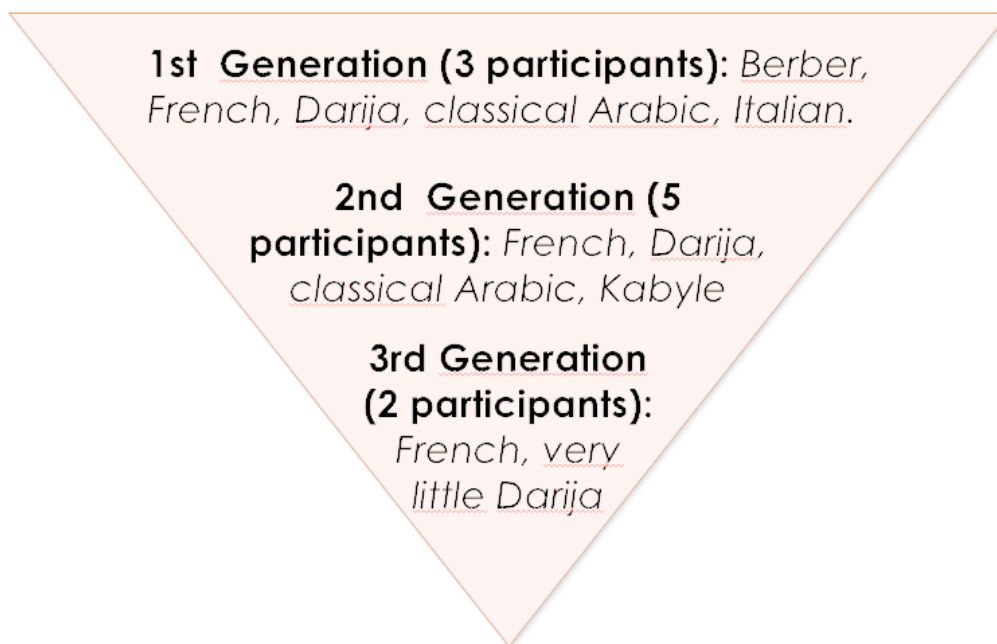


Figure 2. Summary of the languages participants reported speaking.

As I was learning about the students' rich communicative repertoires and translanguaging practices, it became quickly obvious that these clashed with the monolingual and monoglossic school's discourses. Indeed, when I asked the students if they thought their teachers knew that they could use all these languages, they all said no, that their teachers did not know. In the introduction of the volume on bilingual education in France Erfut and Hélot (2016), the editors, posit that the most recent studies all point out "des espaces marqués par une très grande diversité linguistique et des pratiques langagières longtemps ignorées par l'institution scolaire (p. 29)." (spaces marked by a large linguistic diversity and linguistic practices long ignored by the school system) [my translation]. This quote encapsulates the findings in my next section.

What the Teachers Say About the Students' Communicative Practices

Monolingual & monoglossic discourses. I use the term “monoglossic” to define ideologies which view languages of a bilingual as discreet and separate, and autonomous skills that function independently from the context in which they are used (Garcia and Torres-Guevara, 2011, p. 182). What's more, as Cummins (2007), pointed out a monoglossic paradigm insists on the separation of languages and at times, even the exclusion of languages other than the dominant language of instruction. These monoglossic views of language deny the complexity of bilingualism, and they constitute prevailing discourses in societies which favor monolingualism, which is currently the case in France.

Indeed, when I asked the teachers about the students' linguistic practices their answers reflected a gap between what they perceived and their students' reality. M. Lambert replied, “Bonne question...à la maison je pense que souvent c'est la langue arabe qui domine. Peut-être qu'ils font l'effort de temps en temps d'essayer de parler en français, je ne sais pas” (Good question...at home I think that it is often the Arabic language that dominates. Maybe they make the effort from time to time to speak French, I don't know) (Interview 1, September 23, 2015). According to M. Lambert, Arabic was the dominant home language, although they maybe made the effort to speak French, implying that French would be preferable but the students or their families were not really capable, or that they did not actually speak French, evoking a monoglossic understanding of his students' linguistic practices.

Similarly, Mme. Richard presupposed that Arabic is the dominant language and explains what impact it has on her students:

Pour être tout à fait directe, je pense que c'est une majorité, ils parlent arabe et que c'est un frein. C'est vraiment un frein. C'est à dire qu'ils leur manquent ce temps d'écriture et d'écoute de la langue française et que ce manque fait qu'ils évoluent quand même moins

rapidement par rapport aux autres, ils sont moins exposés à la langue. Bon après il y a des enfants franco, enfin nés en France qui ont aussi ce problème, mais je pense que ceux qui ont envie d'évoluer ont quand même ce frein-là, s'ils ne sortent pas de ce contexte.

(To be totally direct, I think that it is a majority, they speak Arabic and that it is a brake. It really is a brake. In other words, they are lacking the time of writing and listening of the French language and that this lack makes them progress less rapidly compared with others, they are less exposed to the language. Well in fact there are Franco children, well born in France who also have this problem, but I think that those who want to make progress yet have this brake, if they don't get out of this context.) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015)

Mme. Richard thinks her students speaking Arabic is a “brake,” which is to say it slows them down learning of French. Therefore, Mme. Richard blamed the perceived home language for lack of progress in French. Her use of several negative words such as “brake,” “lacking,” “lack,” and “less,” illustrates her reductive view of her students’ bilingualism as a deficit. According to Mme. Richard, speaking another language at home prevents students from making progress in French, mostly because they are lacking input in French compared “with others.” In this case, I interpret “others” as meaning monolingual students in the classroom. By comparing bilingual students’ performance in French to that of monolinguals, Mme. Richard made an unfair comparison which resonates with the pervasive myth being that bilingual means mastering two languages equally well, or that bilinguals should be “two monolinguals in one person” (Grosjean, 1989). This perception is still widespread in France, and as Balibar wrote, French public opinion is “perhaps anaesthetized by its poorly-understood monolingualism” and therefore “not sensitive to the urgency of language problems,” (translated and quoted by Schiffman, 2002, p. 10). Similarly, in her contribution to Erfut and Hélot’s book on bilingual education in France cited above, Barontini (2016), wrote early work in francophone sociolinguistics drew causal connections between bilingualism in families of immigrants and low academic achievement. Barontini thus claimed these studies presented bilingualism as a problem to be solved, which are

partly responsible for the pervasive deficit view of bilingualism in France as they indeed match Mme. Richard's view.

In addition, M. Lambert and Mme. Richard assumed that the majority of Franco-Maghrebi students speak Arabic at home. In both comments the students were identified with one language and one identity, that is they are Arabs and they speak Arabic. According to Young, "equating language with identity is an oversimplification," (2017, p. 505) and we should not assume that "the native language is one's true identity nor that any language (...) can index a person's identity" (p. 506). Their comments also highlight a misconception about their students' bilingualism and fail to account for the extent of their communicative repertoires and their translanguaging practices. M. Lambert and Mme. Richard, who are both monolinguals and grew up in monolingual families, apply this monolingual bias, which they see as the norm. Not only do they not show any awareness of their students' hybrid and fluid language practices, but they have negative views of them using another language at home, highlighting French teachers' lack of training in understanding bilingualism (Auger, 2007).

In comparison, as shown in the excerpt below, M. Jahid, the French as a Foreign Language Teacher had a better understanding of bilingual students, their practices, and their experiences:

M. Jahid : Ils parlent espagnol, ceux qui sont passés par l'Espagne, et qui sont nés en Espagne, ceux qui sont nés en Italie parlent italien, heu, les marocains parlent marocains (...)

Sandrine : Vous pensez qu'à la maison ils parlent surtout alors darija ? quelle langue dominerait ?

M. Jahid : Ah ben oui c'est le dialectal parce que de toute façon l'arabe dit standard, classique ne se parle pas, ni au Maroc ni ailleurs, hein ! Donc c'est une langue des médias, des discours officiels, mais la langue commune, la langue courante c'est le darija oui.

Sandrine : Et vous pensez qu'ils parlent principalement cette langue à la maison ?

M. Jahid: Moi d'après ce qu'ils me disent c'est plutôt un mélange, parce qu'ils parlent ou espagnol ou italien ou... ou marocain, ou tunisien...

Sandrine : Ils passent d'une langue à l'autre donc ?

M. Jahid : Oui tout à fait ils passent d'une langue à l'autre, selon les besoins.

(M. Jahid: They speak Spanish, the ones who went through Spain, and the ones who were born in Spain, the ones who were born in Italy speak Italian, hmm, the Moroccan speak Moroccan (...))

Sandrine : Do you think that at home they speak mostly darija? Which language would dominate?

M. Jahid: Well yes, it's the dialectal because in any case Arabic so called standard, classical is not spoken, not in Morocco, not anywhere else, ok! So it's the language of the media, of official discourses, but the shared language, the common language it's the darija yes.

Sandrine : And do you think that they primarily speak this language at home?

M. Jahid: Me, according to what they tell me, it's rather a mix, because they speak either Spanish or Italian, or... or... Moroccan, or Tunisian...

Sandrine: They go from one language to another?

M. Jahid: Yes exactly they go from one language to another one, depending on their needs.) (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

M. Jahid's comments accurately reflect the students' communicative practices. He is aware of their wide linguistic repertoires and how they vary according to their life experiences, and he does not essentialize their identity with one single language. He knows about their trajectories—many of his students have transited through other countries like Spain or Italy before coming to France—which explains how their linguistic repertoires were shaped. He is also familiar with their translanguaging practices and the fact they “mélange” or mix languages, and that they use languages according to their needs. What's more, he does not view

translanguaging as an obstacle to learning French; on the contrary, he later explained, “moi personnellement dans mes cours je m’appuie beaucoup sur leur langue d’origine” (me personally in my classes, I rely a lot on their native language). M. Jahid actually uses translanguaging as a teaching practice. As we discussed, translanguaging is the bilinguals’ normal mode of communication but from a pedagogical stance, and closer to Williams’s original use of the term, translanguaging refers to a teaching practice which can help bilinguals deepen their understanding. As I have established, M. Jahid’s views on bilingualism diverges from Mme. Richard and M. Lambert’s subtractive view.

Teachers’ Subtractive view of bilingualism. Another area of convergence between the two French literature teachers’ views is how students should prioritize their learning of French over preserving their home language.” Indeed, Mme. Richard said:

On veut qu’ils parlent français, et ils doivent si on veut qu’ils soient intégrés. J’ai dit aux parents de Fatima qu’ils doivent maîtriser le français et ensuite ils pourront conserver leur langue natale, je ne suis pas contre.

(We want them to speak French, and they have to if we want them to be integrated. I told Fatima’s parents that they had to master French and then they could keep their native language, I am not against it.) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015)

M. Lambert’s view is similar, although he added a comment about students never forgetting their mother tongue. It is also interesting to notice how they both label languages in ways which do not reflect the students’ reality. Mme. Richard used the word “native language,” while M. Lambert used the words “mother tongue,” which he also labeled as “second language,” a term he applies at different times to both their original language and to French:

Pour les nouveaux arrivants c’est bien d’arriver en France et de ne parler que le français, ça leur permet d’apprendre une deuxième langue, je pense que la langue maternelle, ils ne l’oublieront pas. Après pour ceux qui sont nés en France qui pratiquent le français depuis tout petit, c’est bien d’avoir une deuxième langue.”

(For the newcomers it is good to arrive in France and to only speak French, it allows them to learn a second language, I think that the mother tongue, they will not forget it. Then for those who were born in France who speak French since they were little, it's good to have a second language.) (M. Lambert, Interview 1, September 23, 2015).

There are several issues with these statements: First there is an obvious lack of understanding that the first language is an important cognitive tool for newcomers. As the work of Cummins (from 1976 till present) and Grosjean (2010) have demonstrated, the best practice for promoting language learning for bilinguals is to help them rely on both the home and school languages. The second problem is the assumption that immigrants will never forget their first language thereby ignoring how languages shift and are lost. Indeed, when Mme. Richard tell the parents of her students they have to master French first and then they can go back to speaking their first language, as though it would still be there, ready for them to use when they decide. As García (2009) pointed out, with this model—which she called a subtractive model of bilingualism—students speak a first language, then a second one is added while the first is subtracted, and as a result the students speak only the second language. Contrary to these two teachers' assumptions, with this model the first language is often lost, and the multilingualism of the first and second generations gives way to the monolingualism of the third generation, as illustrated by Leila, Azouz ,and Soukaina's stories.

The third problem with these teachers' beliefs is that first they deny the right of students to develop as emergent bilinguals. If we consider Lantolf and Thorne's claim, "individuals have a much closer psychological link with their L1 as a mediating artifact than they do with their L2" (2006, p. 295), these misconceptions deny the students the cognitive benefits of relying on their first language. Pursuing this claim, Lantolf and Thorne argue, "pedagogies that seek to avoid reliance on learners' first language are, in our view, misguided" because this proscription is "a folly" that "can subvert the learning process itself" (2006, p. 296).

Subtractive views of bilingualism constitute a dominant discourse worldwide (García, 2009), and as shown in my data, the parents of the students have incorporated this discourse. For example, both Leila and Azouz remember that their parents used to speak to them in their home language but then switched to French when they started school in order to increase their chances of succeeding at school. Most of the students were proud to be bilinguals: they saw it as a bonus, not as a barrier to learning French. It is interesting, though, that Leila and Soukaina—who are respectively second- and third-generation immigrants and who both reported not speaking Arabic—shared this subtractive view of bilingualism. For example, Leila and I were discussing what it would have been like if her parents had kept using their home language to her and she said that when she started school “j’assimilais pas en fait les choses rapidement, donc, ça aurait été pire.” (I did not assimilate things rapidly, so, it would have been worse) (Interview 3, May 6, 2015).

Soukaina also shared the view that she would have mastered French less if her parents had spoken to her in Arabic (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). When Soukaina and Leila speculated on what effect of Arabic would have had on their French or their learning in general, they both presupposed that it would have had a negative impact. Leila said it would have been worse, and Soukaina that she would not speak French as well, which corroborates Bertucci and Corblin’s (2004) findings from their study among bilingual students in a high school outside Paris. The authors found that the majority of these students shared a negative perceptions of their bilingualism to the point that they would rather speak only French to better succeed at school. As illustrated in the next section, these beliefs can be traced back to language ideologies in France and more specifically to the way students are made to feel “illegitimate” speakers of the French language within the school (Bourdieu, 1991).

Language ideologies

Teachers' evaluation of Franco-Maghrebi students' language practices: a deficit view. When I asked M. Lambert and Mme. Richard to assess Franco-Maghrebi students' level of French, they agreed that this was not an easy question, because the students had different experiences and as a result, different abilities. However, after teaching this population for several years, they had identified some tendencies, based on their personal observations and teaching experiences. First, they said that Franco-Maghrebi students tended to perform much better in oral French than in written French. Mme. Richard expressed caution about not turning her students' facility in spoken French into a stereotype. "Ils ont une certaine spontanéité, sans faire de stéréotypes, ils sont très à l'aise à l'oral." (Yes they have a kind of spontaneity, without using a stereotype, they are very at ease orally.) During my class observations I had noticed that most of the students were very active in class, often more than other students. Amongst the students this was particularly true of some, in this order: Nora, Abdel, Asmae, Khaled and to a lesser extent Leila. This was not true of all of them, however, as Farid and Soukaina participated only when asked to do so, and Jasmine, Salima and Azouz remained silent in most classes.

Mme Richard further remarked on the students' writing:

Leurs difficultés sont à l'écrit. Certains peuvent s'exprimer mieux en classe que quelqu'un d'origine française, mais ont de grosses difficultés à l'écrit. Parfois c'est une faute par mot. Parler est beaucoup plus facile pour eux. Ecrire ce n'est pas quelque chose de familier pour eux, ce n'est pas quelque chose que leurs parents font à la maison, ça ne fait pas partie de leurs pratiques.

(Their difficulty is in writing. Some who can express themselves in class better than someone from a French background, but have a lot of problems with writing. Sometimes it's one mistake per word. Speaking is much easier for them. Writing is not something familiar to them, it is not something their parents do at home, it is not one of their practices.) (Interview 0, January 15, 2015)

After recognizing they performed well orally, Mme. Richard conveyed a negative

assessment of their abilities in writing, using words like “big difficulties,” “a lot of problems,” and the strong expression “one mistake per word.” Once more she blamed their home practices, assuming that writing was not part of the parents’ daily practices and that as a result students were not familiar with it. I am not sure if she meant that the parents do not write in French or if they do not write at all. If she meant that do not write at all, in both cases, it is not clear what her assumptions were based on. What is surprising is that she attributed the lack of writing at home as being a particular feature of Franco-Maghrebi students’ families, when in fact it may be true for many families regardless of origin. When I think about growing up in France in a single-parent working-class family, I do not recall seeing my mother writing anything else than a shopping list or maybe a post card.

M. Lambert also expressed the gap between written and oral competences that Mme. Richard described, but not as strongly as Mme. Richard. His assessment was not as negative. According to him:

Ils maîtrisent peut être moins la langue écrite, à l’oral... on le voit pas, à l’écrit parfois il y deux trois accords, des petites fautes (...) à l’oral ça ne se voit pas du tout. On n’entend pas... mais oui à l’écrit ils ont plus de difficultés.

Au niveau de la langue orale ça va assez vite, il y a quelques petits défauts de langue, mais c’est assez rare, mais dès l’instant où on passe à l’écrit, il y a des phrases qui ne veulent plus rien dire.

(Maybe they master less well the written language, orally...we don’t see it, in writing sometimes there is two or three agreements, small mistakes (...) orally we don’t see it at all. We don’t hear it... but in writing they have more difficulties. In the oral language it goes rather quickly, there are a few linguistic flaws, but it’s rather rare, but as soon as we move on to writing, there are sentences that no longer mean anything). (Interview 1, September 23, 2015)

Though M. Lambert used the words “difficulties” and “mistakes” to talk about Franco-Maghrebi students’ writing, his choice of words is more tempered, with the use of hedging language such as “maybe, sometimes, two or three, small, rather, a few.”

The gap between oral and written competences has been recognized in education. Indeed, Cummins (1979), in his early work in bilingual education identified this disparity between the language students use for conversation and the language used for more academic purposes. Cummins then made the distinction between two different kinds of language proficiency. BICS are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; these are the "surface" skills of listening and speaking which are typically acquired quickly by many students. CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and is the basis for a student’s ability to cope with the academic demands in various subjects. I think that a literature class such the one taught by Mme. Richard and M. Lambert not only requires a lot of CALP, but a lack of proficiency in academic language would be made even more apparent than in other subjects. It is not surprising then that both teachers identified this disparity, but it is unfortunate that they did not have any theoretical concepts to help them best address their students’ needs.

Notably, both teachers framed these students’ competences in French as deficits while seeming to ignore their bi- or plurilingual abilities. Even when talking about Abdel or Asmae, who had only been in France for five years, the instructors never commented on their progress or abilities to function in several languages. Besides, the class assessments were based on monolingual expectations.

As shown in the following section, many of the students had also incorporated the same deficit view of their abilities in French.

Self-evaluation: students incorporate a deficit view. When I asked the students to assess their level in French, they echoed their teachers' words, with the word mistake "faute" being used by all parties, and illustrating how several participants had integrated a deficit view of their literacies in French. While Mme Richard said about the students' writing, "sometimes it's one mistake per word" Asmae, who had been in France for only 5 years, often commented on her French, saying she had "difficulties" and that she made a lot of "mistakes" and even that she could simply not speak in French. This was far from the truth, because we had long conversations and I never had any problem understanding her.

Asmae reported having a low grade in a mock written baccalauréat because she had made "trop de fautes d'orthographe. 117" (too many spelling mistakes, 117). When I asked her what her grade was she repeated the number "117 fautes" (117 mistakes) in a shameful tone. I asked what impact these errors had on her final grade and she replied: "Ben 6, 8 moins 2. C'est les fautes d'orthographe j'en fais trop." (Well, 6, 8 minus 2. It's the spelling mistakes I make too many) (Interview 3, April 28, 2016). She sounded ashamed and helpless. Having teachers keep track of every single mistake she made probably explained why she was scared to write or speak French and why on the first day I met her, she said: "Mais en français jm'e retiens un petit peu. J'ai peur de dire des fautes" (But in French I hold back a little bit. I am scared to say mistakes) (Interview 1, September 28, 2015).

On several occasions she described how she often felt when speaking French by using the expression "to bug," meaning that she would reach a point when she would freeze up. When I asked her if she knew why she had this problem she said, "ben je stresse, j'ai peur qu'on me juge comment je parle et tout...du coup je préfère pas parler." (well I stress, I am afraid of being judged how I speak and all... so I prefer not so speak). She then explained her fear to be judged:

“ben qu’on me dise qu’elle sait pas parler. Ben c’est vrai mais j’aime pas qu’on me le dise. Je le sais ça, pas besoin de me le rappeler.” (well, that I am told that I don’t know how to speak. Well it’s true I don’t like to be told about it. I know it, no need to remind me) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016). Asmae described how others’ assessment of her ability to speak French or in her mind her lack of ability to speak French, had the power to make her “bug” or to silence her. She chose to remain silent in some occasions so that she would not feel judged for a fault she was aware of.

These negative views were in constant tension with the fact that Asmae had a rich life experience and as she would point out with pride, “dans ma vie j’ai fais trois pays. Trois cultures différentes, trois langues différentes.” (in my life, I have done three countries. Three different cultures, three different languages). (Interview 2, September 28, 2016). I heard in this comment a cry for recognition: Asmae had a unique background which resulted in her having a rich communicative repertoire, although her teachers continued to see her as a student with difficulties who makes a lot of mistakes.

On the same mock *baccalauréat* exam, Abdel, who like Asmae had been in France for 5 years, got a 2 out of 20, the lowest grade in his class. Like Asmae, he lost two points for spelling mistakes. Abdel did not appear as hurt by this grade and preferred to focus on the oral exam where he got 16/20 (Interview 3, May 3, 2015). One could assume that because Asmae and Abdel were first generation immigrants, it made sense that they would have such bad results and have such low opinions of their abilities in French. However, M. Jahid told a story that implied that there was a certain amount of implicit bias when non Franco-French people spoke French. M. Jahid was born in Morocco, but he came to France when he was 18 and studied in France, where he got a master’s degree in Linguistics. Just before the excerpt below, we were discussing the fact that France had not yet embraced its diversity and resisted its multilingualism.

C'est une anecdote justement puisque ça va même jusqu'au point où on te refuse le le... le droit d'une maîtrise parfaite de la langue parce que tu es d'origine machin... Bon je parle de mon cas personnel hein ! Heu moi au début, de par ma formation classique, il m'arrivait, il m'arrive toujours un peu, qu'un imparfait du subjonctif se glisse dans une conversation banale. Et on me corrigeait. Oui, on me disait « ben non, ça ne se dit pas comme ça ». Ben jusqu'au jour où, voilà j'ai dit « relisez votre grammaire, hein ! c'est un imparfait du subjonctif, qui s'utilise dans ce contexte ». Ça fait peut-être pédant, mais c'est juste.

(It's an anecdote actually because it reaches the point where you are denied the... the right of a perfect mastery of the language because you are of origin x... Well I am talking about my personal case, ok! Hmm, me at the beginning, because of my traditional schooling, it happened to me, it still happens to me a bit, that a subjunctive imperfect sneaks up in a mundane conversation. And people would correct me. Yes, they would tell me: "well no, this is not how it is said." Well till the day where, there I said; "go back over your grammar, ok! It's a subjunctive imperfect that is used in this context." Maybe it's sound a bit pedantic, but it's true). (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

In this narrative, M. Jahid recounted an episode when, he had experienced an unfair assessment of his ability to accurately use French because of his origin. His interlocutors did not expect him to speak French properly and as a consequence, people corrected him when actually he was correct. M. Jahid explained that he had received a more traditional education in Morocco and therefore used a more formal French—for example the subjunctive imperfect, a tense that is no longer used in written form, and even less so orally. According to M. Jahid, he was corrected because he was of “origin x” and therefore was denied “the right of a perfect mastery of the language.” In other words, being of different origins than French was taken to mean you cannot be seen as a “legitimate” user of French.

This discourse was still pervasive and as a result the students were partly judged based on their origins. One day in class, M. Lambert and his students were studying a letter written by Manouchian, a poet who was born in Armenia and who fought in the French resistance during the World War II. Before starting the analysis in class, M. Lambert told his students, “La lettre a

été réécrite en français courant car à la base il y avait plein de fautes. Bon c'est normal il était étranger." (The letter was rewritten in standard French because at the beginning there were plenty of mistakes. Well, it's normal he was a foreigner.) (Class observation, September 28, 2015). According to M. Lambert it was to be expected that the "foreign" poet writing in French had made "plenty of mistakes," a comment which is a further illustration of the widespread assumption that foreigners are not expected to master French. This pervasive deficit perspective might account for the fact that Azouz and Leila, who reported not speaking any Arabic, still had a deficit view of their literacies in French. Azouz said "I make a lot of mistakes" and Leila reported making a lot of mistakes compared to others who speak a formal way, suggesting that she does not master this desirable and "legitimate" way of speaking. As I discuss in the next section, formal French had been established as the "legitimate" language within the school and therefor students' used it as a benchmark to judge their literacies in French.

Formal French 'misrecognized' as the 'legitimate' language. Leila, Asmae, Jasmine, Khaled and Nora all expressed their inability to speak formal French. Leila said that her French was "moyen, par rapport aux notes" but "c'est pas assez soutenu" (average compared to grades, but it's not formal enough.) (Interview 1, September 17, 2015), while Jasmine felt her vocabulary was not "très très soutenu" (very very formal) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015).

Despite the fact Nora was getting some of the highest grades in her French class, she still felt that it was not enough because she was lacking in formal language: "mais moi c'est le langage soutenu, je voudrais bien apprendre à parler mieux" (but me it's the formal language, I would like to learn to speak better) (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). In Asmae's case this was almost an obsession. She felt insecure about her French, and once said, "J'parle beaucoup familier, j'arrive pas à parler courant, enfin le langage courant, ou soutenu (I speak a lot

informal, I can't speak the standard language, or formal.) At the end of our interview, once my recorder was off, she asked me what I thought about how she spoke French because she said, "Des fois quand je parle, il y a mon côté racaille qui ressort et les profs même ils me le disent," (Sometimes when I speak there is my "trashy" side that comes out and the teachers even they say it to me) (Interview 1, September 28, 2015). Asmae was the only student who very occasionally used Verlan with me, such as "relou" ("lourd" (heavy)), "chelou" ("louche" (weird)) and she was aware that some teacher had qualified her way of speaking as being "trashy."

The students' comments above suggest that they did not see themselves as legitimate speakers of this variety of French, and that they had interiorized the legitimacy of the formal French and "misrecognized" (Bourdieu, 1977a) it as a superior language, demonstrating the process of reproduction of legitimate language where, "the standard language becomes the language of hegemonic institutions because the dominant and the subordinated group misrecognize it as a superior language" (Blackledge & Pavlenko 2001, p. 247). In her study on Spanish heritage speakers and classroom monoglossic views of languages in the U.S, Showstack (2012), observed a similar phenomenon where students had internalized a "deficit model" of their bilingualism and saw themselves as deficit speakers.

In addition, this "misrecognition" could be partly explained by how Formal French was legitimized during French classes. As a matter of fact, both teachers modeled the exclusive use of a formal variety of French, modeled on standard written language. Formal French was the language used by the teacher and was the expected target of their language education, and this was facilitated by a strongly teacher-centered mode of classroom interaction. M. Lambert and Mme. Richard's classes followed an initiation, response, evaluation pattern, which Seedhouse (2004), identified as the most commonly used classroom interaction pattern when the

pedagogical focus is on form and accuracy (p. 163). Indeed, during the lessons, the teachers always initiated cycles of interaction by asking a question to the class, the students then answered, and the teachers closed the cycle by evaluating the students' response both on content and form.

I noticed very little student-to-student interaction during classes, especially in Mme. Richard's class because, when students spoke to each other she would interrupt them by asking them to answer the question she had just asked. She had established this rule and reminded her students by saying: "vous parlez, je vous interroge, vous le savez bien," (you speak, I test you, you know this well), thereby implying that this was a common practice to discourage her students from talking to each other. In her ethnographic in a Franco-Ontarian high school, Heller (1995), observed similar practices, for example, the exclusive use of standard French (modeled on written French); a monolingual curriculum; corrections and negative sanctions from the teacher, which was facilitated by a "strongly teacher-centered mode of classroom interaction" (p.387). Heller concluded that the school was reinforcing a "monolingualizing" ideology in support of the Francophone nationalism through these practices where French was imposed as the norm and only legitimate language.

In my study, not only was the target language formal French, most of the time the language used in class included technical terms specific to the analysis of literature texts, because, as Mme. Richard warned her students in class: for the baccalauréat "On attend de votre part un vocabulaire de spécialiste, vous devez écrire bien et utiliser un vocabulaire riche" (We expect from you the vocabulary of a specialist, you must write well and use a rich vocabulary) (Observation, May 10, 2016). When students did not speak in this formal variety of French, the teacher would call their attention and either correct them or ask them to correct themselves. As

an illustration M. Lambert did to Nora in the excerpt below:

Nora: “C’est parce que l’Algérie a colonisé par la France” (Is it because Algeria colonized by France?)

M. Lambert: “Recommence en français, ça donnerait quoi?” (Start over in French please, what would that be?)

Nora: “La France a colonisé l’Algérie, pfff...” (France colonized Algeria, pfff...)
(Observation, April 25, 2016).

Just before this interaction, the teacher had asked why Albert Camus was born in Algeria. Nora answered, because Algeria had been colonized by France. However, she omitted the auxiliary verb “être” (to be), in her use of the passive form. Her sentence was perfectly comprehensible and the content was correct. Nevertheless, M. Lambert asked her to start over by wondering what would that be “in French,” implying that the language she had used was not French. Nora then corrected her sentence by modifying her sentence into the active voice. Nora made very few errors when speaking French. I was surprised not only because M. Lambert corrected her but also the way he did it, which made her feel inadequate and annoyed as her puffing sound “pfff” at the end of her sentence indicated. What’s more M. Lambert did not acknowledge the content of her answer, which was right. Finally, given the topic discussed, that is to say French colonialism in Algeria, I found this remark all the more insensitive and culturally inappropriate. It made me realize why Asmae, Jasmine and Leila would be scared to speak in French in their French class. I felt the silencing effect of the institution and how these micro aggression processes when repeated over and over might leave some of the students with the impression that they cannot actually express themselves in any language. This process is illustrated in the excerpt below:

Sandrine : Est-ce que tu penses que tu peux exprimer ta personnalité en arabe comme en français ?

Leila : non

Sandrine : pourquoi ?

Leila : je sais pas mais je sais que non (laughs)

Sandrine : Donc en arabe, tu n'y arrives pas, c'est ça ?

Leila : voilà

Sandrine : et en français, tu penses que tu y arrives ? tu arrives à bien exprimer tes sentiments, tout ça ?

Leila : non, je ne suis pas du genre à trop montrer, je n'y arriverais pas.

(Sandrine: Do you think you can express your personality in Arabic the same as in French?)

Leila: No.

Sandrine: Why?

Leila: I don't know but I know that no (laughs)

Sandrine: So in Arabic you can't, it that right?

Leila: Right

Sandrine: ...and in French, you think you can? Can you express your feelings and all that?

Leila: no, I am the kind to show too much, I wouldn't be able to). (Interview 1, September 17, 2016)

Leila said she could not express her feelings, neither in French nor in Arabic. As I got to know Leila, I recognized that it was a real struggle for her. She often apologized to me because she thought she could not explain what she wanted well enough. Similarly, Azouz said that he wished he could speak better in French and in Arabic, implying he could not express himself in either language. He said about his abilities to express himself in French: “ben en fait à l’oral je préférerais parler mieux.” (Well in fact orally I would like to speak better), as for Arabic: “Ben

j’aimerais bien parler et comprendre mieux. C’est dommage en fait, parce que des fois il y a des mots compliqués, je comprends pas trop, même pas du tout en fait.” (Well I would like to speak well and understand better. It’s a pity in fact, because sometimes there are some complicated words, I don’t understand a lot, even not at all in fact) (Interview 3 and 4, May 13, 2016).

Azouz’s use of the conditional form with the verbs “to like” and “to prefer” to express his wish to communicate better both in French and Arabic conveys an impression of regret, which is reinforced with the expression “it’s a pity.” I argue that the institutional micro-processes described above, the lack of recognition of the students’ communicative resources, the harsh assessment of their literacies in French, and the value put on formal French, affected some students’ sense of self to the point where they felt they had no ways of expressing themselves: no language to do this, no voice. The school practices, which I identify as monolingualizing (Heller, 1995, p.374), had failed to support some of the students as emergent bilinguals and it had even silenced some of them. Not only do I argued that the students’ home languages were not valued and seen as an obstacle, or a “brake” to their learning French but I also realized that these languages were stigmatized and rejected by the institution.

Stigmatization and rejection of home languages. As I wrote in the first chapter, Charles Dupuy’s Life’s Principle (or school regulation) (Appendix B) number 6 states that “l’élève doit parler la **langue française**¹³ en dehors des cours de langues vivantes” (Students must speak the **French language** outside of foreign language classes). Nora was the person who informed me of this regulation during our first interview, and this came as a shock to me. I had never heard of such a regulation in a school, and I knew that this was not a national policy, but one that had been

¹³ “Langue française” is written in bold language, highlighting the importance of this message.

decided in Charles Dupuy. As a result, I wanted to understand, first, the impact it had on the students and, second, the motivation behind this regulation.

Regulation number 6's impact on participants. To find out how this regulation impacted the students, I asked them if they wish they could use their home language more freely in school. Abdel replied with this powerful image: “Ben quand c’est un marocain avec un marocain, même si c’est, je sais pas, on est dans le sommet de la montagne, on va parler arabe.” (Well when there is a Moroccan with a Moroccan, even if, I don’t know, we are on top of the mountain, we are going to speak Arabic) (Interview, 4, May 13, 2016). Abdel explains that when two Moroccan people meet, it is obvious that they will speak Arabic, no matter the circumstances, it is as he had previously told me “in your blood.” According to Abdel, speaking Arabic is how he connects, how he enacts a shared identity, it is also part of his habitus. Despite this powerful image, giving the impression that two Moroccan people cannot not speak in Arabic, when I asked if that was still the case in the classroom, he answered: “en cours c’est un peu délicat...” (in class it’s a bit tricky). He then explained that because of the regulation they were not allowed and that has a result he only said very few words. Regulation number 6 prevented them to use their full linguistic repertoire the way they reporting doing outside of school at the beginning of this chapter.

This means that it affected more particularly students who were used to translanguaging and who would have had the opportunity to keep this practice at school. Nora, Abdel, Farid and Asmae usually sat together and they all shared a common language. Asmae and Nora shared Abdel’s point of view and they both wished they could use Arabic. Nora explained that “en fait y a des mots qu’en français on arrive pas à les dire, enfin on peut pas les comprendre qu’en arabe c’est déjà des mots directs.” (in fact there are words in French we can’t say them, well we can

only understand them in Arabic there are direct words) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). Nora's quote demonstrates how, for bilinguals, there is the need and ability to be more efficient and that some words are more "direct" or have a stronger meaning in one language than the other. The regulation thus prevents them from being more efficient and truly understanding each other on a deeper level.

For Asmae, this was even more of an issue, because Arabic was her dominant language and she was not confident in using French. For her, the regulation meant she could not be as expressive as she would like to because as she explained, "en arabe, j'me lâche, j'parle vite et tout ça. Mais en français jm'e retiens un petit peu. J'ai peur de dire des fautes ou des trucs comme ça." (In Arabic I loosen up, I speak fast and all. But in French I hold back a bit. I'm scared to make mistakes or stuff like that). This feeling of not being able to express herself the way she would in Arabic, together with her fear of making mistakes in French, justify why sometimes in class she admitted that, "j'essaie d'être discrète, mais c'est juste des expressions, j'arrive pas à les sortir en français, sur le moment ch'suis obligée de les dire en arabe" (I try to be discrete, but there are just some expressions, I can't say them in French, at the time I am forced to say them in Arabic) (Interview 1, September 21, 2105). In this quote, Asmae Asmae suggests that the need to speak Arabic is beyond her control; she feels she has no choice. Even though she is aware of the regulation and remains discrete, she feels forced to use Arabic, probably because she is used to having Arabic as an option in her repertoire and not being able to goes against her nature, her habitus. The comments above show that the students were aware of this French-only policy and according to Asmae and Nora, Franco-French students would make sure that this regulation was respected, mostly because they would also presuppose that they were being

insulted in Arabic. Indeed, during an interview when we discussed what would happen if they spoke Arabic in the school, Asmae and Nora said:

Nora : parce qu'on va parler arabe, ils vont nous dire « parlez français » ! (very loud and sarcastic voice)

Asmae : ouais si on parle arabe, déjà ils vont nous dire de parler français.

Sandrine : qui va vous dire ça ?

Asmae : ben les gens...

Nora : ceux dans notre classe ouais...

Sandrine : Les élèves ?

Nora : ouais les élèves de notre classe..ouais ils vont nous dire ils comprennent pas.

Asmae : ouais ils vont nous dire : « on est en France » ! Pour rigoler, mais il y a un deuxième sens...

Nora : En fait je pense que ça les gêne, mais c'est normal en fait parce qu'ils vont croire qu'on parle d'eux... on dit des choses malsaines donc après ils vont se sentir exclus... donc après ils vont nous dire, ouais parler français, comme ça tout le monde est à égalité.

(Nora: because we speak Arabic, they are going to tell us "speak French!" (very loud and sarcastic voice)

Asmae: yeah, if we speak Arabic, they are going to tell us to speak French.

Sandrine: who is going to tell you that?

Asmae: well the people...

Nora: those in our class yeah...

Sandrine: the students ?

Nora: yeah, the students in our class... yeah they are going to tell us that they don't understand.

Asmae: yeah they are going to tell us "we are in France!" As a joke, but there is a second

meaning...

Nora: I fact I think that it makes them feel uncomfortable, but it's normal because they're going to think that we talk about them... we say something nasty so after they're going to feel excluded... so after they are going to tell us, yeah speak French, this way everybody is equal). (Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

In this excerpt we get a sense of what Asmae and Nora have experienced when they speak Arabic in the school. When Nora said loudly "Speak French!" she sounded like she was mimicking the voice of someone who insured the regulation was respected, in other words the voice of the institution, or even in this case the voice of the oppressor. Asmae agreed that this is the comment they would get from their peers in the classroom and she thought they would also they "we are in France" as a joke, but as she pointed, there was an ulterior meaning to it. I understand this underlying meaning as being racist and exclusive.

Nora's explanation for these comments is that their peers are uncomfortable with Arabic because they assume that something bad is being said about them and it makes them feel uncomfortable as they are not used to being excluded from understanding what is said around them. She then concluded that speaking French was a way of making everybody equal, when actually this regulation is reinforcing the exclusive use of the dominant language, and excluding the wider linguistic resources of minoritized students. I argue that this regulation impacted the participants' linguistic practices, and although Canagarajah reported that in the majority of studies among bilinguals showed that "acts of translanguaging are produced unbidden" and that they cannot "be completely restrained by monolingual educational policies" (2011, p. 402), my data, both interviews and classroom observations, show that languages cannot always be used freely, not when there is a regulation that forbids students from using these languages. For the participants, stepping into the school meant stepping into a monolingual sphere that had been determined as such by a regulation with which they had to comply. What's more, from an

identity perspective, Charles Dupuy's monolingual policies are forcing the students to repress an aspect of who they are because their home language is part of their identity. Having analyzed the impacts the school regulation had on the participants, I now explore the rationale behind regulation number 6.

I asked the principal and the student counselor why this regulation had been implemented. The principal said that, "C'est plus cette volonté de faire que, d'abord ils ne parlent pas entre eux, en disant le prof c'est un gros con en arabe, ça non" (It's more this desire that first they do not speak between each other, saying that the teacher is a big moron in Arabic, that no) (Interview 1, May 17, 2016). The counselor also mentioned this desire to avoid allowing students of same origins to gather and use their language to insult staff members, "Ben voilà ça avait été fait justement pour éviter heu... qui est ce... heu... ce regroupement et que... ou qui est des fois des insultes ce genre de choses, auprès d'un professeur, d'un surveillant, d'un CPE" (Well yes it was done precisely to avoid hmm... this gathering and that... or that sometimes insults of this kind of thing towards a teacher, a supervisor, a counselor) (Interview 1, May 13, 2016). When I asked if she was thinking of a language in particular, she said yes, that Arabic would be the most common one. So although the school regulation does not specify that Arabic should not be spoken, when asked about it, administrators admitted that Arabic was in their minds when writing this principle. I see in their answers a certain degree of implicit prejudice and the stigmatization of a particular group. I would argue that Pavlenko (2003)'s concept of the "language of the enemy," which she used to demonstrate how sociopolitical and ideological considerations may affect foreign language policies, here applies to this particular school policy in Charles Dupuy.

What is also concerning about this regulation and its underlying agenda, is that Arabic is not among the foreign languages taught at Charles Dupuy. It would make sense indeed that the

second most widely spoken language in France (Talon, 2012) was taught in one of the biggest schools in Vire. Vire is the biggest town in an otherwise rural area and, as Nora pointed out, Arabic “devient une puissance, enfin comme l’Arabie Saoudite, donc ce serait pas mal non plus d’apprendre l’arabe” (is becoming a power, well like Saudi Arabia so it would not be a bad thing to learn it) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016). Nora and Asmae were the first participants who drew my attention about why Arabic was not taught, and they gave reasons why they thought it should be. On top of the economic aspect, they would have personally liked to be able to continue studying Arabic in a formal way. They had previously studied Arabic at the Mosque in Vire, but there were no longer any courses.

Asmae and Nora both listed all the languages that had been taught in the school for a long time (Spanish, German, English, Portuguese...), and Asmae said that “c’est une langue comme les autres” (it’s a language like any others), suggesting it should be taught like any other language. As they continued to reflect on the matter, Asmae pointed out:

“En plus, nous on est à côté, enfin, déjà il y a nous dedans, faut qu’ils s’adaptent à nous aussi un peu, nous on s’adapte ici mais c’est que dans un sens et aussi ben nous au Maroc, c’est les pays francophones, ça parle français... il faut que ça passe dans les deux sens.”

(Besides, we are right next to them, well, first we are already inside, they have to adapt to us as well a little bit, we adapt here but only one way and also well us in Morocco, it’s the francophone countries, we speak French... it must happen both ways). (Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

Asmae’s comments are valid: First, when she says “we are already inside,” Arabic is the second most spoken language after French; second, when she says “we are right next to them” countries where Arabic is spoken are geographically, historically and culturally close, and finally as she points out in Morocco French is widely used and taught. For all these reasons, Asmae feels French people could also adapt to these youths, it should not be a one-way system where

they are the only who have to integrate. After this conversation with Nora and Asmae I wondered how the school staff would explain why Arabic was not taught in the school. I was surprised to see how their answers varied according to their roles within the institution, and how much they were willing to be critical of this decision. M. Leroy explained at length that it was not offered because there was no demand for it. These are the three comments he made during our interview, which all repeat the same idea: “mais qui n’avait pas eu un grand succès parce qu’en fait, il y a eu très peu d’amateurs pour cette option” (but it was not a big success because in fact, there were very few fans for this option); “mais ça n’a pas rencontré le public. Il y a très peu d’élèves qui étaient intéressés.” (but it was not met with an audience. Very few students were interested); “mais quand cette option a été offerte il y a quelques années, elle n’a pas eu de client.” (But when a few years ago this option was offered, it did not get any costumers).

Without giving any specific statistics, M. Leroy used many different terms to express this idea that the course had no “audience, no fans, no costumers” and concluded that “même les jeunes d’origine maghrébine qui auraient voulu apprendre leur propre langue, ne l’ont pas faites cette démarche. Il n’y a eu personne, donc du coup c’était la fin.” (even the youth of Maghrebi origins who would have liked to learn their own language, did not make this step. There was nobody, so as a result it was the end). The “option” or elective that M. Leroy referred to is called “langue et culture du bassin méditerranéen” (Mediterranean basin language and culture). This course was introduced in 2011 and as described on the French Ministry of Education website (Éduscol, 2017), its goal is to teach Arabic, Latin and Greek languages and cultures “language of Antiquity,” so that students discover “la richesse des travaux et des projets scientifiques et culturels du bassin méditerranéen (archéologie, muséographie, agronomie...)” (the wealth of cultural and scientific work and project of the Mediterranean basin (archeology, museography,

agronomie...)). Therefore, this elective is not a language class and was not designed to teach Arabic as a living language, but rather the ancient culture of a region which France is a part of. Its focus on other languages such as Greek and Latin, as well as the historical approach, frame Arabic as an ancient language, and not as a vibrant language spoken in the modern world. This might explain why even people of Maghrebi origins did not show any interest in this course and why the Charles Dupuy's attempts to offer it were not successful.

The school counselor, Mme Durantet remembered that the previous principle had tried to offer Arabic as a Foreign Language, but that the regional education authority declined this demand, although she could not remember what reasons were given. Mme. Durantet said that in spite of this, some students studied Arabic through a national independent learning course (CNED) and some chose it as a subject for the baccalauréat. Some of the students knew of this possibility but also realized that it was very hard to study by themselves. Contrary to M. Leroy, Mme. Durantet addressed the teaching of Arabic and she was aware that there was a demand but could not comment on why it was not offered in the school.

As for M. Lambert, first, he expressed his lack of understanding and said he found it surprising, given that M. Jahid is qualified to teach Arabic, but never teaches it. He then wondered if it was a lack of funding, and finally gave his opinion on the matter and invoked “notre histoire ça reste dans les têtes, et oui, toujours cette difficulté à euh... à avancer, et à accepter.” (our history it remains in our heads, and yes, always there is always this difficulty to move forward, to accept) (Interview 2, May 12, 2016). M. Lambert did not say exactly what part of “our history” would prevent students in France from accepting Arabic as any other languages, but I believe he was referring to our colonial past with the Maghreb.

I argue that this resistance to the teaching of Arabic in Charles Dupuy and in French

schools in general is the result of a deliberate historical and political decision. As Nora and Asmae said, for immigrants who come from the Maghreb, they have to integrate and adapt. However, France is not willing, and not ready to accept that its cultures and the Maghreb's culture, their histories are connected and that there should be a two-way relationship. France would have to not see Arabic as a threat, but as a legitimate, valid language that both Franco-French people and Franco-Maghrebi would benefit from learning and understanding and as I discuss now this is still a controversial topic.

Arabic in French schools. M. Jahid's comments provide a comprehensive description of the wider picture starting with a history of the teaching of Arabic in France and the more current tendency; for this reason, I will cite an extensive part of his comments:

Oui pour l'arabe, enfin pour l'enseignement de l'arabe dit standard, heu... il y a beaucoup de ratés, c'est-à-dire, c'est quand on a commencé, quand la nomination, la décision de l'ouverture d'une section arabe, ou de l'enseignement de l'arabe n'était plus ministérielle, dépendait du chef de l'établissement, il y a eu beaucoup de chefs d'établissement, qui ont fermé l'arabe pour des raisons de budget, ou d'autres raisons... je ne veux pas rentrer dans les détails, mais le problème c'est que heu... moi je sais qu'à l'époque il y a déjà 15 ans, ou plus de 15 ans quand l'enseignement de l'arabe commençait à périliter, il y a des collègues qui ont bien dit, certains écrit, que c'est ou l'enseignement de l'arabe dans un cadre laïc, par des gens formés, ou bien c'est les mosquées et on voit des fois ce que ça donne... On en revient maintenant à essayer de de colmater les brèches...

(Yes, for Arabic, so for the teaching of the so called standard Arabic, hmm... there have been a lot of failures, that is to say, it's when we began, when the appointment, the decision to open an Arabic section, or the the teaching of Arabic was no longer at the ministry level, was dependent on the head of schools, many heads of schools, who closed Arabic for budget reasons or other reasons... I don't want to get into the details, but the problem it that hmm... me I know that at the time, it's already been 15 years, or more than 15 years, when the teaching of Arabic started to decline, some colleagues said, some wrote, that it is either the teaching of Arabic in a secular context, by trained people, or it is the mosques and we see sometimes what that leads to... We have changed our minds now to try to plug the gaps...) (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

M. Jahid was initially trained to be an Arabic teacher: he has been involved in the discussion for a long time, and his comments bring more depth and are intriguing answers in relation to what was said by different staff members of the school. M. Jahid agreed that there had been many failures in the attempt to teach Arabic, but contrary to M. Leroy, who saw the lack of interest at the main reason for failure, M. Jahid introduced an interesting point about decision making levels. Indeed, what used to be a ministerial decision was now left to the head of the school, which according to M. Jahid was one of the main reasons for all the failures.

Once it became up to the head of school to keep teaching Arabic or not, many decided to close down Arabic classes. M. Jahid first listed funding as a possible issue, as M. Lambert had done, but he also said there were other reasons, and that he did not want to get into the details, thereby choosing not to comment on what would probably be too contentious or political. Later during our interview, he actually said more about this, by talking about the suppression of Maghrebi Arabic as an elective for the *baccalauréat*, a decision made by the Ministry of Education, which could be seen as a political decision, and which highlights the lack of recognition of this language:

Il n'y a pas de reconnaissance du dialecte en tant que tel. Fut une époque où on pouvait le présenter en candidat libre au bac. Le dialectale et puis après ben, heu... le candidat pouvait choisir un sujet, tirer un sujet au sort, et il y avait un entretien avec l'enseignant. Heu... sans qu'il sache lire. Après on est passé à une autre étape où il fallait lire le texte, mais le texte était transcrit en caractère latin (laughs) et maintenant il faut que le candidat sache lire l'arabe, donc on est passé... on peut lui donner un texte en dialectal, mais écrit en caractère arabe. On a de moins en moins de candidats ... et puis en plus il faut qu'on les interroge avec ce qu'on appelle un arabe médian, c'est-à-dire entre l'arabe dialectal et l'arabe littéraire. Donc déjà là aussi, au niveau de l'institution de passage de l'arabe du bac, c'est heu... confus...

(There is no recognition of the dialect as such. There was a time when we could present it as an elective to the bac. The Maghrebi dialect and then after well, hmm... the candidate could randomly choose a subject, and there was an interview with the teacher. Hmm... without knowing to read. After we moved on the another stage where they needed to read

the text, but the text was transcribed in Latin characters (laughs) and now the candidate needs to read Arabic, so we went from... we can give him a text in Maghrebi Arabic, but written in Arabic characters. We have less candidates... and then on top of this we have to ask them question in a so-called median Arabic, that is to say between Maghrebi Arabic and literary Arabic. So there too, at the institutional level the move to Arabic for the bac, it's hmm... confusing.) (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

In the excerpt above, M. Jahid succinctly summarizes what has happened with Maghrebi Arabic in France during the 90s. In 1995, the Ministry of Education decided to add written Maghrebi Arabic as an elective for the bac. Before this, this test was only in oral form. Contrary to what M. Leroy suggested, this option became rapidly very popular. Indeed, in 1999, candidates could take an optional test for non-taught languages and out of 28 possible languages, 76.6% of these candidates (a total of 9,886 students) chose Maghrebi Arabic (Barontini & Caubet, 2008). In spite of this success, the Ministry of Education decided to remove Maghrebi Arabic of this list of non-taught languages: instead students had to be able to read Standard Arabic. Although there are no exact numbers, Caubet, a French sociolinguist specialized in Maghrebi Arabic, reckoned that a few years after this decision, the number of students who chose Maghrebi Arabic as an elective dropped from almost 10,000 to 2,000.

According to Caubet (2000), this decision was based on the idea that the extra points students could get were not worthy because, “les points obtenus en arabe dialectal sont des points trop facilement gagnés, comme si la connaissance de cette langue ne comportait aucune valeur” (the points gained in Maghrebi Arabic are points too easily gained, as though the knowledge of this language had no values). Caubet argued this is actually what was at the core of the decision, a will to not recognize and value this language, which was learnt and used at home, outside of the school context. I find in this political decision an answer to the question why Arabic is so rarely taught in France—by reinforcing Standard Arabic as the only option, the government

deliberately devalued and rejected the language that is actually used on a daily basis by the Maghrebi and Franco-Maghrebi population.

Finally, M. Jahid commented on the issue France is now facing with regard to students learning Arabic. After schools stopped teaching Arabic, the only place students could learn was in mosques, not necessarily by trained people and more importantly, with a heavier focus on religion. As a matter of fact, M. Jahid implied that in some cases political or radical ideologies were transmitted during these classes. According to M. Jahid, as France faces Islamic radicalism, it is trying to find a compromise, and he believes that the situation is likely to change, and that Arabic may be taught more widely in French schools. M. Jahid's optimism, is therefore tainted with France's motivation, which would not be an openness to Arabic but rather a reaction to the fear the rise of Islam has created in France.

This is in fact exactly where the current discourse on the teaching of Arabic in France stands. Indeed, in September 2018, the Institut Montaigne¹⁴ published a report about Islamic fundamentalism in Europe and France (El Karoui, 2018). The author, Hakim El Karoui, lamented that the number of students learning Arabic in French schools had halved in the past twenty years. Only 0.2 percent of students in public middle and high schools took Arabic classes in the 2017-2018 school year, putting the language far behind the widely taught English, Spanish and German. However, El Karoui also reported that the number of students studying Arabic in mosques had been multiplied by ten. He thus recommended that Arabic be taught in French schools as a way of fighting the raise of this fundamentalism.

¹⁴ The Institut Montaigne is a transpartisan organization whose purpose is to suggest public policy to ultimately improve social cohesion.

This recommendation reignited a contentious public discourse about Arabic in French public schools. A few days after the publication of the report, the minister of education, Jean-Michel Blanquer (2018), said on a radio program that Arabic alongside with Russian and Chinese had to be taught more commonly and be given more prestige, but more especially Arabic which should be learnt not only by students of Maghrebi origins. This announcement provoked violent reactions. For example, Marine Le Pen—the leader of the French extreme right party—immediately argued that we were in France and that she wanted people to learn French culture, highlighting her rejection of France’s actual multiculturalism and multilingualism. Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (2018)—a right wing law maker —said on a radio program this would be the “beginning of the Islamization of France” and felt this was “very unhealthy” because it would lead to “communitarisme,” and that instead young people who come from Arabic speaking countries should assimilate.

Faced with this criticisms, only a few days after his first statement in favor of the teaching of Arabic in schools, the minister of education had to back track and explained he never said he wanted to make Arabic compulsory. These reactions indicate France is not ready yet to accept Arabic as a language that could be taught in the schools of the Republic.

As a matter of fact, even if the minister of education is in favor of the teaching of Arabic, I see his recommendation as a reaction to the El Karoui (2018)’s report and therefore more as part of France’s fight against extremism than a true recognition of Arabic as a legitimate language in French society. It is also interesting to point out, as explained in the introduction chapter, that both Maghrebi Arabic and Berber were in the list Cerquiglini created in 1999 in preparation for the *European Charter for Regional and Minority languages*. As a reminder, this Charter could not be ratified because it was seen as contrary to the principles of indivisibility of

the Republic and of non-recognition of groups or communities. Two decades later, the French state is still caught in lively debates and legal argumentation to protect the French language against the varieties that are used in its society. However, at present the fear of losing the purity of its language, the breakup of the Republican cohesion seems to be outweighed by the fear of radicalization driven by Arabic learning taking place in mosques outside of the control of the state.

Summary

In this chapter I have demonstrated that the students' communicative resources varied according to their family histories. A majority of the students have a wide linguistic repertoire from which they can draw from to adapt to their various needs, depending on the contexts and their interlocutors. However, three of them reported not being able to use the language of their families. As I said in the introduction to this chapter, there were no correlations between the length of time the students and their families had been living in France and their linguistic practices. Two out of these three participants were third-generation immigrant, and one was second-generation. The first-generation immigrants tended to use all the languages in their repertoires more freely. Further, my data showed that these rich and dynamic practices clashed with the school's monolingual and monoglossic discourses and policies, represented mostly in M. Lambert's and Mme. Richard's reports.

These two teachers had adopted the belief that speaking another language at home is detrimental to their academic success and thereby expressed a subtractive view of their students' bilingualism. What's more, M. Lambert and Mme. Richard expressed a deficit view of their Franco-Maghrebi students' literacies in French. Their students had in turn incorporated a deficit view of their literacies and many did not perceive themselves as "legitimate" speakers of French,

or more specifically, of formal French, which was reinforced as the norm and the desired target. French was the language of hegemony within the school, while the home languages of the students were stigmatized and rejected, which had in some case a silencing effect. What's more Arabic is perceived as a threat and I have demonstrated that the decision to not teach it in schools has been and still is a political one.

I therefore argue that the school did not provide a supportive environment that would have allowed for the students to thrive as emergent bilinguals, by acknowledging their languages and allowing their full linguistic resources to be visible in the school. This would have allowed these students to use their languages to build on their knowledge and express a side of their identity that, under the present practices and policies, they must repress. Instead, their home practices were devalued, stigmatized and discriminated against. This represents a violation of human rights, of the dignity of humans, for according to Skutnabb-Kanguas, "language is one of the most important of those human characteristics on the basis of which people are not supposed to be discriminated against" (2009, p. 223) and for this reason no individuals should be forced to give up languages, which are integral to their identities.

To conclude, this chapter highlights the micro-processes of symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1977a, 1991), which allows dominant discourses to prevail in the school context. Heller (1995) defined this type of domination as "the ability of certain social groups to maintain control over others by establishing their view of reality and their cultural practices as the most valued and, perhaps more importantly, as the norm" (p. 373). Heller applied this definition to discourses surrounding language ideologies in the school context, but actually as I will demonstrate in the next chapter—where I analyze the students' schooling experiences—this definition could be extended to other aspects of the French education system.

Chapter 7: Students' Experiences of Schooling

In this chapter I answer my second research question: What are Franco-Maghrebi students' experiences of schooling? How does participation in schooling impact the identity negotiation process; that is to say how do Franco-Maghrebi students position themselves within the school and how are they positioned by agents and discourses of the school?

Although each of the student had a unique experience, three major themes emerged from the data about their schooling experiences, which constitute the institutional and ideological factors the participants have to struggle with in the French education system. These themes are (a) the *baccalauréat* in French literature; (b) *culture générale* and; (c) *laïcité*. These terms will be further explained in my analysis.

The *Baccalauréat* in French Literature

Because the students in my study were in Première (11th grade in the US), at the end of the academic year, in June 2016, they took the “épreuves anticipées” (first parts of the) *baccalauréat* in French literature and the following year, in June 2017, they took the complete *baccalauréat* in the rest of the subjects. The *baccalauréat*, created in 1808 by Napoléon, is a diploma awarded by the French Ministry of Education. It marks both the successful completion of secondary education and opens the door to higher education. This comprehensive exam covers all area of study, such a mathematics, philosophy, history, geography, foreign languages, literature, sciences... Each exam contains a series of essays or problems on issues requiring a thorough analysis based on the knowledge acquired over the course of the final two years of high school education. Because it is a national exam, which means all the students in France take the same tests, it follows the curriculum guidelines established by the Ministry of Education.

In 1975 only 3% of the youth took this exam but in 2015, this number reached 77.2 % (French Ministry of Education). While the *baccalauréat* has become more accessible, it is now seen as a minimum requirement on the job market, as illustrated by the 2015 study, which showed that 50% of unemployed people in France did not have a *baccalauréat*, 26% had only a *baccalauréat*, and 13% had a degree in higher education (Centre d'études et de Recherches sur les Qualifications [Cereq], 2015).

This exam has also become an institution, variously described as “l’examen fétiche des français” (the French people’s favorite exam) and “un monument historique” (a historical monument) (Editorial, *Le Monde*, 2018), which has resisted many attempts at reform. The current Minister of Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, is the first minister to successfully make significant changes in recent times, which will take effect in 2021, giving more weight to continuous assessment. However, these reforms will not concern the French literature *baccalauréat*.

This exam in French literature consists of two parts, one written and one oral. For the written part students have four hours to read several texts on a common topic (corpus); then based on these texts, they can choose either a “commentaire” (close reading), “dissertation” (essay) or “écriture d’invention” (creative writing)¹⁵. For the oral part, students are given thirty minutes to prepare a text from a list created by their teacher. The students spend the full academic year studying this list and they must pass it to the examiner. They then have twenty minutes to present the text to the examiner and answer questions.

In this section I demonstrate how this exam plays a central role in the participants’ schooling experience, more specifically (a), how it represents a source of fear; (b) how it

¹⁵ The 2016 French *baccalauréat* test for the ES class (Bac français, 2016a) and STMG class (Bac français, 2016b) can be found on on *Le Monde*’s website.

embodies techniques of power; (c) how it restricts teacher-student relations and teaching practices; and (d) how it dictates the syllabus.

The *baccalauréat* represents a source of fear and stress.

This exam was omnipresent in both the students' and teachers' minds. I counted 31 occurrences of the expression "Le jour du bac" (the day of the bac) in the data. This expression served as a reminder to students of the importance of the course and the need to be disciplined and to listen. In many ways it kept them quiet and focused but also scared and worried. From the very first lesson I observed, I felt the *baccalauréat*'s presence in the classroom, like a shadow that dictated everybody's behaviors and impacted everybody's feelings. The first time I observed the class STMG, on September 12, 2015, Mme. Richard set the tone for the rest of the year by saying, "pour bien se préparer au bac, il faut bien bachoter¹⁶, apprendre par cœur les arguments et les exemples, c'est comme ça" (to be well prepared for the bac, you have to cram, learn by heart the arguments and the examples, that's the way it is).

Only a week after the beginning of the school year, Mme. Richard had started warning her students that the only way to succeed for the exam was to revise intensely. This comment appears both deterministic and stressful: Deterministic, because it implies it is the only way to succeed and that thinking creatively or critically will have no part in getting ready for the exam; and stressful because of the verb "il faut" (one has to), which suggests that it concerns everybody, and that the students do not have a choice over this because "that's the way it is." Because it was the beginning of the school year, and because of her position of authority,

¹⁶ The verb "bachoter" is formed from the noun "bac" the abbreviation of "baccalauréat." It is informal and usually has a negative connotation. It can be translated as "to cram" from the students' perspective and "to teach to the test" from the teachers' perspective.

students were impressionable and this comment had a strong impact on them. Indeed, looking around the classroom, I could see the anxiety on the students' facial expressions.

I realize that this national exam is stressful for every student in France but it puts extra pressure on the students in my research, because, on the one hand, it represents an opportunity to prove themselves and, on the other hand, it is a key moment, a rite of passage, at which their French will be officially judged and assessed by a system that has reinforced a deficit view of their usage of French as explained in the previous chapter.

Asmae, Nora, Farid ,and Khaled used the word “peur” (fear) to describe their feelings towards the *baccalauréat*. An even more common feeling was stress. Indeed, the word stress appeared 18 times in my data, and it was used 16 (out of 18) times in relation to the *baccalauréat*. Students were mostly worried about not being capable of passing this exam, of not being good enough. Khaled said, during our first interview, “j’ai peur de me donner à fond et de ne pas l’avoir” (I am scared to go all out and to not pass). Asmae said with panic in her voice, “j’arriverais pas à parler (...), j’y arriverais pas, je vais buger” (I won’t be able to speak (...) I won’t be able to, I’m going to freeze up) and Nora expressed similar feelings, “je vais pas y arriver” (I won’t be able to). As for Jasmine, she felt underprepared and stated, “je sais jamais quoi écrire” (I never know what to write). All these comments convey a sense of pessimism about their ability to speak or write in French on the day of the exam, which Mme. Richard was aware of as she reckoned, “ils sont plutôt défaitistes” (they are rather defeatist).

For some students, this pessimism could be traced back to personal experiences. For example, in the excerpt below Asmae recounts the recent stressful mock oral *baccalauréat* she took:

Ben j’arrivais pas à parler, enfin vite fait, mais quand je stresse ou quand je trouvais pas le mot dans un texte, parce qu’il fallait citer le texte, donc là je cherchais le mot et j’arrivais

pas, j'me disais là je suis en train de perdre du temps et tout, après je lui ai dit « attends » je l'ai tutoyé sans faire exprès. (...) Mais c'était sur la panique.

(Well I couldn't speak, well quickly, but when I stress or when I couldn't find the word in the text, because I had to cite the text, so there I was looking for the word and I couldn't, I was telling myself I am wasting time here and all, and I told him "wait" I told him "tu" without meaning to (...) But it was out of panic). (Interview 3, April 28, 2016)

This excerpt captures the feelings of stress Asmae experienced during her mock oral exam, when she panicked to the point she could not speak and finally lost control and used the "tu" form with the examiner, which is the less formal version of you, and which would not be appropriate in this context. Her saying "without meaning to" shows her awareness of this linguistic code: she understood the power dynamic and she attributes her faux-pas to her feelings of panic in her attempt to find the "right" word. Her concern with her ability to speak accurately highlights her lack of confidence in using formal French and reinforces the fact that she does not see herself as a legitimate speaker of this variation of French, as discussed in the previous chapter. Her lack of confidence was probably exacerbated by the pressure of the exam, reflecting what Foucault described as: "the superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance" (1995, p. 185). Indeed, faced with the examiner who represented the authority of the *baccalauréat* and the institution, and who, therefore, was in a position of power, Asmae was so afraid that she lost her ability to communicate. (Focus group, June 2, 2016)

During a focus group, I witnessed the type of breakdown she described above. She was introducing a text in practice for the French *baccalauréat* exam. On this occasion, I had given her 15 minutes to prepare a short introduction to *Barbara*, a poem written by Jacques Prévert. Although the focus group was a small supportive group of people she knew well, (Salima, Nora,

and me), when she started talking about the poem, she became uncomfortable, flustered to the point where, as you can see in the exert below, she did indeed “freeze up”:

ok, j’y vais, mais regardez-moi pas s’il vous plaît. Donc de gens se sont séparés durant la seconde guerre mondiale, et même après cet événement tragique, ben... heu... il y a certaines personnes qui n’ont toujours pas eu de nouvelles... après des gens qui s’aiment forcément... et heu... comme par exemple prouvé par.. mais ça veut rien dire... donc prouvé par Jacques Prévert dans Paroles qu’il a écrit en 1946, et heu... dans récit il parle de... enfin il heu... il extériorise ses sentiments à Barbara, pour heu...oh je sais pas parlé... je suis stressée...ch’sais pas parler...

(ok, I’ll start, but don’t look at me please. So of people separated during the second World War, and even after this tragic event, uh...hmm...there are certain persons who still haven’t had news...after some people who certainly love each other... and hmm... as for example proven in Paroles which he wrote in 1946, and hmm...in this story he talks about...well he hmm, he exteriorizes his feelings to Barbara, for hmm, oh I don’t know how to speak... I am stressed... I dunno how to speak...)

I was then surprised that this 18-year-old female, who already had had such amazing life experiences, who could freely use three languages in different contexts, would still feel so insecure about herself to the point of panicking.

Students are not only the only ones affected by the pressure of the *baccalauréat*. As a matter of fact, teachers and administrators feel the pressure to prepare their students because they will be judged and evaluated based upon the performance of their students on the exam. Each year a list of every school’s rate of success on the *baccalauréat* is made publicly available, and although the teachers’ salary is not affected by this rating, the school’s reputation is at stake. The school Charles Dupuy performed rather low in its academic district and in recent years, it was rated 20th out of 29 area schools. The principal, M. Leroy, hinted that although the academic inspector had remarked on the good reputation of the school for its positive atmosphere, his comment on the school’s performance was not as positive, “par contre il me disait on réussit moins bien, qu’à (name of other school in the town), c’est pas le même public” (on the other

hand he told me that we do less well than at (name of other school in the town), it's not the same audience). When the academic inspector pointed out that Charles Dupuy was not performing as well as another school, the principal justified this low achievement by its "audience." Because he had previously told me Charles Dupuy was the most diverse school in Vire, I assume he meant that Charles Dupuy had a more diverse population. For the principal, this could be part of the reasons why it did not perform as well as other schools. This comment appeared to affect M. Leroy, which, given the prominent position of academic inspectors within the French education system, is understandable.

One of the duties of academic inspectors is to observe classes regularly to make sure that the teaching, and more importantly, the content is in accordance with national standards. On this topic, Mme. Richard said she felt "guidé un peu par les attentes des inspecteurs" (guided by the inspectors' expectations) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015) and further explained that the main issue was that "les inspecteurs n'ont pas changé, ils ne comprendraient pas si nous étudions des textes différents, ils n'approuveraient pas" (the inspectors have not changed, they would not understand if we studied different text, they would not approve) (Interview 0, January 15, 2015). Mme. Richard claimed she had very little agency over the content of her course because the inspectors were not willing to accept change and she had to comply with their expectations in order to get their approval.

The pressure the teachers were under had an observable impact on what they did in class as I will demonstrate in my next section.

The *baccalauréat* embodies techniques of power. During my study I was struck by the extent to which the French national standard exams reinforced power relations between teachers and students, and shaped teaching practice. In addressing the role of examinations in teaching,

Foucault (1995) wrote that examinations were “one of its permanent factors; it is woven into [education] through a constantly repeated ritual of power” (p. 186). Further, he claimed that “the examination introduced a whole mechanism that linked to a certain type of the formation of knowledge a certain form of the exercise of power” (p. 187), in other words, the primary function of exams is to validate and assess learning, but in practice it becomes the sole purpose of teaching and it establishes relations of power between the teachers and the students where power is realized by teachers and accepted by students. The image of “ritual of power” being “constantly repeated” matches with my observations of the French literature classes preparing students to the *baccalauréat*.

My descriptions of M. Lambert and Mme. Richard (cf. 107–109) highlight their different personalities, partly due to their different social background. As a reminder, Mme. Richard’s mannerism was in fact more in alignment with the upper-middle class and M. Lambert’s with the lower-middle class, or working class and as a consequence, at first glance, their behavior in class differed. Indeed, Mme. Richard was more authoritative and aloof with her students. She would always start the class by having her students stand up as a mark of respect, thereby asserting her authority and a more formal approach. On the contrary, M. Lambert’s class was more informal, and he was more approachable. He did not require them to stand up at the beginning of the class, instead he would often start the class by making small talk with students. He often interrupted students who spoke together and he tolerated a much higher noise level than Mme. Richard. Although they had created different atmosphere in their classrooms, their teaching methods were nonetheless very similar and routinized, and this was simply because they shared a common goal—to prepare their students for the *baccalauréat*.

We have already established how teachers introduced the *baccalauréat* as the main focus of the course. This quote from M. Lambert further illustrates this reality and its rationale: “Oui dès le premier jour c’est « bonjour lecture analytique numéro 1.” C’est presque ça, on commence en première ES je fais 20 textes” (Yes, from the first day, it’s “good morning, close reading number 1” It’s almost this way, in première ES I do 20 texts) (Interview 2, May 12, 2016). M. Lambert acknowledges that in this class, given that they have 20 texts to study during the year, from the very beginning, shortly after greeting the students, they have to start preparing for the test, which, in practical terms, means doing close reading of every text in their list—20 in M. Lambert’s class and 19 in Mme. Richard¹⁷.

This narrow focus on the *baccalauréat* list shaped the teaching practices, leading to structured and routinized lessons which had two consequences: First the students were not able to share their perspectives and draw from their funds of knowledge because only the teachers were seen as possessing legitimate knowledge. Second, it gave the teacher a sense of power and authority over the students and as a result the students in my study had little opportunity to express their needs.

What struck me while observing the lessons in both classes was how teacher-centered the approach was. As M. Lambert implied, the teachers were in a rush to finish the program; that is to say, to study all the texts on the list, and this meant that there was no time for students to participate in a meaningful way other than answering pointed questions from the teacher. When I asked Soukaina why I never saw her speak in class, she replied, “ben vu que c’est que souvent le prof qui parle vu que c’est lui qui fait le cours, les commentaires.” (well given that it’s often the

¹⁷ Providing the lists from these teachers would constitute a breach of confidentiality, as they could then be identified. There are some general guidelines and expectations teachers have to comply with but they each write their own list.

teacher who speaks, given that it's him who does the lesson, the analysis) (Interview 3, April 27, 2016). Soukaina was doing well in her French class: she was getting good grades, but it did not mean she was active in class, and she explains this passivity by the fact the teacher was the one "doing the lesson." In the excerpt below, Asmae's description of her typical French lesson corroborates Soukaina's comments:

Asmae : Ben de nous aider pour l'oral du bac, (...) la lecture analytique...

Sandrine : Et la lecture analytique ? comment ça se passe ?

Asmae : Ben il fait l'analyse.

Sandrine : Et vous qu'est-ce que vous faites ?

Asmae : Et ben après, on recopie.

(Asmae: Well to help us for the oral bac, (...) the close reading...

Sandrine: And the close reading? How does it go?

Asmae: Well he does the analysis.

Sandrine: And you what do you do?

Asmae: Well after we copy it down.) (Interview 3, April 28, 2016)

First, Asmae identified the role of the teacher as helping them get ready for the oral exam by doing close readings. When I asked her how these were done, she said "he" does the analysis, and then "we," the students write "his" analysis down. Similarly, Farid said, "il explique et nous on écrit" (he explains and we, we write). These quotes capture what I had observed. In terms of activities the lessons would follow this pattern: At the beginning of each lesson, the teacher would hand out a new text, then ask the students to read silently, then a student would be asked to read aloud. After this, the teacher would ask pointed question to complete the close reading.

Often the teacher had written the headings of the analysis parts on the board and the questions asked were designed to fill in the board. On other occasions, the students would have been asked to read at home, and the teacher would simply ask questions to complete the close reading.

In terms of teaching practices, the teachers were at the center at all times. In all the classes I observed the teachers always initiated cycles of interaction by asking a question to the class, the students then answered individually by raising their hands, and the teachers closed the cycle by evaluating the students' response. I noticed very little student-to-student interaction during class and almost no group work.

One issue with this extreme teacher-centered approach is that there was no opportunity for students to contribute in a meaningful way and to make connections between their own experiences (including their languages, cultures, practices and identities) and the new knowledge they were learning. Using the terminology of multiliteracies approach (Kalantzis et al., 2016; Kern, 2000, 2015; New London Group, 1996), the teachers do not activate the students' *available design* nor do they allow them to experience the "known" which requires to engage "learners in reflection upon their own life experiences" (Kalantzis et. al, 2016, p. 77). Instead, students were to accept the teachers' analysis because the teachers were in a position of power.

I will describe two key moments to illustrate the power dynamic in the classroom and how problematic this was for the students, whose rich cultural backgrounds were not valued and at times were even rejected. These episodes took place on April 25, 2016, the day M. Lambert started analyzing *La Peste (The Plague)* by Camus. This novel takes place in Algeria, more specifically in Oran. The first key moment concerns Salima, who had been to Oran several times, as her family was from there. I looked at her when M. Lambert started talking about Oran, she was listening but remained silent. I asked her after class if she wished she could have intervened:

Salima : Ben, oui... ce serait intéressant. J'y suis allée...

Sandrine : Mais ça s'est pas passé.

Salima : Ben non, il n'a pas demandé.

Sandrine : Pourquoi à ton avis ?

Salima : Ben on est passé direct sur le sujet, sur le livre, on n'a pas....

(Salima: Well, yes... it would be interesting. I have been there...

Sandrine: But it did not happen.

Salima: Well no, he did not ask me.

Sandrine: Why do you think?

Salima: Well we moved on directly to the topic, the book, we did not...) (Interview 3, May 2, 2016)

For Salima, I thought it was a pity that the teacher did not ask her to talk about Oran and allow her to contribute from her personal experience of the place. She was probably the only one in the class who knew this town. Salima felt it did not happen because they had to move on, they simply did not have the time. After this, we both agreed that it had been an instance of her culture not being valued at school. I also see it as a missed opportunity, where Salima could have felt empowered by sharing her own knowledge while affirming her multiple identities, which Cummins (2000) defined as *collaborative creation of power* and which results from “classroom interactions that enable students to relate curriculum content to their individual and collective experience” (p. 246). Cummins concluded that this “process of identity negotiation is fundamental to educational success for all students” (p. 254). I argue that their French class did not allow the students to draw from their experiences or to share them.

Another episode will further illustrate this claim. I am now referring to what happened later during the same lesson on *The Plague*. M. Lambert asked the class how they thought the

novel had been received. Nora answered “badly.” M. Lambert asked her why and she explained, “ben parce qu’il critique Oran, dire qu’il y a la peste. C’est la honte pour Oran” (well, because he criticizes Oran, saying it’s got the plague. It’s a shame for Oran). Following a discussion between Asmae, Nora and M. Lambert, Asmae and Nora both said that Camus had criticized Oran and that the people there must have been hurt by that. M. Lambert argued that was not the case because the book was extremely well received by literary critics and, in addition, Camus was born in Oran and he liked his home town. M. Lambert was getting annoyed by their comments and as a way of getting out of the discussion he asked what the plague stood for. When nobody answered, he said “l’occupation nazi en France. C’est pas une attaque contre Oran, ça serait une interprétation très primaire.” (Nazi occupation in France. It is not an attack against Oran, that would be a very simplistic interpretation). His tone of voice had become sarcastic, and he concluded by saying, “Camus a reçu le prix Nobel, ça veut dire qu’il a écrit des bonnes choses, oui Nora? (Camus received the Nobel prize, which means he wrote good things, yes Nora?). His comment put an end to Nora’s participation.

After this exchange, M. Lambert continued reciting Camus’s biography, and the students, including Nora and Asmae, copied down what he dictated. By saying Camus had received the Nobel price, M. Lambert established the quality of Camus’s writing, implying that his intentions and how his novel was received were not up for discussion. Indeed, since a higher institution had put its stamp on Camus’ writing, Nora’s opinion was obviously proven wrong and not valued. How could Nora compete with the Nobel prize committee? In this episode, M. Lambert is asserting his power as a figure of authority in the classroom, whose sole opinion matters, but he is doing so by hiding behind or invoking a higher institution to counter Nora’s interpretation. M.

Lambert's action silenced Nora in the context of the classroom, but I also perceived it as a deeper rejection of her identity with potential longer effects.

I could see Nora was upset after this episode and I wanted to hear her perspective. The next time we were together I asked her how she felt. She still stood by her opinion that Camus's novel was critical of Oran because, "si vous on vous dit que vous avez la peste, donc déjà vous serez rejetés par des personnes, la ville elle sera rejetée" (if you say that you have the plague, so well you will be rejected by some people, the town will be rejected). We then talked about the fact that M. Lambert had disagreed with her. She felt he was "shocked" by her interpretation but she agreed that in the end she had to give up because it was only her interpretation, which was not as worthy as his because "il sait qui c'est Albert Camus, moi je sais pas qui c'est Albert Camus" (he knows who Albert Camus is, me I don't know who Albert Camus is). Nora accepted that M. Lambert has more knowledge and therefore his opinion was more valid.

I was sorry she should give up her opinion that she still felt so strongly. I then enquired why she thought Camus was insulting Oran and wondered if maybe she had voiced the way it would be perceived in her culture. This provoked an immediate reaction as Nora got very excited and said yes, "parce que chez nous, enfin je sais que dans ma famille, si on dit que (...) Tanger est moche, et ben c'est comme si on critiquait le Maroc en fait" (because at home, well I know that in my family, if we say that Tangier is ugly, well then it's as if we criticized Morocco in fact) (Interview 3, April 28, 2016), she then concluded that it is not something that would be done in her culture. By letting Nora explain her interpretation, we realized that she had reacted in a way that was appropriate and common in her family's culture.

By reconstructing her reaction, I was able to reflect on it and understand its origins. M. Lambert had not given her the time to go deep enough in her reasoning to explain her perspective

and its rationale. Their disagreement came from a cultural misunderstanding, which was never made visible nor resolved. The power dynamic did not allow for such critical discussion about how people make sense of the world or, in this case, of a text, depending on their background, their knowledge and habitus. In other words, as the New Literacy studies have highlighted, who we are shapes how we see the world and, as a result, interpretations vary because people “read (...) in specific ways (...) determined by the values and practices of different social and cultural groups” (Gee, 2015, p. 36). Letting Nora reflect on her thinking process would have been a more empowering experience for Nora and the entire class. Instead, she was told her interpretation was wrong and “simplistic” when actually from a postcolonial lens, critics (Said 1993) have problematized Camus’s writing as perpetuating the racist and colonial project of imperial France. I see the rejection of Nora’s interpretation as a missed opportunity to engage in different cultural perspectives and to reach a deeper meaning making of a text within its social and cultural contexts. Nora’s point of view was invalidated because it diverged from M. Lambert’s already written script, his own interpretation shaped by the voice of the institution and his own habitus. In both instances, M. Lambert positioned himself as the one withholding knowledge and by doing so he reasserted his position of power, illustrating how power and knowledge are inextricably related. In other words, knowledge is an exercise of power and power a function of knowledge (Foucault, 1984). Besides reinforcing the power dynamic in the classroom, the *baccalauréat* created a distance, a disconnect between the teachers and the students. As I have discussed, one significant issue is that such a narrow focus on the exam leads to an exclusive environment where the teachers withhold power and knowledge and where students’ perspectives were not taken into consideration. A second issue in connection to this focus is the disconnect between students’ needs and what the teachers do in class.

The *baccalauréat* constrains teacher-student relations and teaching practices. The disconnect between the teachers' agenda and the students' needs could sometimes be extreme, almost absurd, as illustrated in the notes below I took during Mme. Richard's class:

“the teacher announced they were going to read several short texts. She read the first text and asked students to understand what it was about. She provided the title and the century (15th) and expressed her doubts “je ne sais pas si ça vous dis quelque chose” (I don't know if that it rings a bell for you). The teacher read aloud the text once while students listened without any written support, no matrix, no text. She then said “on prend une feuille et on fait un résumé de ce texte-là” (we take a sheet of paper and we write up a summary of this text). A student said that he had not understood anything. The teacher answered that it was part of the unit on theatre and wrote on the board the title of the lesson “le théâtre, lieu de satire sociale et politique” (theater as social and political satire). She then wrote on the board a summary of the text she had just read out. Students copied down the summary. A student asked: “on fait quoi là?” (what are we doing right now?) The teacher answered: “on fait une synthèse de texte sur le document que j'ai lu.” (we are doing the synthesis of the text I just read you.) For the second text, she asked two students (Khaled and a Franco/French student) to do the reading. Just like for the first one, the other students had no support, they could only listen. Once they were done she said: “je vais peut-être relire car je ne suis pas sûre que vous ayez tout saisi, pour voir où est la critique” (I may read again because I am not sure that you grasped everything, to see where is the critic). She read once and wrote down the summary on the board. A student then asked: is this a poem? She said no it's theatre” (Observation, May 24, 2016)

First the description of this lesson further illustrates the teacher-centered approach described above. It also shows that many students clearly have no idea what is going on. Before she starts reading the first text, the only pieces of information she gave them are the title and the century. She then said that this might not resonate with them. She muttered this last comment to herself, almost like an aside in theatre terminology. Indeed, Mme. Richard was not really talking to the class and she did not give them time to answer. Actually, the entire text could be read as a monologue, with brief interjections from the students who ask for clarification, such as “what are we doing now.” It all went fast, it was confusing, and the teacher was the only active person.

Even after she had asked two students to read, she felt the class probably did not understand, so she read again, as though she was the only one who could provide comprehensible input. She had also initially told them that they will be summarizing the text she read. However, she never gave them time to do so and simply provided her own summary which they wrote down. I remember during this particular lesson, I could not help but think about *The Lesson*, an absurd play written by Eugene Ionesco in 1951, which is a satire on totalitarianism in education, and in which the teacher symbolizes the tendencies of bourgeois habitus as it subdues students' critical thinking through reductive lectures. During the play, the disconnect between the teacher and the student grows, as if they did not share a common culture, language and their dialogues are therefore increasingly absurd, and take the form of monologues on the teacher's part. Although, the excerpt from Mme. Richard's lesson might be the most extreme form of lecturing I observed, it was not uncommon for students to be lost and for the teacher to continue regardless.

As a consequence of this disconnect the student participants' needs were not met in their French class. Khaled, Asmae, Abdel, Azouz, Jasmine and Salima all said they had difficulties understanding the texts they read in class. Abdel explained that in order to understand a text "il faut vraiment que je lis plusieurs fois mais des fois c'est, j'arrive pas quand même à le maîtriser" (to really understand a text I need to read it several times but sometimes it's, I still can't master it), and Asmea pointed out that understanding the text was "c'est la base, après si on comprend pas on est foutu, hein !" (it's the basics, after if we don't understand we are screwed, eh!). Abdel's need to read several times was not possible in class, especially not in the type of lesson I described above, where students were expected to understand after only one reading. Typical of the time spent on comprehension, M. Lambert said after the students had read a text in class,

“c’est bon y a pas de problème de vocabulaire dans ce texte.” (It’s okay, there are no vocabulary issues in the text.” Many students laughed, and one said; “si, si!” (yes, yes!). The teacher replied, “non c’est facile” (no it’s easy) (Observation, September 21, 2015).

Asmae often look distressed during class and often asked for clarifications, which did not always come. In one example, she asked a question to check she understood, and M. Lambert said, “Non pas du tout, c’est tout le contraire” (No not at all, on the contrary) (Observation May 2, 2016). Instead of explaining why, he simply moved on, leaving Asmae looking discouraged as she put her head down on the desk. Because she mentioned several times struggling to understand the texts in her French class, I asked her if she felt she was getting enough support. She said she was not, and she was “toute seule” (all alone) in opposition to “tout le monde” (everybody). She referred several times being “toute seule”; for example, she said once, “je me mets toute seule parce que moi j’y arrive pas avec les autres” (I work all alone, because me, I can’t do it with the others). She felt she was the only one who was struggling and she blamed the lack of support from the school. She lamented that she had not been qualified as a French learner based on the fact she had studied French during her four years in Morocco, especially since according to her the French she learnt then was not “approfondi” (in-depth). Indeed, she said that when she first arrived she had to “me suis débrouillée toute seule” (manage all by myself) and later on, five years after she had been in France, that teachers still “font pas l’effort, ils me traitent comme les autres” (don’t make the effort, they treat me like the others).

Asmae pointed at another issue with this frantic pace of lessons, her need for more time spent making sense of the texts were never met. Instead, everybody was expected to follow the same rhythm. Because Asmae and Abdel had spent the least amount of time in France, they were

the most affected by this, but other participants complained that their French class simply did not take into account their specific needs.

For instance, the students agreed that they spent most of their time writing but the only times they wrote was to copy down the analysis the teacher made and not produce personal writing, the way they were expected for the exam. Not surprisingly then, Jasmine felt she was not well prepared for the *baccalauréat* because “je sais jamais quoi écrire” (I never know what to write), (Interview 3, May 18, 2016). So writing was often identified as a need from the students in my study, one that was not met. This was especially challenging for students like Salima who was more used to writing in Arabic. Salima lamented that she only got to practice her writing at home because as she said, “des fois j’aurai besoin d’aide parce que je ne trouve pas des expressions, ce que j’ai envie de dire ça sort pas” (sometimes I would need help because I cannot find expressions, what I want to say does not come out). For this reason, when I asked if she wished she could apply new knowledge in class she said, “Oui, parce que la plupart du temps c’est ce qui ressort dans les commentaires, j’arrive mal à formuler” (Yes, because most of the time that’s what comes out of analysis, I have a hard time to express) (Interview 4, May 6, 2016). In other words, Salima felt she would benefit from help in class actively applying the complex new knowledge presented in class, which she cannot when left alone at home.

The teachers admitted their classes were not designed to help students learn French as illustrated in M. Lambert’s quote:

Pour le coup oui, c’est du bachotage, là oui vraiment on leur apprend pas vraiment à maîtriser la langue, on leur apprend à maîtriser un exercice qui va leur permettre d’avoir une bonne note au bac, c’est dommage, mais c’est comme ça...

(In this case, yes, it is cramming for the *baccalauréat*, there yes really we don’t really learn to master a language, we teach them to master an exercise, which will allow them to have a good grade for the bac, it’s a pity, but it’s like this...) (Interview 2, May 12, 2016)

M. Lambert agrees that in his class students do not learn French because they only learn how to take the bac. Faced with this reality, M. Lambert shows a defeatist attitude, as illustrated in the story he recounted about a student who had just arrived in France and who was still learning to write in French. When this student asked M. Lambert what he could do to make progress, he told him “ben... euh... (laughs) pff... Ben tu passes le bac, donc les acquis c’est fait quoi ! (laughs)” (well, hmm... (laughs), pff... Well you are taking the bac, so the knowledge it’s too late, that’s it! (laughs)). This determinist view, this sensation of feeling “stuck” was repeated several times by the teachers.

During my interviews with the teachers, I gave them an opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices because I wanted to know how they felt about their teaching conditions. In the excerpt below, M. Lambert shared what the teaching practice would be in an ideal world:

Dans un monde idéal (laughs), euh... juste pour voir les faire travailler plus longtemps sur les textes, mais plus par eux-mêmes, je trouve c’est trop moi qui leur donne les choses, voilà je leur dis telle ligne, (...), j’aurai préféré que ça vienne d’eux. On peut le faire que de rares fois, mais si on fait vraiment la lecture analytique ensemble, à 37, j’en ai pour 8 heures à faire une lecture analytique. C’est trop.

(In an ideal world (laughs), hmm... just to see them work longer on the texts, but more by themselves, I think I give them too much, so I tell them this line, (...) I would have preferred that it came from them. We can do it only on rare occasions, but if we do the close reading really together, with 37 students, it will take me 8 hours to do one close reading. It’s too much). (Interview 2 M. Lambert, May 12, 2015)

M. Lambert was aware of the shortcoming of his teaching methods and wished he could involve his students more in the learning process, but he pointed out two limitations, which are the number of students in the class (37), and the time it would take to do one reading (eight hours). As he mentioned earlier, there are 20 texts on the list, and therefore he feels they cannot spend eight hours on one text.

M. Lambert and Mme. Richard are both deterministic about their situation, they both wish they could teach differently, but they see no other way. The exam strips their decision-making power from them and leaves them feeling they have no agency in their classroom.

It is interesting to notice that till now I have portrayed the teachers as having power over their students, but teachers also feel pressure from other sources of power, including the statistics about their school's performance in the *baccalauréat*, the list of texts for the exam, the exam standards they have to prepare their students for, the inspectors who come to their classes to make sure they comply with the list, the standards... This shows that, as Foucault pointed out, power is not a "binary and all-encompassing opposition," but instead it is polymorphous, plural and ubiquitous because power can come from the "manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in (...) limited groups and institutions" (1990, p. 94). Indeed, power is not embodied solely in institutions, it operates primarily at multiple micro-levels and is realized in everyday interactions, as illustrated in my data above between teachers and students, teachers and the institution but also teachers and inspectors.

The *baccalauréat* dictates the syllabus.

Having the exam as a goal constantly in mind, in this class, the teachers and the students fell into a strict routine, devoted to close readings of texts from the list students presented to their examiner the day of their oral exam. The lists were exclusively made of what Mme. Richard referred to as "*classiques franco-français*" (Franco-French classics) such as Rabelais, Montagne, Zola, Voltaire, and so on. In list, the only "foreign" texts were Shakespeare's "Hamlet," and also Levi's "Si c'est un homme."

Mme. Richard felt this was a mistake, because many texts on the list were not relevant to the lives of her students, and that they could not relate to them. For Mme. Richard this was a real

issue and when I asked her what she would like to change about her teaching if she could, she immediately said:

Je changerais les textes que nous étudions. Celui dont on a parlé aujourd'hui par exemple. Ce n'est approprié pour eux. Il y a beaucoup de problème avec le programme. Nous devons les préparer pour le bac, on peut choisir d'autres textes, mais pour le bac, ceux sont surtout des textes franco-français, tous les grands classiques. Ce serait bien d'avoir un meilleur équilibre, avec des textes traduits de langues étrangères, allemand ou anglais par exemple, de façon à s'ouvrir au monde.

(I would change the texts we study. The one we talked about today for example. It is not appropriate for them. There are many issues with the program. We have to prepare them for the bac, there are mainly Franco-French, all the big classics. It would be good to have a better balance, with texts which are translated from foreign languages, German or English for example, as a way of opening up to the world). (Interview 0, January 15, 2015)

In this excerpt, Mme. Richard expresses her wish to change the texts they study because they do not match her students' interests. Because we had been talking about her Franco-Maghrebi students and because I knew she often felt she did not successfully reach out to them, I expected her to mention texts from the "*Beur*"¹⁸ literature as an alternative. I shared with her that I was surprised that the list for the bac did not include any of the *Beur* authors, when many textbooks for French as a Foreign Language across the world include them. She responded that she had never thought about this, but that it would make sense because identity was a crucial aspect for the Franco-Maghrebi students. Instead, she had suggested that other texts translated from foreign languages such as German or English were added, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of these languages and cultures over those of the Maghreb. I want to add though that she made this comment during my pilot study and that at the end of my research, as I will explain

¹⁸ As explained in chapter 2, *Beur* literature refers to a literary movement created in the 80s by second-generation immigrants from the Maghreb, and deals with questions of identity and the tensions between immigrant Maghrebi communities and Franco-French society. It has since developed into a very rich and vibrant literary body of work.

in my last analysis chapter, she had formed a different opinion and was trying to add *Beur* texts to her list.

Students had also labelled the content of their syllabus as being exclusively Franco-French. Abdel said “Je crois que c’est des piliers de la langue française, parce qu’ils ont beaucoup apporté à la langue française” (I think that there are the pillars of the French language, because they have brought a lot to the French language) (Interview 2, September 28, 2015).

Similarly, Soukaina started listing the authors: “Aragon, Baudelaire, Hugo...” and concluded

“il me semble que c’est tout le temps des classiques français, hein?” (I feel there are always French classic, no?) (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). I then asked them if they would like to study Franco-Maghrebi texts, they all answered with enthusiasm that yes they would, Abdel said “ben oui, ça serait bien!” (Well yes, it would be good!) and Asmae expresses her wishes to be able to show the cultural knowledge she had that other students did not have. “on aurait montré nos capacités, genre on en a plus que les autres et tout...” (We would have shown our abilities, like we have more than others and all...) (Focus Group Asmae, Nora, Abdel, Soukaina May 11, 2016). I read in Asmae’s comment a wish to reverse the deficit view that she had been portrayed in and position herself as legitimate in her own culture.

Mme. Richard had actually thought about the benefits of talking about students’ diverse background and claimed:

Quand on parle de leurs origines, leur pays, ils jubilent, quelque chose s’illumine. Ils voudraient en parler plus. C’est une attente. Ils sont très conscients de la différence qu’ils revendiquent.

(When we talk about their origins, their country they jubilate, something lights up. They would like to talk more about it. It’s an expectation. They are very much aware of a difference that they claim). (Interview 0, January 15, 2015).

Mme. Richard must be referring to a positive experience she had when “talking about their origins” to use such strong words as “jubilate” and “lighten up.” She sees their wish as an “expectation,” as something they claim because they feel different, but as we saw, this expectation is not fulfilled. Instead, I argue that the material used in class seemed to both reinforce the supremacy of French language and culture, but also to keep the students with Franco-Maghrebi origins culturally excluded.

The *baccalauréat*, a summary. To conclude on this section about the *baccalauréat*, I have demonstrated how the national standard exam is a source of fear both for the students and the teachers and how it justifies a teacher-centered approach, where the students’ perspectives are not valued. I have also shown how the *baccalauréat* controls the relations between teachers and students, justifies a Franco-French syllabus and how the literature class was a reductive and exclusive environment, where students’ specific needs were not met and where teachers felt they had no agency. What’s more, my data illustrate how the power of the institution is realized through what teachers do, or do not do in class, but also how it operates at multiple microlevels. In the introduction of this section, I wrote the *baccalauréat* was an institution and it is worth putting all these comments, interactions and my observations in the context of this standard exam. I recently observed other classes in France and having been a student myself in the French education system, I was of course the recipient of many lessons in French literature. I believe no other classes are as powerfully ritualized and governed as in a French literature class designed to prepare for the French literature *baccalauréat*. I decided I wanted to do my study at this level because I expected the year students’ French is evaluated will lead to rich data in terms of negotiation of identities, but I did not expect the effect the *baccalauréat* had on their schooling experiences. In the next section, I explore the second theme that emerged from my data—*Culture*

générale— another institutional and ideological structure that impacts the participants experiences of schooling.

Culture Générale

During my fieldwork, the concept of *culture générale*, quickly became a recurrent theme, so much so that it resulted being the most frequently used code (193 segments) during the coding process. Even though I was born and raised in France, I had not anticipated this would be such a central theme. My explanation for this is that *culture générale* is so deeply and uniquely ingrained in French society that it is easy to overlook its subtle but omnipresent role. For this reason, it was a difficult concept to deconstruct, but one that deserves a close focus in order to understand its meaning, its function and the impact it had on the students' schooling experience.

La culture générale, roughly translates as the idea of possessing common cultural knowledge and practices that are necessary to be recognized as a worthy person in French society. However, it does not have a direct equivalent in American or British culture, and, as such, does not translate readily into English. It was first employed in the French education system in the late 19th century by Jules Ferry, whose definition then was: “tout ce qu’il n’est pas permis d’ignorer” (all that cannot be ignored) (1882, as cited in Tavaillot, 2008). In his article “La transmission des savoirs. La culture générale introuvable” (“The Transmission of Knowledge. Nowhere to be Found *Culture générale*”), Tavaillot (2008), a French philosopher, wrote that this definition had not yet changed, and to this day this intangible knowledge is still seen as a necessity for successful participation in French society. Tavaillot points out the tension *culture générale* creates by being both a “necessity and inaccessible” and according to him, the reason for this tension is that *culture générale* is used as a tool for social reproduction:

La culture générale est l’illustration exemplaire de la stratégie des élites pour se reproduire à l’identique. L’implicite de la formule « ce qu’il n’est pas permis d’ignorer »

l'indique, pour une fois, en toute clarté. Elle révèle que le système éducatif est rempli de codes secrets, jamais explicités, qui profitent aux seuls héritiers, à ceux qui « sont tombés dedans quand ils étaient petits ».

The *culture générale* is the perfect illustration of the elites' strategy to reproduce itself. The implicit formula “all that cannot be ignored” indicates this for once. It reveals the education system is filled with secret codes, never made explicit, which only benefits the heirs, to those who “fell into it when they were little.” (Tavaillot, 2008, p. 85).

As I will demonstrate in this section, this quote summarizes how *culture générale* impacted Franco-Maghrebi students in my study. Tavaillot's comment also echoes Bourdieu's analysis of *culture générale*. Bourdieu wrote extensively about the French education system, which he perceived as a tool for social reproduction (1964, 1984) and within this “field,” Bourdieu identified the central role of *culture générale*, or as he called it “legitimate culture” (1979). Because of the depth of Bourdieu's insight of this concept, unique to France, I will use his metaphor of social games to deconstruct this concept, as described in my theoretical framework.

To summarize, in his framework, the French education system is a field—a microcosm with its own tacit rules. The goal of the game in this specific field is to acquire more cultural capital. Indeed, cultural capital is the form of capital most relevant to understand *culture générale*. It includes cultural resources, like language, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, taste, diplomas and behaviors. As explained in chapter 3, cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1979). First, embodied cultural capital refers to “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17) or habitus.

Second, objectified cultural capital refers to cultural assets, such as paintings, instruments, and books. Third, institutionalized capital refers to school qualifications like degrees and diplomas. For example, a good grade in the French literature *baccalauréat* will guarantee a certain recognition in French society.

Bourdieu first theorized cultural capital to explain the achievement gap in schools in relations to social classes. Cultural capital is more likely to function as “symbolic capital,” which is legitimized by the education system and (mis)recognized by the minoritized population, in this case Franco-Maghrebi students. It is what you know, what you have accumulated throughout your life, or what has been transmitted to you by your family; and it is what defines your position in the field of education. In this sense, *culture générale* can be a form cultural capital. In this section, I will answer the following questions: (a) Why is *culture générale* important ?; (b) What is *la culture générale* ?; (c) Where is *culture générale* acquired?; (d) What counts as *culture générale* ?; and (e) How does *culture générale* impact Franco-Maghrebi students?

Why is *culture générale* important? First, all the participants agreed that “culture générale” was important and necessary and thereby misrecognized its symbolic value. For example, during our first interview, on September 20, Azouz talked about the *baccalauréat* and how hard it was because “Il faut avoir la culture générale” (one has to have *culture générale*). Similarly, Nora explained that to be able to successfully write an essay, “il faut avoir beaucoup de culture générale, et si le sujet ben je le connais pas et je l’ai jamais vu, ben j’aurai pas de culture générale, et donc je vais rater” (one has to have a lot of *culture générale*, and if the subject well I don’t know it and I have never seen it, well I won’t have any *culture générale*, and so I will fail) (Focus group, May 11, 2016). As for Farid, he thought for the oral test, “il faut être cultivé” (one has to be educated).

What’s more, in the classroom I often heard teachers talk about the importance of having *culture générale*. For example, Mme. Richard told her students, “Pour montrer que vous avez de la culture, il faut mémoriser et piocher dans les tableaux récapitulatifs” (To show you have some culture, you need to memorize, and pick out what you have learnt on the summary tables)

(Observation, May 10, 2016). M. Lambert, likewise, reminded his students in class, “Oui à l’oral il faut la tartiner votre culture” (yes for the oral (test) you need to spread out your culture)

(Observation, May 12, 2016). Both M. Lambert and Mme. Richard conveyed the necessity of “showing off” or “spreading” their *culture générale* to perform well in the *baccalauréat*.

The students’ obsession with *culture générale* and their teachers’ advice are grounded both in the expectations for the *baccalauréat* as described by the government and in personal experiences.

The government’s assessment of culture générale. The following excerpts are extracts of the objectives of the oral and written French *baccalauréat* retrieved from the official Ministry of Education website,

L’examen oral (...) doit lui permettre de manifester ses compétences de lecture, d’exprimer une sensibilité et une culture personnelle

(The oral exam (...) must allow them (the candidates) to demonstrate their reading skills, to express a sensitivity and a personal culture)

L’épreuve écrite évalue (...) l’aptitude à mobiliser une culture littéraire fondée sur les travaux conduits en cours de français, sur des lectures et une expérience personnelle

(The written exam assesses (...) the ability to mobilize a literary culture based on the work conducted in the French course, on personal readings and experience) (Éduscol. (2016)

I argue that these objectives are arbitrary, because what is evaluated is subjective: how can we fairly measure knowledge, sensitivity, personal culture, readings and experiences? On investigation I could not find any rubrics with detailed descriptors for these criteria. Both objectives are meant to assess “a personal culture” and “a personal experience.” I want to point out to the paradox in using the terms “culture” and “experience” in the singular form, especially because both terms are defined by the adjective “personal.” These objectives highlight a narrow and “institutionalized” (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986) understanding of the terms culture and

experience, which albeit personal, is only conceived as being singular and as I will demonstrate in this section, these boundaries around culture and experience underpin the concept of *culture générale*.

The second issue with these objectives is that the *baccalauréat* not only tests knowledge, but also cultural practices, as clearly stated below in the objectives for the oral exam. The oral exam is divided in two parts. During the first part, the candidates present a text the examiner has chosen from the list. In the second part, the examiner and the candidate have a dialogue which, according to M. Lambert and Mme. Richard, often takes the form of an interview led by the examiner. One of the five evaluation objectives for the second part is: “à tirer parti des lectures et activités personnelles du candidat.” (to draw from the candidate’s personal readings and activities). I understand “reading” and “activities” as sociocultural practices. Based on this, I argue that assessing cultural practices is biased, because the candidates’ funds of knowledge and practices have been shaped by their environment and life experiences and these vary from one candidate to the other. In the passage below, M. Lambert shared his frustration as he acknowledged that assessing a candidate’s “personal culture” was problematic.

Ça dépend énormément du correcteur, et c’est pour ça que l’oral c’est une épreuve que j’aime pas trop, puisque avec certains correcteurs les élèves vont avoir, 17, 18, parce qu’ils vont partager la même culture, du coup ça va être plus facile de répondre aux questions... ils vont comprendre où l’examineur veut aller et puis à l’effet inverse c’est-à-dire qu’ils n’auront pas tout à fait la même culture, les mêmes références, du coup l’examineur va peut-être compter faux, alors que c’est parfaitement juste, mais vu qu’il ne partage pas la même culture... et ça m’énerve ! (laughs)

(It depends a lot on the examiner, and that’s why I don’t like the oral exam very much, because with certain examiners, the students are getting 17, 18, because they will share the same culture, and so it will be easier to answer the questions... they will understand what the examiner means and yet on the contrary, that is to say they will not have exactly the same culture, the same references, and so the examiner will maybe mark as wrong, when it’s perfectly right, but since they don’t share the same culture... and that makes me angry! (laughs). (Interview 2, May 12, 2016)

M. Lambert believed the assessment of the oral exam was biased, because it depends whether or not the candidate and the examiner shared the same culture. As he remarked, a comment can be counted as wrong, when it can simply be the result of a lack of common understanding between the two parties.

Although there are no official statistics on ethnic background to back this claim, it is fair to say a majority of French literature teachers in France are Franco-French, which means Franco-Maghrebi students could be at a disadvantage. M. Lambert was indirectly referring to this when he expressed his worries about Asmae, who could either fail if the examiner did not recognize her culture or, paradoxically, succeed if the examiner was “open to diversity.” The problem according to him is that there is no way of knowing, no consensus over what culture would be valued during the exam. M. Lambert’s concern for this lack of transparency, seems legitimate, especially given that, still from the same official webpage cited above, one of the principles the examiner should foster is “de valoriser la culture personnelle manifestée à bon escient par le candidat” (to value the personal culture demonstrated appropriately by the candidate). Although the examiner has to value the candidate’s personal culture, implying any culture, the adverb “appropriately” draws a line around which culture is proper to demonstrate. It also means that the candidate is the one who needs to know which culture is appropriate to demonstrate or not, even though the examiner will be the one judging which one is valued, and here again there is no way of knowing in advance, and no consensus.

Franco-Maghrebi students’ culture générale assessed. I will now show how the obsession with culture générale was grounded in personal experiences. Even though, in the excerpt above, M. Lambert was critical of the arbitrary nature of culture générale, as an agent of the French education system he reinforced its importance and perpetrated its narrow focus.

Indeed, on one occasion we were talking about the baccalauréat, which was only a few weeks away. M. Lambert said he was worried about a Franco-Maghrebi student who had “aucune culture générale” (no culture générale) (Observation May 30, 2016). I knew he was talking about Abdel, because he had just finished grading the mock baccalauréat exam and Abdel had shown me his paper. Below are two pictures of Abdel’s exam graded by M. Lambert.

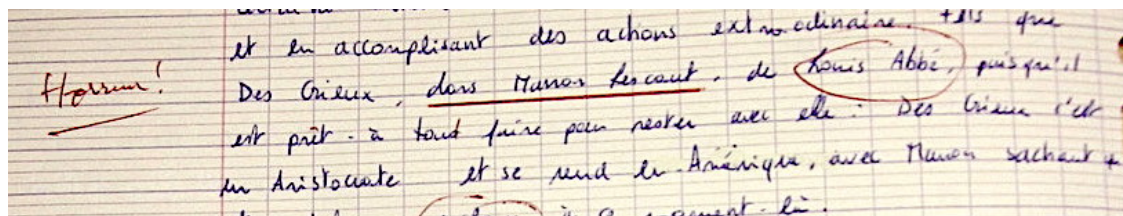


Figure 3. « Horreur! » M. Lambert’s comments on Abdel’s mock baccalauréat.

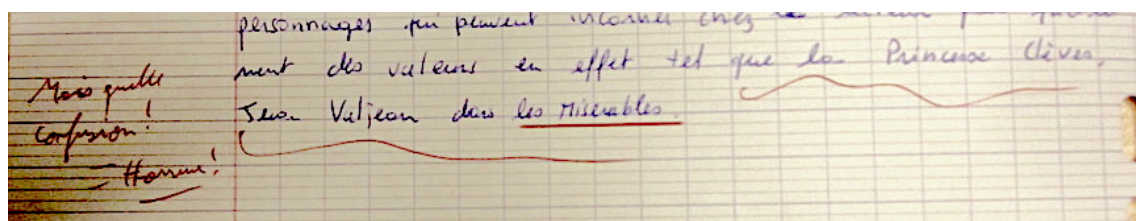


Figure 4. « Mais quelle confusion! = Horreur! » Further comments on Abdel’s mock baccalauréat

In Figure 3, Abdel had written that the author of *Manon Lescaut* was Louis Abbé, when in fact it was written by l’Abbé Prévost. Abdel explained that he had simply mixed up the two names, which, indeed, are quite similar. In the margin, with a red pen, M. Lambert wrote, “Horror!.” A paragraph below this extract, Abdel made another reference error as shown in Figure 4. This time, Abdel was writing about characters from the French novel *Les Misérables* and he referred to *la Princesse de Clèves* and Jean Valjean. While Jean Valjean is an actual character in the novel, *la Princesse de Clèves* is a novel written by Mme. de La Fayette. M. Lambert seemed even more shocked by this error and wrote in red in the margin “But what confusion! = Horror!.” On top of

the front page, next to Abdel's grade (2/20), M. Lambert wrote "Méthode non acquise, d'énormes erreurs dans les références et plan peu pertinent" (non-acquired method, enormous errors with references and not very relevant outline).

Abdel showed me his copy at the end of a focus group, once Farid and Soukaina had left the room, a choice which implied he wanted this to be just between the two of us. I could see that Abdel felt ashamed and upset by his grade and by the teacher's comments. What upset him most was that he actually knew the names, "oui je le savais et je sais pas c'est quand j'écris j'ai écrit vite" (Yes, I knew it and I don't know it's when write, I wrote quickly in fact) (May 24, 2016). Abdel explained he knew who the characters and the authors were, but he just mixed up the names because first they study so many texts and second during the exam, he felt pressed by time, started panicking and as a result made these two errors. But for M. Lambert, these two errors were inconceivable, and he interpreted these two errors as major, which probably weighed heavily in Abdel's low grade and were part of the reasons M. Lambert claimed Abdel had "no *culture générale*."

This example shows that M. Lambert valued a certain type of knowledge, which, in this case, was accurately citing references from French classics. Abdel and I often talked about world events and I was impressed by how much he knew, and how deeply he analyzed information he had been exposed to. On many occasions, he made connections between historical events that took place in other countries and the current situation in France. I felt it was a pity that M. Lambert did not appreciate the scope of Abdel's knowledge, interest and critical thinking. In addition, as a reminder, Abdel had lived in Italy, France and travelled every year in Morocco. He could speak and read several languages and navigate across cultures. While M. Lambert, by labelling Abdel as having "no culture" failed to recognize Abdel's knowledge and culture, it

reveals the asymmetrical relationships between dominant and subordinate literacy practices. Indeed, it illustrates how the elites personified by M. Lambert in my data, control which knowledge, ideas and cultures are valued (Gee, 2011) and how institutionalized cultural capital acquires a symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1979).

During my study, I witnessed other cases of students' literacy and cultural practices being devalued, but the most striking example occurred during my interview with the principal. M. Leroy talked about the challenge of teaching students who had just arrived from their home country where they had never attended school and as a result, "ne savent ni lire ni écrire dans leur propre langue, ils n'ont aucune relation à l'écrit, voilà... c'est des enfants de CP, des enfants de CP mais qui ont 14 ans" (do not know how to read nor write in their own language, they have no contact with writing, so... there are first grade children, first grade children but who are 14) (Interview, May 17, 2016). In this quote, M. Leroy expresses the extent of the problem, from his perspective, these children pose to the school because they are 14 and they arrive in French schools with what he personally considers the level of a six-year old. This comparison between a 14-year-old student who has a first-grade level reflects M. Leroy's deficit and ethnocentric view of knowledge and literacy. According to him, if a child has not learnt to read, he has not learnt anything and therefore he needs to go back to the beginning of schooling, suggesting that none of his other cultural and literacy practices count towards what is needed and valued at school. In this quote, M. Leroy essentializes these "non-literate" students as less knowledgeable. He also draws a line around what counts as knowledge valued by school and by doing so, he establishes that "school-based literacy" (Gee, 2011) is the only legitimized literacy in his institution. I draw a contrast between M. Leroy's narrow definition of literacy and the New Literacy Studies' claim that literacies are multiple, dynamic because they are linked with particular histories, life

possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups (NCTE, 2013). The students he talked about all have rich experiences, which deserve to be acknowledged and valued, even if they differ from the school standards.

M. Lambert and M. Leroy's rejection of other forms of literacies show how "school-based literacy," has become more desirable and legitimate than other forms of literacy. My data demonstrate how the imposition of "school-based literacy" as more legitimate in the field of education has an impact on families with cultural and linguistic practices which do not align with the dominant group—in this case, Franco-French families—and this is especially true for the first-generation students like Abdel.

To conclude this section on the importance of *culture générale* in French society, the data above strongly suggest *Culture générale* was unanimously identified as crucial in the field of education, more specifically in the French literature classroom and for the *baccalauréat*. Despite this consensus, when I asked the students to provide its definition, they agreed it was a difficult task. Indeed, Soukaina, Farid, Salima and Jasmine felt they did not know how to explain this concept. When Jasmine said: Ben ça veut dire... euh... je sais pas comment expliquer (Well it means... hmm... I don't know how to explain), I asked if it was difficult to explain in French, but she answered: "Non je ne sais pas comment expliquer tout court" (No I don't know how to explain period) (Interview 2, April 28).

The teachers also had difficulties explaining what it was. Mme. Richard joked that it was "la question piège" (the trick question) (Interview 2, May 11, 2016). As for M. Lambert, first he said it was a great question because he was teaching a course called "culture générale et expression" but his enthusiasm quickly disappeared as he said, "Donc la culture générale c'est un ensemble tellement vaste, qui signifie vraiment pas grand-chose..." (In fact, the *culture générale*

it's a whole that is so vast, which really does not mean much... (Interview 2, May 2016). Even for M. Lambert who was teaching a course on this topic admitted being confused about its meaning. Having heard many times from the participants that it was important, but that they could not explain what it was, I then joked with Soukaina:

Sandrine : Oui c'est dur à définir et pourtant on nous dit tout le temps que c'est important.

Soukaina : Oui le prof il le dit pour le jour du bac.

Sandrine : Mais est-ce qu'il vous explique ce que c'est ?

Soukaina : Non !

Sandrine : C'est important mais on sait pas vraiment ce que c'est (laugh).

Soukaina : Ben non ! (both laughing)

Sandrine: yes, it's hard to define and yet we are always told that it's important.

(Soukaina: Yes, the teacher says it for the day of the bac.

Sandrine: But does he explain what it is?

Soukaina: No!

Sandrine: It's important but we don't really know what it is (laugh)

Soukaina: Well no! (both laughing)) (Interview 3, April 27, 2016)

In this conversation Soukaina and I laugh at the paradox of *culture générale*. Everybody believes it is important and yet there is no agreed upon definition, which actually reflects French society's understanding of this concept at large. Tavaillot (2008) remarked that if French people were asked to define this concept, "le silence se fera progressivement après quelques tentatives infructueuses de définitions" (silence will slowly settle after some fruitless attempts to find a definition) (p. 84). This echoes perfectly the participants' confusion.

After these first moments of hesitation, the participants and I discussed what could be considered as *culture générale*. In the next section, I will present their answers, which varied greatly, illustrating their diverging personal understanding of the concept.

What is *culture générale*? After analyzing the participants' answers to what constitutes *culture générale*, two categories emerged: knowledge and practices. I have listed some of the answers in the tables below.

Culture générale as a form of knowledge. The first table contains definitions of *culture générale*, understood as some form of knowledge.¹⁹

¹⁹ The term knowledge can be translated either by “savoir” or “connaître” in French. They both have the same meaning but have different grammatical usage.

Table 7.1

Participants' definition of culture générale as knowledge

Participant	Definition in French	English translation
Khaled	C'est toutes nos connaissances . De tout et n'importe quoi en fait, que ça soit dans n'importe quel domaine.	Well, it's all the knowledge . From everything to anything in fact, no matter the field.
Asmae	C'est des connaissances qu'on a nous-même.	It's knowledge we have ourselves.
Farid	C'est les connaissances , par exemple ce qu'on connaît sur d'autres pays, d'autres choses...	Well it's knowledge , for example what we know about other countries, other things...
Jasmine	C'est les connaissances qu'on a dans un domaine, dans plusieurs domaines...	It's the knowledge we have in a field, in several fields...
Azouz	Connaître un peu de tout du monde qui nous entoure	Knowing a bit of everything of the world that surrounds us
M. Lambert	Savoir beaucoup de choses, un maximum de choses,	Knowing a lot of things, a maximum of things,
Soukaina	C'est tout ce qu'on sait non ? Ben ouais, faut surtout savoir des auteurs français tout ça (...) Ben je pense moi surtout à des livres tout ça.	It's everything we know , no? Well yeah, we must know the French authors and all (...) Well I think it's especially books and all.
Salima	De savoir tout ce qu'il se passe par exemple en Asie, en Afrique, dans tout le monde... il faut avoir au moins un minimum de trucs.	To know everything that happens for example in Asia, in Africa, in the entire world... we need to have at least a minimum of stuff.

As shown in Table 7.1 for several students, culture générale is associated with knowledge, which they often see as something that we have or possess “ourselves” or in reference to Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, this knowledge is “embodied” (1979). In addition, this knowledge is often defined as having to be broad, to cover several fields, giving the impression that the broader the better, and that there are no real boundaries: as Azouz explains, it covers “everything, everywhere.”

Second, as shown in Table 7.2, participants defined *culture générale* as social practices, more specifically actions they do that facilitate its acquisition.

Table 7.2

Participants' definition of culture générale as practices

Participant	Definition in French	English translation
Abdel	Il y a la lecture, par exemple, je sais pas en lisant des livres (...). La télé, par exemple quand on regarde des débats...	There is reading, for example by reading books (...). TV, for example we watch debates...
M. Lambert	Se tenir informé de l'actualité, tout ce qui s'est passé.	keeping informed with the news, everything that happened.
Khaled	Si on écoute et on est intéressé donc ça peut acquérir de la culture générale je pense.	If we listen et we are interested and so we can acquire <i>culture générale</i> I think.
Jasmine	En lisant et en écoutant les autres parler... être ouverts à tout.	By reading and by listening to others speak... being open to everything.
Asmae	Moi j'aime bien Arte . Il y a des gens ils aiment pas, mais moi j'aime bien quand il y a des documentaires dans d'autres pays (...), moi j'aime bien, ça m'intéresse.	I like to watch Arte . There are people who don't like it, but I like when they are some documentaries in other countries, (...) I like it, it interests me.
Abdel	En lisant des différents livres... heu... de langues étrangères, il y a aussi voyagé ...	By reading different books... hmm... of Foreign languages, there is also travelling ...
Farid	On peut lire des livres, on peut s'informer sur internet	We can read books, we can get information on the internet
Mme. Richard	Le cinéma je pense que très peu y vont dans nos élèves	The cinema I think very few of our students go there.

In Table 7.2, the participants define *culture générale* as something they do, using for example the following practices “reading books, keeping up with the news, watching television,

listening especially documentaries and going to the cinema.” These practices tend to be associated with high, or “legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1979) culture, as, for example, Asmae said she watched Arte²⁰ on the television. Abdel, likewise, reported watching television, but not any types of programs, debates being usually seen as more intellectual than television for entertainment. The participants who saw reading as a source of culture générale, all specified reading books. It is worth noticing that other forms of reading, like for example reading magazines for pleasure, or emails for communication, are missing from their answers.

Culture générale as a form of literacy dependent on the habitus. As a matter of fact, all these verbs (reading, watching, listening) are what we need to make sense of the world, and I see a connection between the students’ definition of *culture générale* and Kern’s (2000) definition of literacy as being “the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning” (p.16). The answers in the tables illustrate how *culture générale* is more than knowledge, it encompasses all the social-cultural practices we engage to make meaning and which result in the development of literacy.

In addition, the participants defined *culture générale* as being part of what they are interested in (Khaled, Asmae), what they like (Asmae) or what they are inclined to (Jasmine). This definition is more problematic, because it refers to their individual tendencies, which is close to Bourdieu’s definition of habitus, “le concept d’habitus (...) il désigne (...) une *prédisposition*, une *tendance*, une *propension* ou une *inclination*. (the concept of habitus (...) it points out (...) a *predisposition*, a *tendency*, a *penchant* or an *inclination*.) (2000, p. 393). I then argue that *culture générale*, the students’ habitus and life experiences are all interwoven.

²⁰ Arte is a Franco-German channel specialized in areas of culture and the arts.

In Table 7.3, Leila, Salima, and M. Jahid offer an even broader definition of *culture générale* and relate it to everything they experience in life.

Table 7.3

Participants' definition of culture générale as life experiences

Participant	Definition in French	English translation
Leila	Partout, tout ce qu'on vit , avec notre vécu on peut acquérir une certaine culture générale.	Everywhere, everything we live , with our lived experience we can acquire a certain <i>culture générale</i> .
Salima	Par rapport à ce qu'on... enfin ce qu'on vit ,	In relation to what we... well what we live .
M. Jahid	C'est ça on a emmagasiné dans sa vie	It's what we have accumulated in one's life

The answers in Table 7.3 highlight a paradox about *culture générale*, one that the participants were aware of, that is, if *culture générale* is a reflection of a person's life, therefore every person is bound to have a unique one and, as Azouz pointed out, "on est tous différents, même si on a le même origine, on a tous une façon de voir le monde et on n'a pas, non c'est impossible qu'on est tous la même vision du monde." (we are all different, even if we have the same origin, we all have a different way of seeing the world and we don't have, no it's impossible that we all have the same world's view). (Interview 3 and 4, May 13, 2016). However, in the field of education, there is this expectation of shared common knowledge and practices and the reality that one is more valued than others.

If *culture générale* is a form of literacy and is linked to the habitus, then it is dependent on the environment where this literacy emerged. Consequently, the question of where we acquire *culture générale* is central to understanding the tension between this institutionalized and legitimized form of literacy and the students' individual practices.

Where is *culture générale* acquired? When exploring this concept, the participants often talked about where the acquisition of *culture générale* took place, illustrating how knowledge is never value-neutral but represents the particular social environment from which it emerged.

***Culture générale* acquired “outside.”** First, most participants agreed, as illustrated in Mme. Richard’s quote below, that it was not acquired at school:

Mme. Richard : Oui ben c’est un savoir qui peut dépasser le euh... le savoir scolaire. On espère d’ailleurs que ça dépasse le euh... le cadre scolaire. Mais qui est quand même effectivement nourri par ce qu’on peut apprendre à l’école. Euh... alors qu’est-ce qui peut dépasser le cadre scolaire ? euh... c’est peut-être ce qu’on peut trouver ailleurs, au cinéma, au musée... et puis c’est là que la question devient piègeuse, qu’est-ce qu’on trouve à la maison ? et effectivement la culture n’étant pas la même d’une élève à l’autre, euh... cette culture générale varie en fonction de cet apport familiale. Mais euh... il y a cette base minimale qui est donc le savoir scolaire qui s’enrichie par des éléments extérieurs, euh... en espérant que l’élève ait une curiosité suffisante pour aller chercher en dehors du lycée d’autres sources.

(Yes, well it’s a knowledge, which can go beyond, the hmm... the school knowledge. We hope as a matter of fact that it will go beyond the hmm... school context. But which is still actually nourished by what can be learnt at school. Hmm... so what can go beyond the school context? hmm... maybe it’s what we can find somewhere else, in the cinema, in the museum... and then that’s where the question becomes tricky, what do we find at home? And as a matter of fact, culture being different from one student to another, hmm... this *culture générale* varies according to this family input. But, hmm there is this minimum base, which is then is the school knowledge, which becomes richer with external elements, hmm... hoping that the student has a sufficient curiosity to go look for other sources outside of the high school). (Interview 2, May 11, 2016)

In this excerpt, as Mme. Richard reflects aloud about where one acquires *culture générale* and points at some of its caveat. First, she said schools provide the basis for *culture générale* and then it is up to the student to enrich it. Making this knowledge richer, is indeed as we have established what is at stake in this game, that is to say, more cultural capital must be acquired in order to gain power and recognition in society. Mme. Richard’s belief about *culture générale* mirrors the *autonomous* view of literacy (Street, 2005), because it does not take into account the

sociocultural context in which it is acquired. According to Street “literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill, that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (2005, p. 418). Street was therefore critical of what he called the *autonomous* model, which is based on the assumption that literacy in itself—autonomously—will lead to, higher cognitive skills, improved economic performance, greater equality, and so on. However, Street (2000) argues that this model “disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin literacy” or in this context, *culture générale*, “and that can then be presented as though it is neutral and universal” (p7).

Second, during her reflection, Mme. Richard acknowledges that thinking students all have the same access to a universal culture is “tricky,” because it all depends on their social environment, more specifically their families. However, despite being aware of this issue, Mme. Richard persists with her claim that *culture générale* should be acquired “outside through other sources.” A majority of the students shared Mme. Richard’s belief and the conversation below with Soukaina captures this paradox:

Soukaina : Euh... ben pour moi ouais c’est quelque chose qu’on apprend en dehors de l’école. Ouais, on apprend soit par soi-même soit avec sa famille, et du coup c’est pas par rapport à l’école.

Sandrine : C’est pas par rapport à l’école ?

Soukaina : Ou, ouais, pas trop...

Sandrine : Pas trop ? Mais est-ce que c’est important pour l’école ?

Soukaina : oui.

Sandrine : Ok. Et est-ce que ça s’acquiert aussi à l’école ?

Salima : Oui, mais surtout à l’extérieur

(Soukaina: Hmm... well for me yeah, it's something we learn outside of school. Yeah, we learn either by ourselves either with our family, and so it's not in relation to school.

Sandrine: It's not in relation to school?

Soukaina: Or yeah, not too much...

Sandrine: Not too much? But it is important at school?

Soukaina: Yes,

Sandrine: Ok, and can it also be acquired at school?

Soukaina: Yes, but especially outside). (Interview 3, April 27, 2016)

Soukaina says while it is important for school, it is mostly transmitted by families. Nora, Abdel, Salima, Farid but also M. Jahid agreed with Soukaina and said it was acquired “dehors, à l'extérieur” two adverbs which both mean “outside” of school. They listed other sources such as friends, the T.V, music, the Internet... However, several believed family was the most influential source and as Abdel explained “c'est pas pareil quand c'est une famille française, on parle français chez soi... (it's not the same when it's a French family, one speaks French at home...).

Culture générale transmitted by families. Abdel felt the different experiences from one family to another constitutes a “wide gap,” “ben comme j'avais dit ça fait pas longtemps que je suis en France, ben ça fait quoi 6 ans, mais il y a un large décalage entre moi et eux. (Well, like I had said I haven't been in France for a long time, well, it's less than 6 years, but there is a wide gap between me and them). (Interview 2, September 28, 2015). Abdel felt that because he had been in France for only a short time, he was at a disadvantage compared to someone who had been born in France—or as I interpret it—“into the game” and as he further expressed, in a frustrated tone “Ben oui, ils ont plus de connaissances” (Well, yes they have more knowledge!).

Nora, likewise, pointed at this disadvantage as she talked about a former classmate whose family environment differed, this time not in terms of languages spoken, but in terms of cultural practices:

Nora : moi je vois y avait une fille dans ma classe l'année dernière, Marie elle s'appelle, et ben chez ces parents, enfin chez elle ils lisent beaucoup de livres français, enfin ils s'intéressent beaucoup à la France, mais nous on peut pas, enfin mes parents je vais pas leur parler d'Emile Zola (all laugh) enfin je sais pas je peux pas leur parler des livres et tout enfin, je sais pas, ça va pas les intéresser.

(I see there was a girl in my class last year, her name is Marie and so at her parents, well at her home they read a lot of French books, well they are interested a lot about France, but us we can't, well my parents I am not going to tell them about Emile Zola (all laugh) well I don't know I can't talk to them about books and all, well, I don't know, it's not gonna interest them). (Interview 2, September 28, 2015)

In this excerpt, Nora talks about Marie, a Franco-French classmate. Nora points out the different lifestyles and practices between her family and Marie's. Not only does Marie's family have and read many French books, they also share the same "interest" for French culture. Nora draws a clear contrast between the two families and claims she cannot imagine herself talking about famous French writers with her parents because they would not be interested. The adjective "interested" does not suggest that they would not be capable of, it simply states the fact their interests lay somewhere else. Still, Nora, suggests that she is at a disadvantage, because Marie's cultural practices mirror those valued in school.

Nora and Abdel's comments show that Franco-French families share the dominant culture, and that this culture is acquired over time.

The fact that schools have predominantly favored the culture and practices of the dominant group over minoritized ones has been well documented in the USA with the work of Ladson-Billings (1994, 2005), Heath (1983) and Gee, (2008). More specifically, Heath (1983) conducted a ten-year long ethnography in the USA. This study compared students' literacy

practices from three communities: one working class African-American, one working class White-American and a third middle class White-American. Her studies showed how some literacy practices were more or less in alignment with school literacy practices.

Heath found that the children from White-American families were involved in literacy practices like bedtime stories at home with their parents, and that these stories resembled the practices of storybooks in schools. Most strikingly, she also found that while African-American children were engaged in complex performative storytelling, these practices were different from school and therefore not as relevant and not valued. I draw a parallel between her findings and my data where Nora and Abdel compare their families to Franco-French ones. Indeed, these examples corroborates Heath's findings and highlight how literacy practices in schools are neither objective nor neutral. More recently, New Literacy Studies have been attending to these issues of power in society and have debunked the "literacy myth" and according to Gee (2012), "The most striking continuity in the history of literacy is the way in which literacy has been used, in age after age, to solidify the social hierarchy, empower elites" (p. 57).

The question of where *culture générale* is acquired further addresses this "literacy myth" as it points out its strongest paradox, which is how *culture générale* is valued at school—students are judged on their mastery of it—but it is not taught at school. Actually, as Mme. Richard claimed, the *culture générale* truly valued is the one acquired outside of school, "what we can find somewhere else." Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) saw a deliberate effort from school to "dévaloriser la culture qu'elle transmet au profit de la culture héritée qui ne porte pas la marque roturière de l'effort" (devalued the culture which it transmits to favor the inherited culture which does not bear the commoner sign of effort) (p. 35). In other words, schools value a knowledge of a noble culture that they do not teach, which confirms that the rules of the games are kept secret

in order to privilege the ones “born into the game.” The implicit aspect of *culture générale* explains both its essence and the reason why it excludes many of the Franco-Maghrebi students in my research.

Although the rules are implicit and seem arbitrary, there is a consensus among the participants about what is valued as *culture générale* and thereby what is not.

What counts as *culture générale*?

Franco-French classics as the basis for culture générale. While discussing with Mme. Richard about what constitutes *culture générale*, she referred to the list of texts for the *baccalauréat* in French literature, which, as we saw in the previous section is composed exclusively of “Franco-French classics.” She then extended this remark not only to the choice of texts for the national exam but to the definition of *culture générale* and said:

Dans la définition de la culture générale. Euh... non, moi je pense que c'est effectivement très normé parce que les supports sont déjà confectionnés, parce que euh... il y a des directives...

Sandrine : Donc normé par qui ? par l'éducation nationale en générale ?

Mme. Richard : Oui et puis ben par tout ce qui est l'inertie de l'éducation nationale, c'est-à-dire qu'on en va pas enlever Voltaire d'un manuel de littérature, euh... et puis tout adulte qui se respecte par la suite doit savoir qui est Voltaire, par contre on ne va pas valoriser quelqu'un qui va connaître euh effectivement un auteur marocain, voilà. Le fait que ce soit partagé par déjà plusieurs générations hein, connaître La Fontaine, Voltaire etc.... fait que ça devient de la culture générale établie.

(In the definition of the *culture générale*. Hmm... no, I personally think that actually, it's very normalized because the frameworks are already manufactured, because hmm... there some directives...

Sandrine: so normalized by who? By the national education system in general?

Mme. Richard: Yes, and well by all the inertia of the national education system, that is to say we are not going to remove Voltaire from a literature course book, hmm... and every single adult who deserves respect subsequently must know who Voltaire is, on the other

hand we are not going to value someone who knows hmm indeed a Moroccan author, there. The fact that it is shared by several generations eh, knowing La Fontaine, Voltaire etc.... means it becomes the established culture générale). (Interview 2, May 11, 2016)

In this quote, Mme. Richard explains the mechanism of *culture générale*, which she perceives as deliberately orchestrated, or “manufactured” by the education system, or rather its “inertia.” This resonates with Tavaillot (2008) and Bourdieu (1977a) who both claimed *culture générale* was a strategy from the people in power to ensure they keep their position. Inertia can indeed be a powerful strategy when it fails to account for diversity and a new social order. What’s more, in this excerpt, Mme. Richard acknowledges and laments that knowing a Moroccan author does not count, thereby pointing out the Franco-French culture is the only one legitimized and the cultures of non-Franco-French students not valued.

In contrast, when asked about the same question, M. Lambert’s expressed a different attitude, “Ben c’est un peu évident, c’est la culture française (sarcastic tone of voice), c’est de la littérature française.” (Well it’s a bit obvious, it’s the French culture (sarcastic tone of voice), it’s French literature) (Interview 2, May 12, 2016). I remember feeling frustrated by his answer because it sounded like he was mocking me for asking such an “obvious” question. According to M. Lambert, because he lives in France, because he teaches a course called “French literature” in a French school, there is no reason why other cultures should matter. His assertion shows his denial of the diversity in his classroom and in French society and assumes that all his students share the same fund of knowledge. Because I have had several conversations about adding Franco-Maghrebi authors to French *baccalauréat* list with Mme. Richard, I wanted to know how M. Lambert felt about it. He explained why he had never done it:

Il y a des auteurs français d’origine maghrébine, il y en a plein, c’est très bien mais ils écrivent français. Donc ouais, non ce ne serait pas valorisé, une référence à un roman arabe, je pense que ça ne passerait pas, enfin ça passerait peut-être, mais vraiment en exemple euh... lointain. C’est logique hein, la matière s’appelle français (laughs). Oui,

mais à contrario, si on cite Shakespeare et ben c'est valorisé.

(There are French authors with Maghrebi origins, there are many, it's very good but they write in French. So yeah, no it would not be valued, a reference to an Arab novel, I think that it would not go down well, well it would maybe be ok, but really as an example hmm... a remote one. It's logical no, the subject is called French (laughs). But on the contrary, if we cite Shakespeare and so it's valued). (Interview 2, May 12, 2016)

Once more, M. Lambert answered this question with a slightly sarcastic tone because the name of the course being French, it is logical that the texts should be French. In this quote, M. Lambert is not willing to open the debate over what "French" literature means in the 21st century, in an era of entrenched globalization, he stands by a literal definition of the term, which to him makes sense. M. Lambert acknowledges that there are many Franco-Maghrebi, who write in French, which he sees as a very good thing. However, he expresses that they are still not seen as legitimate to be included in the program, hence reflecting the inertia Mme. Richard described in her previous quote. Finally, he makes an interesting remark about where the boundary stands as far as acceptable cultural reference, stating that while making a reference to an Arabic novel would not be acceptable, citing Shakespeare would. Now that I have explained the importance of *culture générale*, what it is and where it is acquired, in the next section, I will illustrate how this concept operates within the classroom.

How does *culture générale* impact Franco-Maghrebi students? The assumption that all the students and teachers shared a common knowledge was often realized during the classes I observed. For example, one day, Mme. Richard asked her student to open their book to read the poem, "Mignonne allons voir si la rose," written by Ronsard, a French poet. She introduced the poem by saying, "Poème le plus connu de la poésie française, poème connu par vos grands-parents, vos cousins, vos tantes. Ça fait partie de la culture littéraire." (The most widely known poem of French poetry, poem known by your grand-parents, your cousins, your aunts. It is part of

the literary culture) (Observation, September 15, 2015). Her use of the singular definite article in front of “culture littéraire” is revealing in this sentence because it conveys the notion that there is only one culture and her use of the definite article implies we all know which one it is, because it had already been defined. After this quick introduction, Mme. Richard asked the class “Quelle est la morale de ce poème connu par tous?” (what is the moral of this poem, known by everybody?), reinforcing her strong expectation that all her students knew this poem.

After the class, I walked out in the corridor with Jasmine and I asked her what she thought of the poem. She replied in a sarcastic voice that she had never heard of it, and that her aunt did not know it either because she lived in Algeria and could not read French because she spoke Kabyle. She seemed to be amused, but also annoyed by the teacher’s comment, which did not match her reality. She concluded, “elle parlait pas de moi” (she wasn’t speaking about me). In this comment Jasmine expresses her feeling of being excluded by Mme. Richard, who had created an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991) of people who all shared the same knowledge. Because of her cultural background and practices Jasmine did not belong to this community. Although it was probably not Mme. Richard’s conscious intention, this comment excludes all the students and their families who do not share this common knowledge, and it defines what it means to be French. This comment therefore reveals an ethnocentric perspective which does not take into account the classroom’s diversity and the students’ plural identities.

I argue that these assumptions and the lack of explicit explanations about what constitutes *culture générale*, its criteria, its mode of transmission kept the non-Franco-French students out of the game. Indeed, as I demonstrated in the previous section about the *baccalauréat*, was mostly missing from the French class and I observed numerous interactions, where students, often Franco-Maghrebi students called the teacher’s attention to say that they did not understand a

word, a concept, but their requests were often ignored because of the teacher assuming they were all on the same page. The teachers never explicitly explained the demands put on the students, probably because, as Grenfell (2012) argued, “making explicit presuppositions” in the education field would require of teachers to “step outside of their ‘linguistic and social ethnocentrism’” something they would seem unlikely to do, as it went against the very nature of generating principles of the academic discourse to which they belonged.” (p. 62). Indeed, I believe that the complacency of teachers, especially M. Lambert, is to some extent responsible for the perpetration of *culture générale* and its symbolic capital. Even if *culture générale* is deeply entrenched in French society and is a tool of social reproduction and exclusion, it was often met by counter-discourses from many of the participants.

For instance, M. Jahid was the only teacher who openly contested the boundaries of *culture générale*. As I demonstrated when introducing the participants, M. Jahid also came across in my data as closer to his students and more aware of the students’ lives and outside-of-school interests. He then pointed out some forms of arts young people liked, but which remained ignored by the school and not considered as high culture, «Même si Molière reste moderne hein ! Mais il n’y a pas que Molière, il y a aussi, la, la, il y a aussi le street art comme ils disent, ça fait partie aussi de la culture hein ! (laughs) il y a des choses qui sont totalement ignorées alors que les gamins baignent dedans...» (Even if Molière remains modern, ha! There is more than Molière, there is also the, the, there is also the street art as they class it, it is also part of culture, ha! (laughs) there are things which are completely ignored whereas kids bathe in them...). M. Jahid, acknowledged, that Molière, a French playwright from the 17th century, which could be considered the epitome of *culture générale*, is still relevant but maybe it is time to also incorporate other forms of culture which speak to the younger generation. I find his comparison

between this 17th century writer and Street Art to be rather provocative, and I imagine many people in the education system would be offended by it, but M. Jahid, one more time shows how much closer he is with the students. Similarly, Azouz said, “Ben il y a pas que la culture générale avec les auteurs français, je pense. Il y a aussi sur internet, la culture générale, il y a ch’ sais pas par exemple il y a des films aussi.” (Well there isn’t only *culture générale* with French authors, I think. There is also on the Internet, *culture générale*, there is I dunno for example there are movies too). (Interview 1, September 28, 2015).

Culture générale, a summary. *Culture générale* presupposes that all students have a shared common knowledge and ignores the different cultural background each student brings to the classroom. What’s more this shared common knowledge is not neutral, but constitutes a Franco-French interpretation of the only legitimate culture, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Because it is legitimized by the government, it has become a form of cultural capital and the school ensures the reproduction of its legitimacy. Going back to Bourdieu’s the three forms of cultural capital (a) embodied; (b) objectified, and (c) institutionalized, I argue that Franco-Maghrebi students were less likely to possess any of these forms of cultural capital. First, considering its (a) embodied form, because Franco-Maghrebi were not “born into the game,” which does not necessarily mean they were not born in France, but simply that because they were not imbued from an early age into this legitimate culture, this form of cultural capital was not embodied in their habitus. Second, in its (b) objectified form, Franco-Maghrebi students’ families did not possess the same cultural assets, as Nora pointed out when she talked about her friend having many French books at home. Third, in its (c) institutionalized form, Franco-French culture is legitimized by the school system, and less conventional cultures, like those of Franco-Maghrebi students are not guaranteed the same value.

In this section, I showed how institutional expectations for students to have a Franco-French cultural literacy—*culture générale*—prevents Franco-Maghrebi students from fully participating in the French classroom. The results confirm the implicit and exclusive nature of *culture générale*, and highlight how it legitimizes the dominant culture while excluding and devaluing Franco-Maghrebi students’ home literacy practices, cultures, in other words their habitus and identities. I now explore the concept of *laïcité*—the third main factor that impacts the participants’ schooling experience.

Laïcité

The third major theme which emerged as impacting Franco-Maghrebi students’ experience of schooling is *laïcité*. *Laïcité* is most closely translated in English as *secularism*. It has a strong legal basis in French history traced back to the French revolution and the separation of church and state. It also constitutes a controversial policy whose interpretation has changed over time. Accounting for *laïcité*’s evolution is therefore central to understanding current divides, and I will briefly describe this evolution. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 proclaims that “everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference, even those of a religious nature, provided their demonstration does not disturb the public order established by law” (Article 10). Later, the Article 1 of the Act of 9 December 1905, charges the Republic to ensure “freedom of conscience (...) guarantee freedom of worship limited only by the following rules in the interest of public order.” The 1905 law that separates religion from politics in France was a hard-fought rejection of the Catholic Church and has been a governing force in French politics and society ever since. The law is based on three principals: freedom of conscience, the separation of political institutions from religious organizations, and the equal footing under the law of different religions and beliefs.

The original aim of the 1789 and 1905 laws was to ensure the protection of religious belief while establishing that this freedom is a right which is regulated in order to maintain public security and harmony. It was not until 1958 that the term *laïcité* is explicitly mentioned, as Article 1 of the French constitution of October 1958 stipulates that “France is a secular Republic.” Though this new law makes the principle of *laïcité* officially part of the constitution, its interpretation remains unclear because of the tension between freedom of religion and the restrictions placed on the expression of religion and its potential threat to order and security. As the Rapport du Haut conseil à l’intégration (2000) (High Council on Integration) noted, how this law is interpreted depends entirely on the evolution of society, changing politics, demographics, and public opinion, its expectations and the demands of the rule of law. This is precisely what happened in 1989 when religious tolerance was put to the test in Creil, a small town north of Paris, after three female students were expelled from their middle school for refusing to remove their *voiles*. The story quickly made headlines in the French media, precipitating a heated nationwide debate that would mark France for decades. At the time, the State Council argued that, as long as religious clothing does not disturb the classroom or constitute “pressure, provocation, or proselytism,” it could not be prohibited.

However, fifteen years later, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the wave of islamophobia which followed, France felt the need to revisit *laïcité*. In 2004 the French parliament banned conspicuous religious signs in public schools. The reasoning was that the display of individual religious or ethnic identities in the classroom interferes with a collective “Frenchness” and disrupts a school’s ability to transmit republican values. France then adopted a more extreme interpretation of the principle of *laïcité*. This resulted in what Ajjat (2013) referred to as “néo-laïcité,” which was directed at a specific community: les musulman.e.s” (Female Muslims)

(Artagna, 2016, p. 2). Indeed, in March 2004 France passed a law stating:

Conformément aux dispositions de l'article L. 141-5-1 du code de l'éducation, le port de signes ou de tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit. Lorsqu'un élève méconnaît l'interdiction posée à l'alinéa précédent, le chef d'établissement organise un dialogue avec cet élève avant l'engagement de toute procédure disciplinaire.

(In accordance with the provision of the L. 141-5-1 article of the education code, wearing symbols or clothing through which students ostensibly express their religious affiliation is forbidden. If a student disregards the ban established in the previous sentence, the school principal will organize a dialogue with this student before starting disciplinary measure). (Respect de la laïcité, 2004).

Nowadays, in the public discourse, French politicians portray *laïcité* as a noble principle which guarantees students' freedom of religion and equality. In practice, this law means that Muslim female students are not allowed to wear the *voile* in schools. Shortly after the debate surrounding the 1989 *voile* affaire, Bourdieu said:

En projetant sur cet événement mineur (...) le voile des grands principes, liberté, laïcité, libération de la femme, etc., les éternels prétendants au titre de maître à penser ont livré, comme dans un test projectif, leurs prises de position inavouées sur le problème de l'immigration : du fait que la question patente - faut-il ou non accepter à l'école le port du voile dit islamique ? - occulte la question latente - faut-il ou non accepter en France les immigrés d'origine nord-africaine ? (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 305)

(In projecting on this minor event (...) of the *voile* great principles of freedom, laïcité, women's liberation, etc., the eternal pretenders to the title of master-thinkers have delivered, as in a projective test, their undisclosed positions on the problem of immigration, such that the explicit question – Should wearing the “Islamic” *voile* be accepted at school? – hides the implicit question – Should immigrants of North African origin be accepted in France?) (Bourdieu, translated by Bowen, 2007, p. 246).

Bourdieu's comments foreground and predict the core of the issue with the new interpretation of *laïcité* and as my data below show, the same questions are still worth asking today.

In order to complete a full picture of the socio-political landscape in which *laïcité* has evolved over the past 30 years, I will quote the introduction of the annual reports from the Observatoire de la laïcité (Secularism Monitoring Center) of the French government, from 2014 and 2018 (Observatoire de la laïcité, 2018). In 2014, the report identified “the greater cultural diversity in France” as the reason why the “country needs secularism more than ever” (Observatoire de la laïcité, 2014). In 2018, “le contexte particulier des attentats que la France a subit depuis 2012” (the particular context of attacks France has been subjected to since 2012) and the “menace terroriste” (terrorist threat) were presented as motivation to reinforce *laïcité*. It is clear from these official texts that the government perceives diversity and terrorist attacks as challenges which can be mitigated through *laïcité*.

In this following section I discuss (a) how this policy is interpreted in the school Charles Dupuy; (b) how its implementation reveals some paradoxes about religion and freedom and (c) how it impacts the students.

How is *laïcité* interpreted in the school?

Laïcité as a founding principle. In the school Charles Dupuy, teachers and administrators were strictly applying this policy²¹, and any female students wearing the *voile* had to remove it before entering the school. As the students in my study mentioned, Charles Dupuy being in a rural area with a less diverse population, they felt more isolated and more marginalized than their friends in bigger cities. As I demonstrate, the way *laïcité* is interpreted in their school plays a role in this marginalization. I start by sharing my notes where I describe how I perceived the application of the policy:

²¹ From my conversation with friends and family who work in schools in Paris and Marseille, where there is a higher percentage of Muslim students, I gathered this policy is not always as strongly reinforced and some students come to class wearing their *voile*.

Today it was raining very hard when I arrived at the school. This spring has been unusually cold and wet. I have not packed the right clothes. I even had to borrow some from my friends. When I walked through the gate at 8 am, a cold rain was coming down hard. I was wearing a coat with a hood, like most students did around me. And yet the two “*surveillants*” were there under their umbrellas to make sure female Muslim students wearing the veil removed it before walking through the official entrance of the school. Most of them had already taken it off, but a few were called on and had to do it then. It felt unfair. Students with a hood could walk in without being stopped, but those with a veil had to remove it and get their heads wet. I also thought at the time that the *surveillants* had developed very sharp eyes and were able to recognize female students with a veil amongst a big crowd of students, most of them also covering their heads. It was another instance of how discriminatory this ban is. Students are not all equal, some have the right to remain warm and dry while others have to be exposed to the elements, but more importantly Muslim female students are being singled out and publicly reprimanded for their personal faith. I wonder how this made them feel, angry? Humiliated? Powerless?

This was my own interpretation, which differed from the school administrators. Indeed, when I asked the principal to define what *laïcité* meant to him, he said, “Moi je crois qu’au sein de notre république, un établissement public doit être laïc. Puisque cette loi nous conditionne, je veille à ce qu’elle soit respectée partout, partout, partout.” (I think in our republic, a public institution must be secular. Because this law conditions us, I ensure that it is respected everywhere, everywhere, everywhere.) (Interview 1, May 17, 2016). In this quote, M. Leroy starts by contextualizing his answer and establishes himself as the voice of the institution—a French Republican school—and given the responsibilities instituted in his position, he presents himself as the guarantor of this policy.

When I asked the school counselor, her answer resembled the Principal’s as she claimed first *laïcité* is, “le fondement de notre république, surtout le fondement de notre école” (the founding principle of our republic, especially the founding principle of our school) and second, she shared the belief, “c’est notre rôle de maintenir cette laïcité” (it’s our role to maintain this *laïcité*) (Interview 1, May 13, 2016). I will compare their answers in depth later, now I want to

go back over the principal's repetition of the word "everywhere" ("partout") three times, which illustrates the intensity with which this policy is respected in Charles Dupuy. As a matter of fact, "laïcité" was everywhere in the school. It was printed twice in the students' *carnet de correspondance*²² under the title "Charte de la laïcité" and, in this book, the "règlement intérieur" (school regulations) had a special section called "laïcité." The same school regulations were also printed in the students' "livret d'accueil" (welcoming booklet).

Walking around the school I also noticed posters of the *Charte de laïcité* on the walls in the corridors, in the administrator's offices, and in some classrooms. Mme. Durantet, the school counselor, explained it had been her initiative the previous year to "intégrer la charte de la laïcité dans les carnets de correspondance (...) pour que tous les parents la lisent bien" (integrate laïcité in the carnets de correspondance (...) so that all the parents read it well). She had also ensured that this principle was visible because as she stated, "normalement c'est une obligation qu'elle soit affichée, elle est affichée à plusieurs endroits notamment au secrétariat" (usually it's an obligation that it is displayed in several places particularly in the school office).

Although they saw their role as implementing the policy, both administrators used similar language of coercion: of being "conditioned" (M. Leroy), and "obliged" (Mme. Durantet). These verbs suggest how the policy is being forced on them, mirroring what I have already pointed out about power being realized and imposed at different levels by agents of the institution (Foucault, 1990).

²² A "carnet de correspondance" is an important school book the teachers and parents use to communicate about absences, lateness, special dispensations, punishments. The use of this book is described on the first page as being « une liaison entre l'établissement et la famille » (a contact between the school and the family).

As Mme. Durantet said, since 2013 posters advocating *laïcité* have to be displayed in the schools. Indeed, the Minister of education stressed in a “livret laïcité” (laïcité booklet)—a 31-page-long document addressed to school staff—that these documents must be visible,

La Charte de la laïcité doit être affichée dans l'école ou dans l'établissement dans un espace visible de tous les membres de la communauté éducative. Elle peut aussi être affichée dans l'ensemble des salles de classe à côté de la Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du citoyen.

(The *laïcité* Charter must be displayed in school and building in a space visible by all members of the educative community. It can also be displayed in all the classroom next to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.) (Livret laïcité, 2015)

By suggesting the *laïcité* charter and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen should be placed next to each other, the Minister of Education established the “sacred” nature of the *laïcité* charter. As a consequence of *laïcité* being omnipresent in the school environment, it had been internalized by the students and the staff. Indeed, when I mentioned *laïcité*, participants defined this principle using the same rhetoric. For example, Jasmine said *laïcité* was “tout le monde n’a pas le droit à les signes religieux” (nobody has the right to religious symbols) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). For Khaled *laïcité* meant, “Ben il y a juste enfin je pense, l’interdiction de porter des vêtements religieux ou des signes religieux je crois” (Well there is just well I think, the ban about wearing religious clothing or religious symbols I think). M. Lambert referred to “signes distinctifs religieux” (distinctive religious symbols) and Leila, M. Jahid, and Mme. Richard used the terms “signes ostentatoires” (ostentatious symbols), which as Mme. Richard remarked are “les termes de l’éducation nationale” (the terms of the French education system) and as a matter of fact the adjective “ostentatious” is strongly associated with this particular policy.

Despite strong evidence showing students and staff had been exposed to *laïcité* and could recite its content, some people remained unsure. For example, Farid explained, “La laïcité... ben... être libre, avoir le droit par exemple de porter ce qu’on veut, des signes religieux...” (laïcité... well... to be free, to have the right for example to wear what we want, religious symbols) (Interview 2, April 28, 2016). When I asked him if it was to be allowed or not he said, “Ah, je sais pas en fait. Je crois c’est pas avoir le droit” (Ah, I don’t know in fact. I think it’s not having the right). Farid had incorporated the right terms “religious symbols,” even though he was not sure if it meant being allowed to or not. I interpret this as a result of him being exposed to this discourse and its specific terms, but also the ambiguity of the message which is meant to guarantee students’ freedom of religion by not allowing them to wear religious symbol, a point I will further explore in this section on *laïcité*. I have shown how participants had incorporated the rhetoric of *laïcité*, now I want to point out how their attention had shifted on a single element out of 15 in the “*charte de laïcité*.”

1. ***Laïcité and its focus on the voile.*** The complete *Charte de la laïcité* can be seen in Appendix C. The image in Figure 5 is a close up of the last two points out of 15 points listed which constitute the laïcité’s charter.



Figure 5. Bottom part of the Charte de laïcité.

The 14 other points promote *laïcité* as it is described in the amendments to the French constitution in 1905 and 1958 (Gouvernement français, 1905, 1958); that is, France is a secular

republic that guarantees the freedom of conscience to believe or not believe. These points also explain how *laïcité* translates in the school context: it ensures a shared and common culture, it rejects violence and discrimination, and it requires the staff to promote its principle but also to be neutral. The 14th point is the only one which refers to the 2004 ban on religious symbols, and yet as my data illustrate, it is the one that first came to mind when I asked the participants about *laïcité*.

Not only did the participants associate religious symbols with *laïcité*, but the *voile* was frequently singled out as the only religious symbol banned. For example, while Nora said “Ben oui le voile, ben oui, c’est sûr” (well yes the voile, well yes, it’s sure); Salima pointed at the voile, “Ben le voile. Mais ça c’est une autre histoire...” (Well the *voile* but that’s another story... (interview 3, May 2, 2016) and Jasmine elaborated, “Ben le voile, je pense que ouais, à l’école, les filles voilées qui viennent à l’école” (Well the *voile*, I think that yeah, at school veiled girls who come to school) (Interview 2, April 28, 2016). It would seem logical that Salima and Jasmine, who both wear the *voile* outside school and Nora who wishes she could but does not, talk about the voile in relation to *laïcité*. It was interesting though to see how M. Jahid, the French-as-a-foreign-language teacher, echoed their answers,

ben les applications c’est que... on les voit plus dans le... si vous voulez dans ces histoires de foulard, de gamines qui enlèvent le foulard avant d’entrer dans l’établissement. C’est surtout le voile, ce qui pénalise plus, enfin pénalise, ce qui vise plus, les filles...

(well the implementations are that... we see them more in the... if you want it these headscarves stories, of female kids who remove their headscarf before coming into the building. It’s above all the voile, which penalizes the most, well penalizes, which targets more the girls)

I personally remember that during the debate before and just after the law was passed in 2004, this law was simply referred to in the public discourse as “le loi sur le voile” (the law about the voile). To illustrate this point, I will cite the titles of two major French newspaper

Libération from 2005 “**Loi sur le Voile**, le Ministère Content” and *Le Monde*: “Un An Après la “**Loi sur le Voile**,” les Difficultés des élèves exclues,” as well as the article by Mikaïl (2004), a researcher specialized on geopolitics of the Middle East and North Africa, who reported the Middle-East perception of the law in the article, “**La loi sur le Voile** Vue du Moyen-Orient.” All these articles illustrate how the policy was portrayed at the time, that is a policy about the *voile* more so than the principle of *laïcité*. Although France now wants to hide this reality behind the noble principle of *laïcité* its origin and its implementation reveal a bias against Muslims and as Mikaïl noted shortly after the law was passed, “derrière la volonté tiale apparente de garantir les fondements d’une laïcité spécifique à la France pointait clairement le spectre du foulard islamique” (2004, p. 35). (Behind the apparent government’s will to guarantee the founding principles of a laïcité specific to France, it actually clearly pointed towards the spectrum of the Islamic headscarf). According to Mikaïl, this debate arose from a confusion in the French public discourse between *Islam*, the faith shared by Muslims believers, and *Islamism*, which he defined as the rigorous personal interpretation of the founding principles of Islam, and where women are seen to be oppressed.

Laïcité and its paradoxes. Is Laïcité a guarantor of women’s rights? A common assumption shared by the school staff and the policy makers is that women who wear the voile are forced to do so and therefore laïcité offers them freedom. In a guidance note written by the Secularism Monitoring Center (Observatoire de la laïcité, 2014), the state claims that “secularism brings freedom.” I argue that it defines this freedom in opposition to Muslim women being “forced or obliged.” For example, article 12 of this note states “no believer may be obliged by law to respect religious dogmas or dictates.” Article 17 repeats the idea of religious practices being impose and justifies laïcité because of the “need to protect children from pressure they may be

under to wear a particular symbol.” In article 16, this symbol is explicitly associated with women’s clothing, “Where women’s clothing is concerned the rejected symbol is deemed to jeopardize women’s freedom, their right to equality, or even their dignity.”

In this article the terms “women’s clothing” suggests a reference to the *voile*, which the State sees as an attack on women’s dignity. However, this contradicts what the female students told me about the *voile*. While Asmae said she wished she could wear the *voile* because she would feel more “valorisée” (valued), Leila explained she was not wearing it because she was not feeling ready and her mother had told her one had to be ready to wear the *voile*. As for Jasmine, she said she was wearing the *voile* against her mother’s advice who thought it was too dangerous for her daughter to be veiled in the street. She also explained that when having to remove her *voile* she felt, “pas en sécurité (...) pas libre en fait (...) pas libre de faire ce que je voulais en fait, de m’habiller comme je veux...” (not safe (...) not free in fact (...) not free to do what I wanted in fact, to dress like I want...). This clear disconnect between the stories of these students and the stated intention of the law also emerged during interviews with the school staff, although this sentiment was not unanimous. Depending on their status in the school and relationships with the students, the staff either echoed the dominant anti-Muslim discourse or portrayed a more accurate understanding of the students’ lives.

I will first share the opinions which were more aligned with the students’ narratives: Mme. Durantet and M. Jahid. As the school counselor, Mme. Durantet had the opportunity to talk face to face with students about issues they were facing. Her comments on the topic of the *voile* showed a clear understanding, as well as concern for female Muslim students. She started by saying “il faudrait leur poser la question à elles (...) mais c’est vrai que souvent on se pose la question, est-ce qu’elles sont forcées ou pas?” (we should ask them the question, are they forced

or not?). This quote first illustrates she was aware of the common assumption and her own bias and she did not want to impose her interpretation.

In the same spirit of not wanting to make an empty generalization, she stressed her opinion was based on her own experiences with these students saying that often wearing the *voile* was a personal choice “Mais sur plusieurs exemples moi c’est des cheminements personnels” (But with several examples I think there are personal journeys). This realization contradicts the articles 12 and 17 of the guidance note on *laïcité* cited at the beginning of this section, which assumed these students are being forced to wear the *voile* and therefore *laïcité* brings them freedom. Mme. Durantet made one more comment, which contradicted this idea, “les dames voilées, elles sont quand même regardées, il y a un regard très suspicieux voir des fois on sent de la haine, de l’incompréhension, ... alors que pour elles, elles c’est une protection” (veiled ladies, they are being looked at really, there is a suspicious look even sometimes we feel hatred, incomprehension, whereas for them, it’s a protection). This critical observation highlights how close to the students Mme. Durantet was and how this allowed her to adopt the students’ perspectives. As a matter of fact, Nora, Jasmine, Salima, Abdel, Farid, Azouz, and Leila talked about these looks of hatred and Jasmine said she did not feel safe when she had to remove her *voile*, suggesting that to her the *voile* was a protection.

M. Jahid, the French-as-a-Foreign-Language teacher, also expressed a nuanced understanding about the *voile*, as shown in his comment below:

Les raisons de porter le voile sont multiples, hein ! Il n’y a pas qu’une question de foi, il y a des fois même une révolte contre les parents qui veulent, (...), qu’elles ne le portent pas. Elles le portent justement pour dire aux parents « ben je fais le contraire ».

(The reasons to wear the *voile* are multiple, eh! It is not only a matter of faith, there is sometimes even a rebellion against parents who want, (...) that they don’t wear it. They wear it precisely to tell parents “well I’m doing the opposite).

In this quote, M. Jahid captures the complexity behind the decision or not to wear the *voile*. He does not exclude the fact it can be about faith but he feels it can mean more, and the reasons are personal. The example he gives is close to Jasmine's position. Indeed, on several occasions Jasmine implied wearing the *voile* was a point of contention with her mother, and actually not only the *voile* but how she dressed in general. For example, during our first interview, she explained her mother did not want her to wear a "tenue vestimentaire d'une musulmane, qui montre pas ses formes" (outfit of a female Muslim, who does not show her figure), like long skirts, and would rather she wore jeans. However, Jasmine insisted on wearing long black skirts and the *voile*. This does not mean it was the only reason she wore the *voile*, I believe her faith was important to her, but as M. Jahid stated, the decision to wear the *voile* are diverse. Further to this, M. Jahid counters the common belief that young women are forced to wear the *voile* by their family, and actually suggests the roles can be reversed—that they can be under pressure not to wear it.

In contrast, Mme. Richard and M. Leroy's comments encapsulate the dominant contemporary discourse, viewing female Muslim students as victims of a patriarchal community and *laïcité* a way of liberating them. As shown in the excerpt below, Mme. Richard was concerned whether or not female students had a choice to wear the *voile*.

ça dépend aussi de sa motivation, hein ? pourquoi porte-t-elle le voile ? est-ce qu'elle le porte parce que dans la famille on lui a dit qu'il fallait le faire où bien, c'est d'elle-même qu'elle veut afficher quelque chose ? (...) Si on était certain que la jeune fille ait décidé d'elle-même de le porter, c'est vrai que les choses seraient beaucoup plus faciles, c'est pas forcément le cas. Je pense qu'il y a quand même des pressions.

(it depends on her motivation, right? Why does she wear the *voile*? Does she wear it because in her family she was told she had to do it, or does it come from her that she wants to display something? (...) If we were sure that the young girl decided to wear it on her own, it's true that things would be much easier, it's not necessarily the case. I think there are still some pressure.). (Interview 2, May 11, 2018)

Mme. Richard raised several questions which all pointed at whether or not female students were pressured to wear the *voile* by their families. She answered these questions herself, claiming it was not necessarily their decision and that there must be some pressure. She also suggested that if wearing the *voile* was a personal choice, the motivation must be to “display something,” which means Mme. Richard did not consider this decision in relation to personal religious beliefs but more as a public statement of identity.

M. Leroy also believed the *voile* was not about religion but rather “cette affirmation d’identité qui permet d’appartenir à un groupe et qui passe par la religion, mais par une religion ignorée. Elles n’ont jamais lu le coran, aucune idée de ce qu’est le coran” (this identity affirmation which allow belonging to a group and whose medium is religion, but an overlooked religion. They have never read the Qur’an, no idea what is the Qur’an). M. Leroy’s statement is more matter of fact than Mme. Richard. He is not raising any questions, and he seems confident in his belief that female students have never read the Qur’an. To prove this, he explained “dans le coran il n’est jamais dit que la femme doit être voilée. Il y a une sourate, qui doit être la sourate 24 où il est question de se voiler la gorge, mais il n’est pas question de se voiler le visage” (nowhere in the Qur’an it is said women must be veiled. There is a surah, which must be surah 24 which is about covering the throat but is not about covering the face). In fact, Surah 24:31, is interpreted differently by Muslims and some do not believe a headscarf is required.

He is therefore repeating a common discourse but because he is a figure of authority in this context, M. Leroy positions himself as an expert in the interpretation of the Qur’an and claims to know more than Muslim students. Later, he recalled a discussion he had with a student who wore the *voile*. He told her she would not get a job if she was veiled. He conceded that “que tu aies une foi religieuse” (you having a religious faith is one thing) but then he quickly

discarded this possibility and said “qu’elle n’a pas, puisqu’elle n’a rien compris” (which she does not have because she has not understood anything). M. Leroy believes female Muslim students have not read the Qur’an and that even if they think they have a faith they have not “understood anything,” which is paternalistic, and reveals an attitude which was common in the colonial era.

Indeed, M. Leroy often implied the wearing of the *voile* was a backward tradition imposed on women. For example, he remarked: “Quel avenir vont avoir ces jeunes filles ? si ce n’est se retrouver mariée et femme soumise à la maison. Quel avenir !” (What future will these young girls have? Except being married and being a submissive wife at home. What a future!). In this excerpt, M. Leroy portrays Muslim female students who wear the *voile* as being forced in a traditional role with no agency. I find M. Leroy’s attitude echoes colonialism because he assumes these students are victims who have to be saved from their own people. Like Mondon (2016) argued, “the very act of unveiling a Muslim woman” is “a reminiscent of some of the darkest hours of French history” (p. 2) that is the French propaganda in the 1950’s in occupied Algeria, with posters such as in Figure 6 aiming at convincing women to remove their veils:

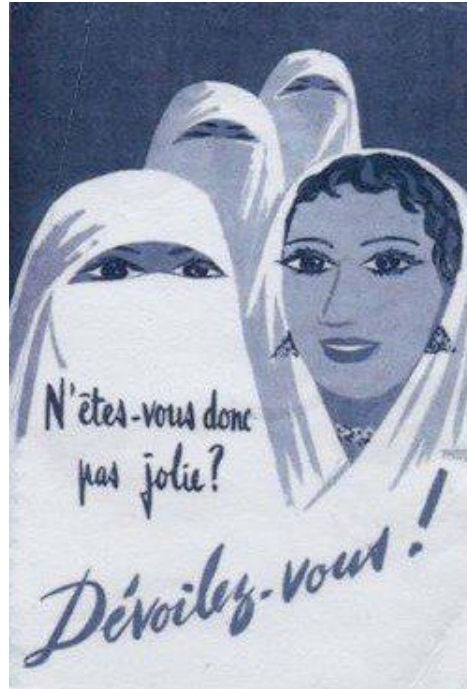


Figure 6. Poster published in Algeria in the 1950's by the French government: “Aren't you pretty? Unveil yourself!”

Mondon then concluded that listening to Muslim women is unnecessary because “the country of the Rights of Man knew best what was right for its women” (p. 3). Similarly, M. Leroy implies that he knew best what choices women should make.

Nora was familiar with this dominant discourse and provided a response both to the assumption of being forced and not understating the Qur'an, saying, “si une femme elle est obligée de porter le voile et de réciter du coran alors qu'elle sait rien, ben elle va pas y pendre goût, elle va détester cette religion” (if a woman is forced to wear the voile and to recite the Qur'an even though she knows nothing, well she is not going to like it, she will hate this religion). (Interview 0, January 8, 2015). Her comment shows that M. Leroy's beliefs, though disturbing, merely echo common prejudices, and that to her such ideas are unconceivable. According to Mikail (2004) the dominant discourse in France portrays the wearing of the voile as

“synonyme à la fois de soumission de la femme musulmane et de pratiques héritées d’un autre temps” (both synonym of the Muslim woman’s submission and practices inherited from a previous era) and this is cited as one of the main reasons for the 2004 ban. Mondon (2016), likewise, while criticizing the 2016 law banning burkinis on French beaches, wrote that French politicians believed “subscribing to Islam could no longer be considered as a matter of agency: it meant being under the power of a sexist, violent, uncivilized community” (p. 408). However, these beliefs and the ban actually deprive female Muslim students of their agency. As Jasmine clearly said, she did not feel “free in fact, not free to do what I wanted in fact, to dress like I want....”

In alignment with these claims, M. Leroy, still talking to the same student, told her about “le grand principe de la laïcité c’est que la religion c’est de l’ordre de la vie privée” (the great principle of *laïcité* is that religion is in the realm of private life). He argues that this principle was in place to protect her in the public sphere, to avoid having “faire fermer toutes les portes” (all the doors closed) and also as he said above not being forced into marriage and a life of servitude. Deconstructing his conversation with this student, it becomes apparent that M. Leroy was trying to convince her that *laïcité* was a guarantor of her rights as a woman, which is a way *laïcité* is often presented in France (Mondon, 2015, 2016; Selby 2011).

In the next section, I will challenge M. Leroy’s and policy makers’ pretense of *laïcité* as secularism and the idea that religion is not visible in the French public sphere and more specifically in schools.

Is France a secular country? In the public discourse *laïcité* is the heritage of a long tradition of the separation of Church and State and is understood as a means to prevent religious symbols and beliefs from coming into the public sphere. My data made me doubt these two

common assumptions, first because the students pointed out the Christian tradition in France and second, it became apparent that *laïcité*'s application resulted in double standards in regard to what is considered an acceptable religious symbol or even categorized as a religious symbol.

France sees itself as a secular country and yet half of the student participants (Soukaina, Azouz, Asmae, Nora and Khaled) said France was a Christian country and the ban on the *voile* was a way of protecting France's religion. Indeed, when I asked Soukaina to explain why the *voile* was banned, she said, "Ben parce que déjà on est dans un pays euh... français, donc ici oui c'est le christianisme. C'est plus le christianisme" (well because first we are in a country hmm... French, and so here yes it's Christianity. It's more the Christianity) (Interview 3, April 27, 2016). Similarly, Khaled felt not everybody was affected by *laïcité* in the same way because, "je trouve que heu... comment expliquer? heu ils sont plus indulgents... enfin ils sont plus tolérants avec les chrétiens, je pense. (...) parce la France à la base c'est un pays chrétien non ? Je suis pas sûr. (I think that hmm... how can I explain? hmm they are more lenient... well they are more tolerant with Christians, I think. (...)) because France originally it's a Christian country no? I'm not sure). (Interview 2, April 27, 2016).

Soukaina and Khaled's interpretation of *laïcité*, was the opposite of the basis on which the principle was based. This made me look closer at this claim that I had taken for granted when I was growing up in France and I started to see some inconsistencies, some of which were directly pointed out by students. For example, just after the eid al-fitr, which marks the end of the month of Ramadan, several students complained that there was no holiday. Soukaina remarked that Ramadan was exactly the equivalent of Christmas, "C'est exactement pareil et donc et encore pour Noël il y a les vacances tout ça..." (It's exactly the same and so, and yet, for

Christmas there are holidays and all...). Students felt it was not fair that for their major holiday they could only take one day off, while they had two weeks off for Christmas.

As a matter of fact, the longest school holidays in France are Christian holidays (All Saints, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost). Though I do not consider myself a religious person, I was brought up in a Catholic tradition: I did my two communions, I served as an altar girl for a few years and spent four years in a Catholic middle school. Because of my upbringing, we celebrated Christian holidays, and in my youth I never questioned the paradox of secular schools following a Christian calendar. When I returned to France to conduct this research, I had been away from a Christian environment for a long time, and I was more aware of the subtle but recurring Christian influences and references in French society. For example, during lessons, I heard several references to Jesus, references that were presented as being part of common knowledge, as illustrated below with my notes from M. Lambert's class.

This lesson was dedicated to a close reading of an extract of *The Plague* in which a child is agonizing, dying from the disease. M. Lambert then wanted students to compare the death of this innocent child to the death of Jesus:

M. Lambert: "Quel est le plus grand innocent mort?" (Who is the greatest dead innocent?).

Abdel: Jesus

M. Lambert: Oui (Yes)

Classroom laughs.

M. Lambert asked Abdel: Pourquoi Jésus c'est le plus grand innocent? Jésus Christ c'est qui ? (why is Jesus the greatest innocent? Who is Jesus Christ?)

Abdel: Il a été sacrifié (He was sacrificed)

M. Lambert: Oui mais l'imaginaire collectif c'est qui? (yes, but in the collective psyche, who is he?)

Another student (Franco-French): le fils de Dieu (the son of God).

The teacher approved the answer and continued to talk about God and his unfair, unjust character. Abdel looked puzzled. Soukaina stopped listening. (Observation, May 18, 2016).

When M. Lambert asked the question “who is the greatest dead innocent?” he had a specific answer in mind, which Abdel provided: Jesus. M. Lambert accepted the answer but he wanted a more complete one and so he asked two more leading questions about who Jesus was. Abdel offered an answer which M. Lambert accepted with a “but” indicating this was still not the answer he was expecting. To offer further guidance, he said “in the collective psyche, who is he?” A Franco-French student finally provided the “right” answer: “the son of God.” M. Lambert’s use of “collective psyche” alongside the definite article “the” reinforces the idea that there is a unique psyche in which Jesus is the “the son of God.” By doing so, M. Lambert created an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991) which excludes non-Christian students, the same way Mme. Richard had when assuming everybody knew Ronsard’s poem.

Abdel seemed genuinely disturbed by this statement, which can be understood given his faith in Islam, a religion which does not recognize Jesus as the son of God. M. Lambert spent the rest of the lesson developing the comparison between the child in Camus’s novel and the death of Christ, without ever contextualizing this interpretation as being from a Christian’s perspective. I argue that this omission illustrates M. Lambert’s and the religious bias of the curriculum, where Christianity is seen as the default religion. Events like this one could explain why half of the student participants considered France a Christian country. Another reason for this belief could be the legitimization of Christian symbols.

Religious symbols and the double standards of laïcité. What struck me during one of the first class I observed, was the number of students wearing Christian symbols. In my notes from Mme. Richard's class I made the following comments:

As I looked around the room I saw behind me a female student wearing a big earring shaped as a cross. I then looked around more carefully for any other religious signs and saw 3 female students wearing baptism medals with the Virgin Mary engraved in them. (Observation, September 10, 2015)

I then raised the following questions: Are French schools secular? Are no religious signs visible? M. Lambert when asked about what *laïcité* meant said with irony:

alors en théorie (laughs) normalement ils n'ont pas le droit d'avoir tout signe distinctif religieux, sauf que on a toujours des élèves qui ont une croix par exemple, alors c'est dissimulé, c'est caché ça, c'est un petit collier, c'est un bijou, sauf qu'il y a la croix

(so in theory (laughs) so they should not have the right to wear any distinctive religious symbol, expect that there are always students who have a cross for example, so it is concealed, that's hidden, it's a small necklace, it's a piece of jewelry, except that it's a cross). (M. Lambert, Interview 2, May 12, 2016)

In this excerpt, M. Lambert shows the gap between what the theory says and what happens in practice. Indeed, some students wear religious symbols, but they are Christian symbols and therefore are accepted. Mme. Richard also talked about her daughter's friends in primary school who, the week before their communion wear "une grosse croix en guise de pendentif" (a big cross as a pendant) but like M. Lambert, Mme. Richards suggested this was just a piece of jewelry, "bon certes ça peut être décoratif aussi une croix" (of course it can be decorative too, a cross) (Mme. Richard, Interview 2, May 11, 2016).

I recognize in this comment what Mondon (2015) referred to as "double standards in regard to Islam" (p. 410). The two excerpts below illustrate this double standard. Mme. Durantet and Nora talk about fashionable T. Shirts with a cross on them, but the meaning they associate with these differ.

Mme. Durantet : j'ai pas eu d'autres signes ostentatoires, à part oui des fois des grosses croix, mais c'est plus, ça n'a rien à voir à la limite avec la religion, c'est des fois des T-shirts, c'est la mode...

(There are no other ostensible symbols, except yes sometimes big crosses, but it's more, it has nothing to do with religion in the end, it's sometimes T-shirts, it's the fashion...)
(Interview 1, May 13, 2016)

Nora : vous savez il y a la mode, il y a une époque où la croix sur les T-shirts étaient autorisée, alors que la main de Fatima, même si c'est pas religieux la main de Fatima, puisque nous normalement on n'a pas le droit de la porter, mais la main de Fatima elle est pas autorisée, donc la laïcité en fait, ça ouais, ça touche plus les musulmans...

(You know there is a fashion, there was a time when the cross on T-shirts was authorized, whereas the hand of Fatima, even if it's not religious the hand of Fatima it's not authorized, so *laïcité* in fact, yes it affects more Muslims...) (Interview 3, April 28, 2016)

While Mme. Durantet sees these T-shirts as fashionable accessories, Nora compares them to other symbols which are not accepted such as the hand of Fatima, a popular decorative motif in North Africa because they are connected to the Muslim religion.

Farid, Jasmine, Nora, Azouz, Leila, Soukaina, and Asmae all reported seeing students wearing crosses at school, and both Azouz and Leila specified that there were small. The discussion about the size of the cross reveals the “fuzzy” nature of the 2004 ban (Brau, 2005, Mondon 2015, Artagna, 2016). Brau (2005) claimed the March 2004 law is open to interpretation and though the May 2004 memorandum brings some clarifications by listing unacceptable signs such as the Islamic veil, the Jewish kippah and a cross “de dimension manifestement excessive” (of manifestly excessive size) (Journal officiel, 2004). This distinction means its application remains subjective and that discreet religious symbols such as a small cross or a baptism medal are authorized. The Secularism Monitoring Center (Observatoire de la laïcité, 2014), specified that “clothings that are based on religion (...) can arose hostility and distrust” and then gives a definition of “proselytism.” The *voile* is not directly mentioned, but since it was at the center of

the polemic when the 2004 passed, the connection is easy to make. Behind this subjectivity hides a form of discrimination, as Muslim religious symbols have come to be seen as a threat to national unity and have become the target of *laïcité*. In the next section, my data illustrate how *laïcité* affected the student participants.

Laïcité and its impact on Franco-Maghrebi students. When we started talking about *laïcité* a majority of students initially agreed with this principle, believing that it was to ensure equality. Farid, Jasmine, Leila, Nora, and Khaled stated it made all the students equal. Azouz said it was important in order to live together. Salima said it was to avoid people who had a religion to feel marginalized. However, as we spent more time on the topic, Asmae, Nora, Azouz, Abdel and Leila agreed no matter what the principle implied, they were all different. For example, Asmae said, “on vient pas du même endroit, on n’est pas les mêmes” (we don’t come from the same place, we are not the same) to which Nora added, “Mais même, pas que par l’endroit, par notre personnalité, tout court on sera jamais tous pareils, il y aura toujours des différences, même s’ils veulent enlever les différences à l’école... il y aura quand même des différences, ça sert à rien...” (but even, not just the place, by our personality, just this we will never all be the same, there will always be differences, even if they want to remove the differences at school... there will still be differences, it’s pointless.) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016).

In these quotes, Nora and Asmae undermine the pretense of equality associated with *laïcité* because of their cultural background and simply because of who they are, students will never be the same. Nora criticized the school’s pointless efforts in “removing these differences.” I read in Nora and Asmae’s comments a description of France’s assimilation policy and according to Simon (2004), a French sociodemographer who studied ethnic segregation in

France, the debate about the *voile* is deeply rooted in France's resistance to acknowledging its multicultural nature. In the excerpt below Abdel expresses a similar opinion:

Ben il faut accepter nos différences, je crois c'est la meilleure chose à faire. (...) en fait sur le papier la laïcité, si on lit on a l'impression que tout le monde est mis au même pied d'égalité, mais heu... en réalité il y en a certains qui sont plus avantagés que les autres. (...) ça vise une population et c'est pire, en fait ça fait un creux, ça fait qu'empirer en fait. Ben ça creuse un écart, à la place de réparer l'erreur ben ils en rajoutent en fait.

(Well we have to accept our differences, I think that's the best thing to do. (...) in fact on the paper *laïcité*, if we read we have the impression that everybody is put on the same level, but hmm... in reality some are more advantaged than others.

It targets a population and it's worse and worse, in fact it makes a hollow, it's only getting worse in fact. (...) it digs a gap, instead of repairing the error well they add to it in fact.)

(Interview 3, May 2, 2016).

In this narrative, Abdel shows he clearly sees through the policy which is meant to make all the students feel equal when in fact, it creates a deep gap between them. After this conversation with Abdel, I felt my own opinion had shifted even more. I wrote in my notes:

After I talked to Abdel about *laïcité*, I realized how much my view of this principle has evolved during my fieldwork. It had already changed when I lived in Morocco, but this time, talking with the people who are affected by it makes me see a different perspective. I now see a real gap between this conviction shared by so many people around me, including my friends and family that *laïcité* is a beautiful principle which needs to be promoted, protected – and the pain and feelings of injustice it generates. All the participants' perspectives have added to my take on this policy, especially Abdel and Nora who seemed to have such a clear awareness of the bigger picture. (Fieldnotes, May 2, 2016)

For Abdel, accepting differences would be the best solution, instead of trying to erase them. Abdel's comment summarizes the discrepancy between the initial aim and presentation of the policy, and the effect it has in practice, which is to stigmatize a community. Brau (2005), also remarked, "Conçue comme moyen d'apaiser les conflits autour du principe de *laïcité*, la loi du 15 mars 2004, les a, au contraire envenimé." (Designed as a means to appease conflicts concerning

laïcité, the March 15, 2004 law, on the contrary, aggravated them) (Brau, 2005). In light of this, I argue that this law is discriminatory, as it targets certain students “whose religious habits were perceived as threatening” (Mondon, 2015, p. 408).

Laïcité stigmatizes female Muslim students.

During my study I became more and more aware of the students’ sense of injustice towards this policy; but it was most clearly expressed by Nora in our conversation below, where she talked about her friend’s experience with the ban. I have divided this conversation in two parts in order to analyze two different aspects:

Nora : Ben je sais qu’il y en a une elle est énervée parce que, déjà juste elle met un bandeau, ils lui disent enlève ton bandeau. Un bandeau simple hein ? alors que moi si je porte un bandeau ils ne vont rien me dire parce que je ne porte pas le voile. Mais elle vu qu’elle porte le voile ils lui disent enlève ton bandeau, c’est religieux. Ça l’énervé parce qu’un bandeau, elle pourrait quand même mettre un bandeau pour tenir ses cheveux.

Sandrine : Donc ils insistent vraiment ?

Nora : Oui des fois elle l’enlève juste après le portail, ils lui disent, non non, tu ressorts, et tu l’enlèves dehors. Et je me dis mais...

(Nora: Well I know that one of them she is angry because, first she wears just a headband, they tell her take your headband off. A headband simple eh? Whereas me if I wear a headband they are not going to tell me anything because I don’t wear the voile. But her because she wears the voile they tell her take your headband off, it’s religious. It makes her angry because a headband, she could wear at least a headband to hold her hair.

Sandrine: So they really insist?

Nora: Yes, sometimes, she takes it off just after the gate, they tell her, no no you go back out and you take it off outside. And I tell myself, but...)

In the first part of the conversation, Nora recounted an episode in which her friend was asked to remove her headband even though as Nora pointed out it is not a religious symbol. Nora also remarked that because, contrary to her friend, she does not usually wear the *voile*, and thus

Nora would be allowed to wear a similar headband. When Nora and I talk about “they,” we mean the “surveillants” the people whose job is to carry out the policy in this context. From this narrative, we can see how forcefully they apply the policy. Indeed, when Nora’s friend walks through the gate with her headband and then takes it off, she is asked to go back out again to take it off *outside* before she can come in. By doing this, the “surveillants” send the message that the accessory she wears constitutes a threat to the functioning of the school or the people in it.

The treatment she gets when she is actually not wearing any conspicuous religious symbol is extreme and reveals what is really at stakes with *laïcité*, which really is straightforward discrimination. Indeed, Nora’s friend has been positioned (Davies and Harré, 1990) by the school authority as “Muslim,” an identity that is “coercively applied” (Young, 2008), which means it is not negotiable. What’s more, Nora’s friend’s identity has been essentialized by the institution, what Mondon refers to as “Muslimness,” which implies “certain innate beliefs/attributes.” With this label, “one is Muslim and as, such, innately suspicious” and to preclude “them” from fundamental rights is therefore justified (Mondon, 2016). Nora’s friend is reprimanded not for wearing a *voile* but for having identified as Muslim and in this instance, *laïcité* is reinforced not against a religious symbol, but against a certain community. I see a parallel with Mehta’s (2010) study on Negotiating Arab-Muslim Identity in Paris housing projects and the author’s reference to “manufactured identities” imposed on French Muslims, which “sustain a universally ratified construction of an equally ‘imagined’ French identity that subverts transnationality in a reductive and racist French/non-French equation” (p. 181).

Mehta explains the construction of these identities by the “not-so-disguised search for preserving cultural and religious homogeneity,” in other words, *laïcité*, which has led to institutionalized discrimination against Muslims. Similarly, the 2016 French commission of

“luttres de discriminations à l’École” (struggle against discriminations at school), pointed out “le voile islamique (...) pose problème non pas tant en sa qualité de signe religieux, en ce qu’il cristallise un ensemble de rapports de pouvoirs sociaux et historiques” (the Islamic *voile* constitutes a problem not so much in its nature as a religious sign, as it crystalizes several social and historical power relationships) (p. 4). The authors of this report then put forward France’s unresolved colonial past and the underlying hostility against immigrants and their descendants, implying the *voile* is only an excuse to legitimize and institutionalize discrimination and racism. Although it is a fact 9/11 and the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks have aggravated the situation for Muslims in France, this tension originates in France’s colonial past.

From a postcolonial perspective, I see in this scene a “clash of civilizations,” which Wacquant (2004), defined as “the confrontation between two social systems locked in asymmetrical relations of material and symbolic power” (p. 393). I argue this asymmetrical relation of power is a residue of the colonial system which as Begag (2007a) noted, did not end with the decolonization of the Maghreb but which has been carried over from the former French colonies to France.

In his early work in Algeria, Bourdieu wrote the colonial system kept the “dominated caste (...) locked into a situation of collective ‘humiliation’” (1961, p. 28), and I see a replication of this situation in the second part of Nora’s narrative,

Sandrine : et à ton avis qu’est-ce que ça peut lui faire ?

Nora : Ben je pense déjà que devant tout le monde, heu... ça lui fait honte, parce qu’elle est marginalisée, enfin elle est seule comme ça, et je sais pas, elle comprend pas (...) Surtout que les élèves, moi je sais que la plupart des élèves, heu... ils s’entendent bien avec la fille qui est voilée, il n’y a pas de conflits, il n’y a rien, ça ne la différencie pas des autres, elle est pas seule, elle est normale.

Sandrine : Donc c’est l’école, l’institution qui...

Nora : oui c'est l'institution qui la rend marginale parce que du fait qu'on l'interdit ça veut dire qu'elle est différente, donc si elle est différente, les gens ils vont la voir d'une autre manière du moment qu'elle sera interdite.

Sandrine: and according to you what does it do to her?

Nora: Well I think that in front of everybody, hmm... it shames her, because she is marginalized, well she is alone like this, and I don't know, she doesn't understand (...)
Especially since the students, I know that most of the students, hmm... they get on well with the veiled girl, there are no conflicts, there is nothing, it does not differentiate her from others, she is not alone, she is normal.

Sandrine: So it's the school, the institution which...

Nora: Yes, it's the institution which makes her marginal because of the fact it is banned, it means she is different, so if she is different, people are going to look at her in a different way as long as it is banned). (Interview 3, April 28, 2016)

First I want to draw attention to how Nora's comments show an awareness of the social construction of the rule and its impact. Nora said her friend experienced "shame" in front of everybody. From the sense of injustice Nora, Abdel, and as we will see later Leila, Jasmine and Asmae expressed when talking about students having to remove their *voile*, I argue that this feeling of shame or "humiliation" was shared by other students who identified with this community. Nora believes that without the ban, her friend would feel normal and be accepted and the policy is what makes her feel rejected or seen as "other."

In postcolonial theory, Said (1993) described how the Western gaze, here in the person of the "surveillants," constructs the Orient or the colonized, represented by Nora's friend, as outside or "Other." Still drawing from Mehta's work (2010), the way Nora's friend was treated could constitute "religious profiling" a result of the "imposed secularism," which results in "a permanent state of Othering" and "a continued stigmatizing" of the Franco-Maghrebi youth. More recently, the national report about struggle against discriminations at school (Artagna,

2016), qualified forcibly removing the *voile* from female Muslim student as an “indirect discrimination” which they define as “une disposition, un critère ou une pratique neutre en apparence susceptible d’entraîner un désavantage particulier pour des personnes par rapport à d’autres personnes” (a disposition, a criteria or a practice which looks neutral in appearance, likely to lead to a disadvantage to some people in relations to others) (p. 4). Whether or not this form of discrimination is legally qualified as “direct” or “indirect” there is evidence that, as Nora claimed, the policy stigmatizes Franco-Maghrebi students.

Laïcité and the feeling of being rejected. When I asked students how they personally felt about having to remove the *voile* or how they thought others felt, they said they felt rejected, not welcome and having to change who they were in order to better fit in. I have selected three excerpts in which students talk about having to leave aside their beliefs, which are a part of themselves, or even their personalities, when they walk through the school gate. In the first excerpt, Leila critiques the policy, saying:

Leila : Ben ça doit être chiant, enfin ça doit être vraiment chiant.

Sandrine : Pourquoi ?

Leila : Ben de pratiquer sa religion et d’arriver dans une sphère qui est publique normalement où on respecte chaque personne, et qu’au final non on est obligé de se changer, de changer ce que l’on croit et l’enlever pendant la période du lycée.

(Leila: Well it must be a pain in the ass, well it must be a real pain in the ass.

Sandrine: Why?

Leila: Well to practice one’s religion and to arrive in a sphere which is public where we should respect every person, and that in the end we are obliged to change ourselves, to change what we believe and to take it off when we are in the school). (Interview 2, May 2, 2016)

Leila is upfront about what she thinks of the ban and repeats twice how “chiant” it must be for students who have to remove the *voile*. She also uncovers one of the paradoxes of *laïcité*: that it is supposed to ensure everybody is respected when, in fact, some have to “change who they are and believe in” whenever they are at school. She later added that “leur croyance, ça définit un peu ce qu’ils sont, et ils peuvent pas être ça” (their belief, it kind of defines a bit who they are and they can’t be that).

Leila draws an interesting parallel between a person’s belief and their self. Though some of Bourdieu’s most basic concepts have their roots in the study of religion, he did not explicitly link ones’ habitus and religious belief. However, because the habitus constitutes a set of dispositions of ingrained attitudes (ways of speaking, of dressing) and perceptions, it influences the way we perceive the world and as a consequence what we believe in. I therefore suggest Leila’s reference to a student’s religious belief and her sense of self can be extended to her habitus, with the *voile* being an external index of this habitus. In the scene described by Leila, but even more so in the previous section with Nora’s narrative, the student’s habitus had to confront and adjust to a new social environment, where the school policy was directly in contradiction to her habitus.

Although Leila’s friend’s internal reality remained the same, that is to say she was still a young practicing female Muslim, her lived reality came to a point of crisis. This was a disjoint situation where her religious beliefs and practices clashed with the school’s policy, and as a result she had to comply in a way that contradicted with her habitus, and her sense of self. She had to at least in appearance, “change herself, change what she believed in” and could not be who she really was. The excerpt below further illustrates the idea of students having to alter their habitus,

Asmae : De l’enlever ? ben ça enlève une partie d’eux, une partie importante (...) Mais ouais, ça enlève une partie d’eux, ça les prive de quelque chose, qui est pour eux normal.

(To take it off? Well it takes away a part of themselves, an important part (...). But yeah, it takes away a part of themselves, it deprives them of something that for them is normal). (Interview 3, April 28, 2016).

Asmae equates the action of having to remove a *voile* as having to remove an important part of a person, a part that is common to them and that reflects an ingrained product of a shared practice as practitioner of a religion. She sees the ban as depriving them of a part of themselves. Finally, in the last excerpt Salima talks about her personal experience and how for her coming to school means having to leave her personality behind,

Salima : quand je le mets, c'est plus ma personnalité.

Sandrine : Et quand tu viens à l'école ?

Salima : Ben je la laisse de côté en fait.

Sandrine : Qu'est-ce que tu laisses de côté ?

Salima : Ben ma personnalité...

Sandrine : et c'est dur ?

Salima : Ben oui, il faut que je devienne quelqu'un d'autre pour qu'on m'accepte.

(Salima: when I wear it, it's more my personality.

Sandrine: and when you come to school?

Salima: Well I leave it aside in fact.

Sandrine: What do you leave aside?

Salima: Well my personality?

Sandrine: and it's hard?

Salima: Well yes, I have to become someone else to be accepted). Interview 4, May 6, 2016)

Salima's narrative reveals the most negative effect the ban on the *voile* can have. She corroborates Asmae's claim that the *voile* is an important part of the person who decides to wear it and actually Salima claims it is her personality, meaning it is more than what she looks like or what she believes in, it is who she feels she is. Yet, when she comes to school, she has no choice but to "leave her personality aside." Salima's narrative also reflects the microprocesses of "symbolic domination" (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1991): the tacit social, cultural and (in this case) spiritual domination which the institution uses to maintain control over students' practices and beliefs by imposing a norm. Through her decision to wear the *voile* Salima's practices and beliefs deviate from the norm, and I think this points to the crucial aspect of the policy, that it affects female students more directly, and it is thus felt as an injustice by many Franco-Maghrebi students, more especially Abdel, Farid, Asmae, Leila, Jasmine, and Nora, because they have to not only leave their cultural and linguistic practices outside, but also who they are.

Barsali et. al (2003) referred to this youth as "des français pas comme les autres" (French with a difference), whose "unassailable cultural differences" fed a new form of racism and justified new forms of control (Mehta, 2010), embodied in the ban on the *voile*. As a matter of fact, in their study of Islamophobia in the French context, Hajjat and Mohammed (2013), described the discourse around the ban on the *voile* as "revealing of the will to discipline bodies and minds: the bodies and minds of Muslims are undisciplined, they refuse to adapt to 'Republican' mental structures and must be subjected to a particular form of discipline" (p. 152).

I argue that this new interpretation of *laïcité* is in alignment with France's assimilation policies and constitutes a way of maintaining a narrow definition of Frenchness through the production of "docile bodies." According to Foucault (1995) "a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (p. 136). Foucault believed docility is achieved

through the actions of discipline and that disciplinary institutions, like schools, created a mechanism of control through constant surveillance. Once Salima (and other students who wear the *voile*) enter the school gates, they are under the constant gaze of the “surveillants” and this surveillance ensures the control of their body by forcing them to remove their *voile*, and also their minds, by forcing them to go against what they believe is right: that is, the practice of covering their heads in accordance with their faith. This form of discipline is different from force or violence but achieves the desired result: “docile bodies” who comply with the policy.

From Salima’s perspective, it is felt as a rejection of her personality. Salima’s words, “I have to become someone else to be accepted” suggests her internal struggles while having to negotiate her multiple identities. She does not see herself as a legitimate member of the school and in order to belong she has to leave aside a reminder of her difference, of her Muslim identity, in other words, the *sine qua non* condition for her to be accepted in the school, is to prove she can adopt and adapt to the principle of *laïcité* and the normative standards of “Frenchness.” As Olivier Roy (2005) states:

Les musulmans de France n'ont toujours pas obtenu leur légitimité à faire partie de la nation française et la société française, comme toutes les sociétés majoritaires envers les minorités vivant en leur sein, demande des gages, des gages de fidélité, des gages d'allégeance : « on veut un islam 'à la française', libérale, voire... laïque » (p. 46).

(Muslims of France still have not obtained their legitimacy to be part of the French nation and society, like all the majority societies towards minorities who live in them, asking for tokens, tokens of fidelity, tokens of allegiance: “we want a French Islam, liberal, even ... secular”).

From the students’ narratives about *laïcité*, removing the *voile* can be seen as this “token of allegiance” to the French republican school and its value. In addition, as Lalami (2007) stated, “millions of French citizens with ancestral roots in North Africa are being told... in order to be French, they must “integrate” by giving up that which makes them different—Islam,” even

though the religion is not regarded as a set of beliefs but rather, as an innate and unbridgeable attribute, based on the racist notion of innate differences between French citizens of Maghrebi origin and those of European origins.

***Laïcité*, a summary.** In this section I have demonstrated how *laïcité* is considered a founding principle in Charles Dupuy and as a consequence is strictly applied. My data illustrate how *laïcité* has shifted its focus from a separation of the State and the Church to the ban on the *voile*, a Muslim religious symbol that is now seen as a threat, thereby creating paradoxes and inconsistencies. Indeed, under its pretenses of being a guarantor of equality and women’s right in the public sphere, the student participants’ narratives reveal the stigmatizing and discriminating effects of *laïcité* targeted against Muslims communities. *Laïcité* in this sense has legitimized and institutionalized a “Republican racism” (Gèze & Manceron, 2017), while still eschewing France’s violent colonial past. It seems that 14 years after the ban on the *voile* was passed, Bourdieu’s comment is still relevant: “Should wearing the “Islamic” *voile* be accepted at school?— hides the implicit question—Should immigrants of North African origin be accepted in France?” The practices revealed in my research indicate that for many, and in key policies of the school and the state, the answer is “no.”

In this chapter, I explored the three main themes, which emerged from the data when I asked the participants about their schooling experience—*baccalauréat*, *culture Générale*, and *laïcité*. I enquired about the origins of each themes, and I analyzed how in practice they impacted the participants’ schooling experience, thereby revealing how Franco-Maghrebi students position themselves within the school and how they are positioned by agents and discourses of the school. In the last analysis chapter, I show how the students’ schooling experiences impact their sense of

selves and how the participants negotiate the constraints of the school system and societal discourses.

Chapter 8: New identities, new worlds

In this chapter, I answer my third research question: How do the experiences of schooling, as described in the two previous analysis chapters, impact the students' sense of selves? How do participants negotiate identities and create new worlds? These themes are crucial to make sense of my data, to reconcile dichotomies between the participants' individual experiences and narratives as recorded, and the impact of these experiences on the wider social historical contexts. This chapter, thus, is about how individuals find ways to resist, assume, or negotiate identities by creating new narratives and new possibilities for their future and the future of their sociocultural environment. First, I summarize how the students positioned themselves and how they were positioned by others. Second, I demonstrate how the students invested in other identities and how Islam played an important role in this identity construction. Third, I showed how the students' sense of selves were impacted by the violent events which took place during my research. Finally, I discuss the participants' reactions to taking part in my research.

Reflective Positioning vs. Interactive Positioning

I start this section by showing how the way the students position themselves differs from how they are positioned by others. The gap between self- and other-positioning, also termed by Davies and Harré (1990) reflective positioning and interactive positioning, leads to a negotiation of identities as a site of struggle. To account for this interplay, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) proposed a framework that differentiates three types of identities: "*imposed identities*, which are not negotiable in a particular time and place, *assumed identities*, which are accepted and not negotiated, and *negotiable identities*, which are contested by groups and individuals" (p. 21).

As explained in my framework, I view identities on one hand as emerging from sociocultural discourses, on the other hand, identities are also mediated by our habitus, our previous experiences, our beliefs, the past we share with our family and our community. In other words, our habitus shapes how we position ourselves and identities are therefore conditioned by affiliation and association.

To approach the topic of identities with the participants, the interviews followed the same pattern, which was. First, I asked the students which countries they identified with and how they positioned themselves in terms of nationalities, then I asked what they thought other people would call their nationalities and finally, I asked how they wanted to be positioned for the purpose of this dissertation. In Table 8.1, I summarize the students' answers.

Table 8.1

Summary of the students' answers.

Students' Name	Generation	How they positioned themselves	How they were positioned by others	How they wanted to be positioned for this research
Asmae	1 st	Moroccan (inside), French (a little bit), has lived in three countries	Moroccan, Arab	I am Muslim, I Arab and I am Maghrebi.
Abdel	1 st	More Moroccan than French, of Moroccan origin, but also Italy	French, terrorist after Charlie Hebdo	I am Moroccan, Maghrebi and Muslim and proud.
Khaled	1 st	Moroccan, not Moroccan, Berber; not French, Moroccan	A stranger because of my skin color, black, African	First I am Muslim, Muslim Maghrebi.
Nora	2 nd	French of Moroccan origin	Moroccan, sometimes Arab	I am from a Maghrebi family

		(both), from a Maghrebi family	but not often because of my white skin, Arab outside of school	and I am Muslim, can we have all 3 at the same time?
Farid	2 nd	French-Moroccan	French, of Moroccan origin	First I am Muslim and then Franco-Maghrebi.
Salima	2 nd	Algerian and French, both; Algerian	Arab all the time, and Algerian because you can see it.	I would say Franco-Maghrebi-Muslim.
Jasmine	2 nd	Kabyle and not Arab	I don't know, bad reputation	Muslim-Franco-Maghrebi
Leila	3 rd	French, Franco-Algerian (half, half)	Arab, Algerian because her skin is "not very white"	Franco-Maghrebi-Muslim but not necessary
Soukaina	3 rd	Moroccan first (because of my physical appearance), of Moroccan origin, French but not Arab	Arab and Muslim	First Muslim and Franco-Maghrebi
Azouz	3 rd	Neither, of Algerian origin, born in France	Arab because you can see it.	Of Maghrebi origin, I don't identify with a religion.

How did students position themselves? In Chapter 6, student participants reported using a wide linguistic repertoire. Similarly, students positioned themselves in multiple ways, which clashed with the essentialized way they were positioned by others. As shown in table 8.1, nine out of the ten students identified with more than one culture or one country, which mirrors the results of the 2009 survey *Trajectories and Origins: The Diversity of Population in France*, where a majority of the respondents claimed “plural allegiances” or used “hyphenated identities” (Simon, 2012). As a matter of fact, when I asked students how they identified themselves, they positioned

themselves in terms of their ethnic identities, French, and their countries of origin. I understand the concept of “ethnic identity” as being based on “shared history, descent, belief systems, practices, language and religion, all associated with a cultural group” (Block, 2007b, p. 43). The expression of their ethnic identities reflects a sense of affiliation with their countries of origin and/or France and reveals the students’ histories, trajectories and aspirations. This was especially the case with Asmae and Abdel, who had both transited through Italy before coming to France.

When I asked Asmae how she would introduce herself she said:

Je suis née en Italie, j’ai vécu dans trois pays différents, donc trois cultures, trois écoles, donc voilà... heu... quoi d’autre ? ben ch’suis étudiante, ben je suis musulmane, je suis arabe, et je suis une maghrébine, et voilà.

(I was born in Italy, I have lived in three different countries, and do three cultures, three schools, and so there... hmm... what else? Well I’m a student, well I am Muslim, I am Arab, and I am Maghrebi, and there.) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

Asmae expressed her affiliation to three countries, three cultures and positions herself in multiple ways in terms of her current occupation (a student), her religion (Muslim), her ethnic identity (Arab), and the region of her origin (Maghreb). I read in Asmae’s use of “and there” at the end of this sentence as a way of affirming these identities and an invitation for the listener to accept them all. Asmae’s and other students’ narratives resonate with the concept of “hybridity” which has been recently explored in SLA to describe complex, dynamic, changing, and plural identities (Block 2007). The concept was borrowed from postcolonial studies and more specifically Bhabha (1994) who defines “hybridity” as:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from a minority perspective, is a complex on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural transformation. (p. 2)

Looking at how students positioned themselves in table 8.1, it is interesting to notice how unpredictable and complex their answers were, and how they reflect both a sense of affiliation or antagonism. According to Block (2007b), a key concept of hybrid identities is “ambivalence,” which he describes as “the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart” and the “mutually conflicting feelings of love and hate” (p. 21). For example, Jasmine, Soukaina, and Khaled positioned themselves in opposition to another identity. Khaled first said he was Moroccan but then he said actually he was Berber and not Moroccan, and later he said he was not French but Moroccan. Similarly, Jasmine said she was Kabyle and insisted several times she was not Arabic. I see in Jasmine’s discourse a reflection of the struggle of the Kabyle people—a Berber ethnic group who have long fought with the Algerian government for the recognition of their language and culture. Similarly, Soukaina said she was Moroccan, French, and not Arab. Her identifying as Moroccan first was surprising because she is a third-generation immigrant, with most of her family in France, she had not kept close links with her country of origin and she reported not being able to speak Arabic. As de Jong (2011) pointed out, several studies have shown that “the link between language and identity can exist regardless of the level of proficiency in the language” (p. 32), which was obvious in Soukaina’s case. She explained, though, that her physical appearance was what made her feel Moroccan, illustrating how physical traits weigh both in self- and other-positioning (Young, 2008).

Further, the students often talked about this “articulation of difference” and the “complex on-going negotiation,” which they viewed sometimes as a richness and other times as a site of struggle.

Students’ positive experience of their hybrid identity. The majority of students (Abdel, Jasmine, Leila, Salima, Soukaina, Farid, Khaled, and Azouz) said they viewed their hybridity as

a richness. For example, Leila, said, “c’est intéressant, c’est deux cultures différentes qui se mélangent, mais ça fait quand même quelque chose de puissant je trouve. Ouais, voilà...” (it’s interesting, these two different cultures which mix with each other, but all the same it makes something powerful I think. Yeah, that’s it...) (Interview 1, September 17, 2015). Leila’s description of her identity illustrates the concept of hybridity, which is not simply the summing up of two pre-given sets in the fixed tablet of tradition cultures, but rather a *mélange*, resulting in a uniquely powerful, but also complex and unpredictable identity (Bhabha 1994, Block 2004). As a result of this hybridity, some students reported being able to navigate across cultures without feeling torn in between. For example, when I asked Azouz how it felt to have more than one culture, he replied, “j’ai jamais vraiment fait gaffe à ça (...) parce que j’ai toujours vécu avec les deux” (I have never really watched it (...) because I have always lived with both) (Interview 3 and 4, May 13, 2016). Azouz implies he does not think about two distinct cultures because he grew up with both and cannot differentiate between them. While Khaled and Leila said they were used to move across several cultures and that they could easily “s’intégrer” or blend in (Interview 3, May 6, 2016), Farid had an even more positive feeling, saying there was no problem moving from one culture to the other because they were similar and “il n’y a rien qui s’oppose” (there is nothing that contradicts each other) (Interview May 4, 2016). However, some students, especially female students felt differently about their hybrid identities, which they perceived more as a clash between two cultures.

Hybridity as a site of struggle. Indeed, Nora, Asmae, Jasmine, and Salima often talked about contradictions between the school and their home cultures. I asked Nora if she could easily move from one culture to the other and she said no because, “c’est pas du tout possible de naviguer entre les deux puisque c’est l’opposé... ouais... ça a rien à voir” (It’s not possible at all

to navigate between the two because it's the opposite... yeah... it's got nothing in common). She then suggested that, "avoir une culture je pense ça arrangerait les choses" (having one culture would make things easier) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015). What motivated Nora to wish she had a single culture was mostly the discomfort that she, Asmae, and Salima experienced on several occasions at school.

All three reported feeling "embarrassed" or even "ashamed" with some of the practices the school imposed on them, which clashed with their habitus as young female Muslim women, who were also first- or second-generation immigrants. For example, Asmae and Nora complained about having to learn about sex at school, especially with students of the opposite gender in the class:

Nora : Ben oui parce que nous ça nous gêne parce que chez nous c'est tabou, et on apprend ça à l'école avec des garçons de notre culture... donc c'est enfin je sais pas c'est...(laughs)

Asmae : ah ouais la honte...

Nora : Ouais je vois Farid il est en train d'écouter et moi j'écoute, c'est gênant...chez nous ça dit pas, ça se fait pas ça...

(Nora: Well yes because it bothers us because at home it taboo, and we learn about this at school with boys of our culture... so it's well I don't know it's (laughs)

Asmae: ah yeah the shame...

Nora: Yeah I see Farid he is listening and me I listen, it's embarrassing... at home we don't say that, we don't do that...) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

In this dialogue, Nora and Asmae clearly draw the lines between two different worlds—school and home—with contradictory cultural codes. They express feeling caught in the middle, feeling embarrassed and ashamed especially in front of male students who shared their culture and thereby know that talking about sex with the opposite gender is taboo. The

expression “at home” can be interpreted both literally as their home with their parents but also their country of origin. Indeed, later during the discussion, they talked about having to read texts or watch movies in their French class with nude scenes, which would not be permitted in Morocco:

Asmae : ouais c’est vraiment gênant...Même en français hein...

Nora : ouais en français quand on voit des textes enfin des images avec des femmes nues...

Asmae : oui et le film qu’on a vu là, toutes des femmes nues dedans... on peut pas parler...

(...)

Nora : en fait il y a des scènes je pense qu’au Maroc elles seraient censurées et tout...

(Asmae: yeah it’s really embarrassing... even in French eh...)

(Nora: yeah in French when we read texts well images with naked women...)

Asmae: yes, and the film that we watched there, all the naked women in it... we can’t talk...

(...)

Nora: in fact, these scenes I think that in Morocco they would be censored and all...)
(Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

Nora and Asmae felt the movie shown in their French class clashed with their values and their identity as Moroccan females. They reported being embarrassed and Asmae expressed her frustration by saying this was not easy because “on nous impose ces choses” (these things are imposed on us), implying they lacked agency. Similarly, when I asked Salima how she felt about navigating between her identities, the first issue she raised was being exposed to nude scenes in her French class:

Salima : Ben il y a pas longtemps on a regardé un film, *Bel Ami*²³ je crois, un film français, et il y avait des scènes, pas possibles, et en fait, chez moi, ces scènes on les regarde pas, dès qu'il a une scène, mon frère, il change vite, on se précipite sur la télécommande, et parce que heu... ça se fait pas chez nous, on parle pas du tout de ça.

Sandrine : Donc tu t'es sentie comment ?

Salima : Ben vraiment mal à l'aise, j'osais pas regarder, après je voyais les gens ils me regardaient, parce qu'ils savaient...

Sandrine : Ils savaient quoi ?

Salima : ben ils savaient que pour moi c'était un peu la honte, enfin j'avais honte... du coup je me cachais et les autres ils me regardaient.

(Salima : well not long ago we watched a movie, *Bel Ami* I think, a French movie, and there were some scenes, not possible, and in fact in my home, these scenes we don't watch them, as soon as there is a scene, my brother, he quickly changes, we jump on the remote control, and because hmm... we don't do that at home, we don't talk about all that.

Sandrine: So, how did you feel?

Salima: Well really ill at ease, I didn't dare to watch, after I could see people watching me, because they knew...

Sandrine: What did they know?

Salima: Well they knew that for me it was a bit shameful, well I was ashamed...and so I was hiding and the others they were watching me). (Interview 4, May 6, 2016)

Like Nora and Asmae, Salima expresses the discomfort she experienced in her class, but in her case this discomfort was more extreme and more painful, possibly because she wears *the voile* and as a consequence, this experience clashed even more with her habitus. Salima reports being “vraiment mal à l'aise” (very ill at ease) because she was raised in a family for whom

²³ *Bel Ami or the History of a Scoundrel*, is a novel written by Maupassant, which tells the story of a corrupt man who rises in the Parisian bourgeoisie by having affairs with wealthy women. The novel was recently made into a movie, which was rated R in the United States for “strong sexuality, nudity and brief language.”

watching such scenes would be unacceptable, but also ashamed to have to watch this in front of her peers.

I argue that M. Lambert, the teacher's choice to show this movie reflects the imposition of the French culture, the dominant group, for whom the practice of viewing such content may be more common and may not constitute a threat to their faith. Salima's feeling "I was hiding and the others they were watching me" conveys an unfair scene where the school denied her sense of identity and thereby propagated inequality and marginality. Indeed, Salima's expressed a sense of marginalization, of rejection or "othering" because she did not fit the norm of the social group and this common expectation that every individual in the room should feel at ease watching sex scene in a movie. I then draw a parallel between the scenes where Nora's friend had to remove her *voile* at the school gate and Salima who was forced to watch nude scenes in her class. In both cases, these students are being "othered" in front of their peers by being publicly forced to act in a way that contradicts their habitus and their values. Just like Nora suggested students should be able to wear the *voile*, Salima said the teacher "does not have to show a movie like this, he can summarize." These suggestions would indeed reflect more cultural sensitivity and lead to inclusivity.

Hybridity and cultural (dis-)engagement. While Bhabha (1994), suggested hybrid identities enact performative cultural engagement, I have found in the data that for some this can also translate into cultural (dis-)engagement. In the quote below, Azouz expresses feeling neither affiliation with France, the country where he and his parents were born, nor with Algeria, his country of origin:

Sandrine : Avec quels pays tu t'identifies ?

Azouz : Aucun des deux j'pense.

Sandrine : Pourquoi ?

Azouz : Ben l'Algérie j'pense que ch'suis pas assez... J'ai pas assez vécu pur comprendre la mentalité de là-bas. Et la France ch'sais pas, j'ai pas la même valeur que la France.

(Sandrine: With which countries do you identify?)

Azouz: Neither of the two I think.

Sandrine: Why?

Azouz: Well Algeria I think that I'm not enough... I have lived there enough to understand the mentality from there. And France I dunno, I don't have the same values as France.) (Interview 1, September 20, 2015)

His statement did not surprise me because first, Azouz reported not having close connection with Algeria, he had only been there a couple of times when he was much younger. Second, as I got to know Azouz, I realized he did not fit in the school environment and he had a negative perception of himself. I see a parallel between his feelings of being disenfranchised and saying he could not speak Arabic or French, as shown in chapter 6, which resulted in a lack of confidence in expressing himself and low grades in the literature class. This quote and Azouz's narrative in general therefore encapsulate the relation between languages, a sense of identity or belonging, and school achievement.

What's more, Azouz's feelings towards France could be explained by some of his experiences at school where he felt excluded and even humiliated. For example, in the excerpt below, Azouz and his friend retell a traumatic experience in a history class where the theme of French colonialism in North Africa was presented from what they called "a French perspective":

Azouz : Ben j'aime pas trop hein... ben la dernière fois on a fait un truc avec la fiche de Maroc là, tu t'en rappelles ? (à son ami) et ils étaient comme des sauvages, des incultes. J'avais même pas envie d'écrire, ça m'a vraiment énervé.

Sandrine : Qu'est-ce que c'était alors ?

Azouz : C'était comme quoi les français ils étaient venus donner l'intelligence, la richesse, et la culture. Alors que c'est pas du tout ça.

Azouz : Et comme quoi aussi les marocains ils étaient, enfin, sur l'image ils étaient carrément à genoux, limite...

Ami : à genoux devant Marianne, en fait ça représentait la France et elle était en train de verser de l'argent.

Azouz : ouais.

Sandrine : Et votre prof, il a eu un discours critique là-dessus ?

Azouz : Non, il a fait son cours.

(Azouz: Well I don't really like it eh...well the last time we did a thing with a poster of Morocco there, do you remember? (To his friend) And they were like savages, uneducated. I didn't even feel like writing, it really annoyed me.

Sandrine: What was it then?

Azouz: It was about the French had come to give us intelligence, wealth, and the culture. Whereas it's not like that at all. And how also Moroccans, they were, well, in the picture they were totally on their knees, almost...

Friend: On their knees in front of Marianne²⁴, in fact it represented France, and she was pouring money.

Azouz: yeah.

Sandrine: And your teacher, did he have a critical opinion about this?

Azouz: No, he was teaching his class). (Interview 2, September 28, 2015)

Although this event had taken place a year prior to the interview, the memory was still fresh in both Azouz and his friend's mind and their anger was still detectible, especially Azouz's. The document studied in class had portrayed them as "savages and uneducated" in front of the

²⁴ Marianne is a female figure and the symbol of the French Republic.

class, France as their savior, and the teacher was not critical of these offensive labels. After our interview, I asked them about the picture they had studied. They could not show it to me because they no longer had the textbook, but we googled, “France, colonisation, Maroc, livre, histoire, seconde and Marianne” and we found it (Figure 7).



Figure 7. “The good deeds of colonization”: Picture published in a French newspaper in 1911.

The picture published in November 1911, a few months before the creation of the French protectorate of Morocco was the front cover of *Le Petit Journal*, one of three major French newspapers at the time. It says “France will be able to freely bring civilization, wealth, and peace to Morocco. The good deeds of the colonization of Morocco.” As Azouz and his friend remembered, it shows Marianne pouring money to several people of dark skin, two of whom are

on their knees. The caption says, “France will be able to freely bring civilization, wealth and peace to Morocco” and underneath in large letters “The good deeds of the colonization of Morocco,” which is very close to Azouz’s memory, who said, “the French had come to give us intelligence, wealth, and culture.” Azouz was upset as he remembered this event, he repeated several times how “disgusted” he was. I believe the way Azouz reacted to this specific experience was mediated by his habitus, more specifically, the knowledge of history and the collective habitus he shared with his family. Indeed, during the same interview, Azouz explained how the Algerian War of Independence was studied at school from a French perspective, and that it was actually not what really happened because his grandfather had told him what the French had done:

Azouz : Mais ils ont quand même caché quelques trucs, comme quoi ils avaient, quand ils ont employé des algériens pour faire la guerre contre les algériens, dans les rangs français quoi, ben mon grand-père il était de ce côté en plus. Et ils ont dit, ben en fait ils y sont pas allés pour se battre contre les algériens, hein. ! En fait c’est juste qu’ils leur avaient promis qu’ils auraient, je sais plus, 100 000 euros par an je crois et ils ont jamais rien eu, hein.

Sandrine : Ah bon ?

Azouz : Ouais mon grand-père il a jamais rien eu.

Sandrine : Ils se sont fait avoir quoi...

Azouz : Oui, et ils les laissaient pour mort aussi. Mon grand-père, ils leur ont dit il fallait pas les ramener là-bas. Et ils avaient donc comme quoi ils prenaient que des gens de 18 ans, majeur quoi, 21 ans c’était avant, et mon grand-père il avait 16 ans quand ils l’ont pris. (...) Mais il me racontait souvent que quand il tirait, il tirait à côté en fait, pour pas... ouais il tirait en l’air ou à côté.

Sandrine : Oui pour ne pas blesser.

(Azouz: But they still hid some stuff, about what they had done, when they employed Algerians to go to war against Algerians, in the French ranks like, well my grandfather he was on that side even. And they said, well in fact they did go fight against Algerians, eh! In fact, it’s only that they had been promised that would get, I don’t remember, 100 000 euros per year I think, and they never got anything, eh.

Sandrine: Really?

Azouz: Yeah my grandfather he never got anything.

Sandrine: They got ripped off like...

Azouz: Yes, and they left them behind for dead too. My grandfather they had told him that they shouldn't bring them back. And so, they had something about the only took people who were 18, like, 21 it was before and my grandfather he was 16 and they still took him. (...) But he was telling me that when he shot, he missed in fact... or he shot in the air, so that... Yeah he shot in the air or he missed). (Interview 2, September 28, 2015)

In this powerful narrative Azouz tells his grandfather's experience of the Algerian war where he had been lured into fighting with the French against his own people under false pretenses. This is a story of betrayal and Azouz points out several specific occasions when France manipulated his grandfather by not giving him the money they had promised, by turning him against his own, by asking him to leave soldiers behind, and by recruiting him when he was only 16. I then argue Azouz's negotiation of multiple identities, his need to distance himself from the French and, as we will see later, the development of his religious identity are linked to the wider socio-political context and the institutionalized racism, which can be traced back to colonialism, but which is enacted in everyday situations. The data also illustrate how identities are both negotiated in reaction to present experiences, but that this negotiation is mediated by the habitus.

To summarize how the students identified themselves, each of them seemed to have their own perspectives and even within the same generation they expressed different levels of attachment and affiliation with France or their countries of origin. The data also show that the students do not see themselves exclusively as belonging to one country. Many scholars in the field of SLA (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Duff, 2015; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004,) have called for a more flexible understanding of identities, especially in a postmodern, post-national era, with

people like Abdel and Asmae who have lived in several countries. In the next section, I analyze how students reported being positioned.

How are students positioned? What stands out in table 8.1 is the difference between how the students identify themselves and how they are identified by others, indeed, there is not a single match between the third and fourth columns. Nine out of the ten student participants identified with more than one country and six positioned themselves as partly French but only two believed other people would position them as partly French and all of them said they were positioned as foreigners, Arab being the most common word used (6 out of 10). Several students were aware of how common this label was, which could leave them perplexed, as Nora who remarked:

En fait je pensais, l'autre jour on disait que pour les autres on est arabe, mais en fait être arabe c'est pas avoir une autre origine, enfin, il y a des espagnols, mais les espagnols on va pas dire : « Ouais toi t'es espagnol », c'est vraiment que sur... enfin c'est bizarre de dire ça, mais c'est que sur les arabes.

(in fact I was thinking the other day we were saying that for others we are Arabs, but in fact Arab is not having an origin, well, there are Spanish people, but the Spanish, we don't say: "yeah you you are Spanish," it's really that about... well it's strange to say that, but it's only about the Arabs). (Focus group, June 12, 2-16)

As Nora pointed out, people who have other origins, like for example Spanish people, do not get labelled in the same way, and she recognized that people of Maghrebi descent are specifically targeted or "othered." According to Simon, this "othering" is "sharper for the second generation: the descendants of postcolonial migrations, who are also the most "visible in French society" (2012, p. 14). Nora's example of Spanish people in France is a good example because they are Europeans—they do not share of history of colonialism, they also tend to have the same religion as most of the French population and have the same skin color all factors which play important parts in racism. While Nora qualified this as being "strange," Salima expressed her

annoyance, and the usually shy student that I had got to know, got angry about this constant labelling, as illustrated in the dialogue below:

Salima : Arabe, ça revient tout le temps. (...)

Sandrine : Et qu'est-ce que tu en penses ?

Salima : Ben j'ai l'impression qu'ils mettent tous les arabes dans le même sac, alors qu'il y a des marocains, des kabyles...

Sandrine : et toi tu t'identifies pas comme ça ?

Salima : Non. (...) et je trouve ça débile ! enfin je sais pas, après ils font ce qu'ils veulent.

Sandrine : Mais tu aimerais qu'ils comprennent plus les différences ?

Salima : Oui voilà, on est pas tous pareil.

(Salima: Arab, it comes up all the time. (...))

Sandrine: And do you think about it?

Salima: Well I have the impression they put all the Arabs in the same bag, whereas they are some Moroccan, some Kabyle...

Sandrine: And you, you don't identify as such?

Salima: No. (...) and I find this idiotic! Well I don't know, after all they do as they please.

Sandrine: But you would like them to understand more the differences?

Salima: Yes exactly, we are not all the same). (Interview 4, May 6, 2016)

During this conversation, Salima really lost her composure and said that being positioned under the single term “Arab”—a term with which she does not identify—did not reflect the plurality of their origin but rather revealed an “idiotic” or, as I understand it, an ignorant attitude. In contrast, Salima would like people to acknowledge that “Arabs” all have different identities, cultures, histories.

What's more, this positioning as Arab is so systematic that it persists from generation to generation. Leila, Azouz, and Soukaina are third generation but they feel they are positioned as such. In the excerpt below, M. Jahid, the teacher of French as a foreign language, points out the absurdity of this discourse:

Au bout de la quatrième génération, et qu'on renvoie toujours les personnes à leurs origines, (...) le gamin, il est né en France, ou ses parents sont nés en France, ou même ses grands-parents et on l'intègre pas dans l'identité nationale.

(After the fourth generation, and that we still throw back people to their origins, (...) the kid, he was born in France, or his parents were born in France or even his grand-parents and he is not integrated in the national identity). (Interview 1, May 26, 2016)

In her study on Franco-Maghrebi youth's identity crisis, Mehta (2010) identified this continued stigmatizing of "French with a difference" or "children born of immigration" wherein the reference to immigrant origins suggests a permanent state of Othering. These youths are caught in marginal representation and partial identifications, which lead to what she called a "citoyenneté non partagée" (p. 174), a citizenship that is not shared, or a one-way identification, as illustrated in table 8.1. The fact that second- and third- generation students have French citizenship by birth does not make a difference, they are still seen as alien. When I asked why this was the case, Khaled, Nora, Leila, Salima, and Azouz said their appearance or more specifically the color of their skin is how these identities are imposed on them.

While Pavlenko and Blackledge claimed race and ethnicity can be negotiated, my data suggest this is not always the case, and I agree with Young (2008) who saw race and ethnicity as "coercively applied" because "human racial categories are based on visible traits" and the "visibility of these traits ... has a greater permanence than others" (p. 120). In his study *French National identity and integration: Who belongs to the National Community?* Simon (2012), reported the percentage of descendants of immigrants who did not feel French was higher for

“visible” minorities, that is to say those perceived as different due to external factors such as skin color.

In the extract below, Khaled expresses this lack of option in the way he is constantly perceived as “un renoi” (a black person in verlan), or “comme un étranger, (...) parce que de couleur de peau ch’suis pas blanc... Ben ouais en fait tout le monde croit que je suis un africain en fait, enfin pas un maghrébin, mais un africain” (like a stranger, (...) because of skin color I’m not white... Well yeah in fact everybody think I am an African in fact, well not a Maghrebi, but an African) (Interview 3, May 6, 2016). Khaled explains is the reason why everybody position him as an African, not Maghrebi of Moroccan, which is his legal status and the way he personally identifies.

Finally, I want to draw attention to how students are being essentialized as Arab, which negates the “hyphenated identities” most of the students claimed. Most students criticized this systematic negative positioning which they felt was unfair (Nora), or even idiotic (Salima). In the dialogue below, Leila raised another important issue when she was saying that she personally felt French but knew others did not, she explained:

Leila : Je sais pas ils ont des opinions des arabes soit t’es algérienne, soit t’es française, tu peux avoir les deux pas être, tu peux pas avoir les deux. Je comprends pas.

Sandrine : C’est intéressant ce que tu dis. Qui te dit ça ?

Leila : Les adolescents de maintenant, ils sont... c’est bizarre parce que je suis autant française qu’eux, mais non. T’as des origines donc t’es pas française.

Sandrine : Tu le ressens ça ?

Leila : Ah oui je le ressens, fortement.

Sandrine : Pourquoi, qu’est-ce qu’on te dit ?

Leila : Ça fait quoi d’être algérienne ? on te demande ta nationalité, toujours on te demande tes origines, parce que ça se voit que je suis pas que française. Donc tout le

temps soit à me dire, t'es française ou pas ? t'es née ici ? Donc ça se ressent en fait.

Sandrine : et qu'est-ce que tu dis alors ?

Leila : Ben oui, je suis française, comme vous !

(Leila: I don't know they have opinions about Arabs either you are Algerian, either you are French, you cannot have both. I don't understand.

Sandrine: That's interesting what you say. Who tells you that?

Leila: Teenagers nowadays, they are... it's strange because I am as French as they are, but no. You have some origins, so you are not French.

Sandrine: Do you feel this?

Leila: Ah yes I feel it, strongly.

Sandrine: Why what do people tell you?

Leila: How does it feel to be Algerian? They ask me my nationality, all the time they ask me my origins, because you can see it that I am not French. So, all the time either they tell me, are you French or not? Were you born here? So, I feel it in fact.

Sandrine: And what do you tell them then?

Leila: Well yes, I am French, like you!) (Interview 1, September 17, 2015)

Leila expressed how her origin will never allow her to be French, because “you cannot have both.” She reports that this message has been sent to her so often and in such an intense way that she feels strongly about it. This narrative illustrates the negotiation of identities, or the site of struggle to which Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) refer. Leila is recounting this battle, which I visualize as a tug of war between “Arab,” the identity “imposed” on Leila that is not negotiable from her classmates’ perspectives, and “French” the “negotiable” identity, which she claims since it is her actual legal right, when she says, “I am French, like you!.” Although she says, teenagers nowadays make her feel this way, this is a pervasive discourse in France and, as Simon (2012) suggested, while other countries like the USA and Canada have accepted the

concept of dual identity or dual belonging, which can be seen as positive marks of diverse heritage, this is seen negatively in France. According to Simon (2012), resistance to multiculturalism reveals a conception of identity as a sort of “finite stock,” where “any sense of belonging to another country must necessarily weaken an individual’s sense of being French” (p. 3).

It would be misleading though to say the way the student participants are positioned in my study is representative of France in general. Indeed, several students pointed out their differences were more visible because they lived in a small town, where they were a small minority.

Racism in rural France. Salima and Azouz had recently moved from big cities and they both remarked that Vire was especially challenging for them because as Salima explained in the excerpt below, in bigger cities they had a community with which they could identify and they were not positioned as “different”:

Salima : Ben à Lyon, il y avait plus de maghrébins, et voilà, et ici il y en a moins. Donc du coup, c’est pas pareil.

Sandrine : Comment c’est pas pareil ?

A Lyon on avait des petits délires entre nous, on était plus nombreux. Là je suis différente, enfin différente entre guillemets, mais on a pas les même délires, enfin on voit pas les mêmes choses pareil. (...) dans une petite ville c’est pas pareil, c’est plus difficile.

(In Lyon we had inside jokes, there were more of us. Here I am different, well in quotes, but we don’t have the same humor, well we don’t see things in the same way (...) in a small town it’s not the same, it’s more difficult). (Interview 4, May 6, 2016)

Similarly, Nora wanted to leave Vire because she said living in a small town was harder:

Nora : Surtout à Vire, c’est pas une grande ville comme Lyon ou Paris.

Sandrine : Et c’est plus dur ça tu penses d’être dans une petite ville ?

Nora : Ouais, parce qu’il y a plus de racisme. Enfin, on le voit, même mes parents ils le

voient, tout le monde. (...)

Sandrine : Tu connais ? t'as des amis ?

Nora : Ben ma famille elle habite à Lyon et j'en ai qui habitent à Paris. Par exemple mes parents, pour chercher du travail c'est plus dur que si ils avaient un nom... enfin même des fois on leur dit des... moi je vois il y a des collègues à ma mère, ils disent des choses blessantes à ma mère.

Sandrine : Et ça tu penses que dans les grandes villes ?

Nora : Ben dans les grandes villes, ce serait moins... heu... ils ont plus l'habitude de voir des personnes...

Sandrine : de différentes origines ?

Nora : Ben oui, par exemple de voir des personnes noires, des personnes maghrébines, des personnes chinoises. Ils sont plus habitués, il y a plus de mixité que à Vire.

Sandrine : Et tu en parles de ça avec tes copines ?

Nora : Ben elles savent que je veux partir de Vire.

Sandrine : Et tes copines qu'est-ce qu'elles en pensent dans ton quartier ?

Nora : Ben en fait elles aussi elles aiment pas Vire, ouais, ça les blesse. Ouais c'est pareil pour tout le monde ici.

(Nora: Especially in Vire, it's not like a big city like Lyon or Paris.)

Sandrine: And do you think it's more difficult to be in a small town?

Nora: Yeah, because there is more racism. Well, we see it, even my parents see it, everybody. (...)

Sandrine: Do you know ? do you have friends ?

Nora: Well my family lives in Lyon and some live in Paris. For example my parents, to look for a job it's more difficult than if they have a name... well even sometime we tell them... I see some of my mom's colleagues, they tell things that are hurtful to my mom.

Sandrine: And you think that this in big cities...?

Nora. Well in big cities, it will be less...hmm, they are more used to seeing people...

Sandrine: with mix origin?

Nora: Well yes, for example to see black people, Maghrebi people, Chinese people. They are more used to it, there is more diversity than in Vire.

Sandrine: Do you talk about that with your friends? (...)

Nora: Well in fact they don't like Vire either, yeah it hurts them. Yeah it's the same for everybody here). (Interview 0, January 8, 2015)

When Nora compared her life and the way she was positioned with her family who lived in big cities, she felt racism was more extreme in Vire because of the lack of diversity. As a consequence, she said life in Vire was more difficult, for example finding a job, or dealing with discriminatory comments like her mothers had to. She also explained that her feelings were not unique and that all her friends felt the same way about Vire. It is therefore important to situate the data from my research in this context, rural France in 2015/16. The results to the 2017 presidential election corroborate Nora's comments about racism in rural France. Indeed, while Le Pen—the extreme right candidate—got less than 5% of the votes in the first round of elections in Paris, she got 22% in Vire, and she came first in many smaller villages around Vire. One reason for it could be like Nora suggested, a less diverse population, racism being often the result of a lack of contact and ignorance. When Begag (2007b) was the delegate minister of equal opportunity in the French government, he introduced the concept of “inoculation” as a way of fighting racism, by which he meant making diversity so common that French people will be used to it and will no longer label others based on their countries of origin. While this “inoculation” might have started in French cities, my data suggest rural France has remained underexposed and racism still prevails.

I never heard the teachers and staff members in Charles Dupuy position Franco-Maghrebi students as “Arabs” and M. Lambert claimed during an interview that “on est tous tolérants ici”

(we are all tolerant here). However, I overheard an interaction between teachers in the staff room, which corroborates the way students said they were constantly and negatively positioned with this label.

The interaction happened the day of the Eid al-Adha, a major holiday in Islam, where many Muslim families sacrifice an animal. All the student participants were absent except for Salima, which explains why I spent most of the day in the staff room. It was around 11:00 am, the beginning of lunch time and there were only three teachers in the room. A teacher came in and told her colleagues who were sitting and having lunch that she had not realized today was “la fête du mouton” (the sheep festival) and when she called the students from the roster, she realized all “les petits arabes” (the little Arabs) were absent. She then concluded “et oui tous les petits arabes, non en fait il y avait aussi Emilie, mais on était bien tranquille” (and yes all the little Arabs, no in fact there was also Emilie, but we had it nice and quiet) (Fieldnotes, September, 24, 2015).

This comment not only echoes how students felt they were positioned; but it also illustrates how this expression of racism can be tolerated and seen as acceptable. Indeed, I was totally shocked by this comment but none of her colleagues told her she was out of line, they giggled and kept on talking about something else. When the teacher said “we had it nice and quiet,” she did not say “without them,” but because she had just said “all the little Arabs were absent,” it was implied that this is what she meant. She therefore shared in front of her colleagues that she enjoyed her class better without the “little Arabs,” voicing the view mostly expressed by the extreme right party that France would be better off without them and that they do not really belong to French society.

Faced with these dominant discourses that deny their hybrid identities, Franco-Maghrebi students found ways to escape these labels and create new worlds and new identities for themselves.

Investments in Other Identities

Investment in foreign languages. As we saw in the excerpt above, Azouz may not have fitted in the school environment, but he had created several other identities which diverged from the dominant discourses. For example, he was fascinated by many cultures and gave a long list of countries he wished he could move to: Japan, the US, the UK... English was his favorite subject at school, one where he got good grades:

J'aime beaucoup l'anglais. Vu qu'il y a tout le temps de l'anglais. Enfin j'ai beaucoup d'applications en anglais. Du coup maintenant j'arrive bien à parler l'anglais et c'est là que je m'en sors le mieux (...) j'ai des bonnes notes.

(I like English a lot. Since there is always some English. Well I have a lot of applications in English. And so now I can speak English well and that's where I succeed the most (...) I have good grades). (Interview 1, September 20, 2015)

One of the reasons for his success in English was that he used it a lot online, “Mais en fait moi sur Facebook je parle plus en anglais, ouais, que en français, parce que c'est tout en anglais maintenant, sur internet presque. Du coup j'écris tout le temps en anglais, tout le temps.” (But me, in fact, on Facebook I speak more in English, yeah, than in French, because it is all in English now, on the Internet almost). I interpret Azouz's interest in learning English as an investment, which Norton (1995), used to “capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world” as it conceives them as “having complex social identities and multiple desires” (p. 17). What's more, concerning Azouz's online practices, as Duff (2015) wrote, “Digital technologies (...) provide mechanisms for forging a sense of belonging and affinity with others in similar diasporic, transnational, and multilingual situations” (p. 73). Other scholars

have investigated the affordances of digital technology. For instance, Lam (2000, 2006) found that immigrant youth in the US created new transnational identities through social media and were able to access new learning opportunities, while still being stigmatized as immigrants and incompetent language users in the school context. This resonates with Azouz who had found a way of escaping from the world in which he does not fit by creating new identities, mostly online, while expressing his affiliation with cultures and languages other than the ones he was rejected from and could not identify with.

Other student participants expressed their desire to learn languages other than French, often in order to work and live in other countries and many said foreign languages like English, or Spanish were their favorite subjects in school. Soukaina was studying Spanish with the hope of living in Spain, Abdel was learning English because he thought he could study in London, Asmae also worked hard on her English because she was thinking of living in the UK or the USA. These students' desires to learn foreign languages can be interpreted as a counter-discourse to the French language. First, possibly because they were positioned as not "legitimate speakers" of the French language as illustrated in chapter 6, and second because it offers them new possibilities and new perspectives in countries from which they have not been rejected. As Norton (1995) pointed out, when learners "invest" in a second language they do so knowing it will increase their cultural capital, and as their cultural capital increases, so will their sense of who they are, and this might change their desires for the future. In the excerpt below Leila expresses her investment in learning Arabic:

Je sais que dans le commerce c'est bien d'avoir de nouvelles langues. L'anglais ça ne suffit plus alors du coup je me suis dit que peut être je pourrais apprendre l'arabe et que ça me fera un plus, peut être que ça me démarquera des autres candidats.

(I know that for business it's good to have new languages. English is not enough and so I told myself that maybe I could learn Arabic and that it will give me a plus, maybe it will

help me stand out from other candidates). (Interview 1, September 17, 2015)

In this quote, Leila explains her strategic choice to invest in Arabic and her awareness of the symbolic value of Arabic because it has the potential to increase her cultural capital on the job market and therefore make her more successful in the future. Other student participants expressed their desire to learn Arabic, but unlike Leila, they did not talk about the economic benefits but a broader interest in Islam and its sociolinguistic practices. For example, learning Arabic to be able to read the Qur'an.

Arabic as a way to connect with Islam. Nine out of ten students cited the importance of Islam and its sociolinguistic practices in their lives. For example, Abdel explained, “Aussi je parle arabe classique, mes parents ils m’ont appris à lire et aussi écrire l’arabe, heu... parce que c’est un but pour la religion musulmane.” (Also, I speak classical Arabic, my parents they taught me to read and also to write Arabic, hmm, because for a purpose, for the Muslim religion). Abdel’s parents taught him Arabic for religious purposes. This represents Abdel and his parents’ investment in Islam and its sociolinguistic practices, and the link between Islam and the Arabic language, which is perceived by Muslims as the “language of God” (Sadiqi, 2006). Actually, six students out of ten (Salima, Leila, Jasmine, Nora, Asmae, and Abdel) reported currently attending or having attended evening classes at the mosque to learn classical Arabic and study the Qur'an. As Suleiman (2003) pointed out, the Qur'an encourages Muslims to read in Arabic because “the language of the Qur'an (39:28) is said to be devoid of any crookedness” (p. 43). In addition to being the recommended medium to read and study the Qur'an, Arabic is also the unifying language in the Arab world. The concept of *Ummah*, which means “mother” in Arabic, provides Muslim with a “super-ordinate identity to an otherwise hugely diversely community” (Shah, 2006, p. 218), transcending political boundaries.

Several student participants referred to their religion and its related community as an important part of their identity, one that France, as shown in the section on *laïcité*, had prevented them from enacting. Nora explained her investment in learning Arabic in order to access a wider Muslim community, “je voudrais bien apprendre l’arabe littéraire vu que je veux pas rester en France, et j’aimerais bien partir dans les pays de l’Arabie Saoudite” (I would like to learn literary Arabic since I don’t want to stay in France, and I would like to move to the countries of Saudi Arabia). Nora had expressed elsewhere that she was tired of being positioned in France either as an Arab or even as a terrorist. Her use of the plural form for “the countries of Saudi Arabia,” implies she may be referring to the wider region, and on another occasion she said she wanted to, “voir autre part, enfin autre part que le Maroc et la France. J’aimerais bien aller à Dubaï. Enfin m’installer à Dubaï ou dans la Qatar. Mais non je pense pas rester vivre en France” (see somewhere else, well somewhere other than Morocco or France. I would like to go to Dubai. Well settle in Dubai or Qatar). Nora clearly wanted to distance herself from both France and Morocco, two countries who have positioned her as a foreigner. As a matter of fact, Nora explained that once a classmate had told her to “go back to her country.” She had felt angry about this because, as she said, “Morocco is not my country and I was born in Vire.” She then lamented, “quand je suis au bled²⁵ je suis française, et quand je suis en France, je suis marocaine! Je suis d’où moi en fait à la fin?” (when I am in my parents’ hometown I am French, and when I am in France, I am Moroccan! Where am I from, in fact, in the end?) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016). In her work in the UK on Muslim youth identity, Shah (2006) wrote “to a young teenager’s self-esteem, an association with a “powerful” cosmic identity would be more appealing as compared

²⁵ The word “bled” comes from the Arabic “balade,” which means “land” or “country.” In this context it means “the old town” or “my parents’ home town.”

to a negative racialized identity” (p. 229). All the countries Nora would like to live in have in common Islam as a religion and represent this more “powerful” cosmic identity. In this sense Islam, as I will demonstrate now, offers Franco-Maghrebi students an identity they can all safely share, one that bridges their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences.

Islam as a third space. During my fieldwork, I became more aware of the role Islam played in the students’ lives. Towards the end of my research I asked them if they wanted me to add Muslim to Franco-Maghrebi students in the title of my research. Their answers are recorded on the right –most column in table 8.1. Nine students out of ten said they would prefer if I added Muslim to identify them. Azouz was the only one who said he would rather not be identified with a religion, although as we will see in an excerpt below, he said otherwise during a conversation with his best friend. Asmae, Khaled, Farid, Jasmine, and Soukaina said they would like “Muslim” to come first, implying it was the most salient trait of their identity or as Khaled said, “c’est dans ma personnalité en fait” (it’s in my personality in fact). When positioning themselves as Muslims I could feel a sense of pride, which Abdel clearly stated, “je suis marocain, maghrébin et musulman et fier” (I am Moroccan, Maghrebi and Muslim and proud) and later during the same interview (May 13, 2016), “je suis musulman et je l’assume” (I am Muslim and I fully accept it). Abdel’s comments illustrate how identities can be assumed (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) by individuals who are comfortable with and not interested in contesting identities legitimized by the dominant discourse. Indeed, in chapter 7 on students’ experiences at school I discussed how the institution positioned students as Muslims, an identity most students fully assumed.

In addition, students often said their religion played an important part in their relationships with their friends and for Khaled it was in fact a deciding factor because, “la religion, c’est... heu.. Enfin ça évite les mauvaises fréquentations” (religion, it’s... hmm... well

it prevents from bad influences) (Interview 4, May 26, 2016). Khaled suggests that if people share his religion, his values, it will keep him away from bad influences. Jasmine confirmed this statement when she explained why she and Khaled were so close:

Jasmine : Ben Khaled c'est un peu comme mon frère, je le considère un peu comme mon frère. Et Leila aussi d'ailleurs, comme ma sœur.

Sandrine : Qu'est-ce qui vous rapproche ?

Jasmine : Khaled déjà, c'est l'origine, et le fait qu'on soit musulman, et puis qu'il m'apprend beaucoup de choses sur la religion.

Sandrine : C'est vrai vous en parlez ?

Jasmine : Surtout avec Khaled.

(Jasmine: Well Khaled he is a bit like my brother, I see him a bit like my brother. And Leila too actually, like my sister.

Sandrine: What brings you together?

Jasmine: Khaled first, it's the origin, and the fact we are Muslims, and that he teaches me a lot of things about religion.

Sandrine: Really you talk about it?

Jasmine: Especially with Khaled). (Interview 4, May 20, 2016)

Jasmine explains her friendship with Khaled first by their shared common origin—she identifies as Kabyle from Algeria and he as Berber from Morocco—two cultures which are very close. Second she mentions their religion and the fact he teaches her a lot about religion is what makes them close friends. I had seen them together at school but I had not realized that to her Khaled felt like a brother and I had not realized either how important religion was to Khaled. This had not really come up in our interviews till the end of my research, when they both trusted me more. Other students explained their religion was a deciding factor as far as friendships were concerned. For example, the discussion below took place between Azouz and his best friend, a

first-generation immigrant from Turkey. Just before this excerpt, they had been talking about their friendship:

Ami : Ben ouais, vous dites arabe ou turc, c'est la même culture en fait, la même religion.

Sandrine : C'est vrai ? Pour les français alors ?

Ami : Pour les français, mais même nous, hein ? Moi je pense que c'est la même.

Azouz : oui moi c'est pareil.

Sandrine : Vous vous sentez proches ?

Ami : Ben oui la culture, et surtout la religion, ... il y a juste la langue qui change en fait, mais sinon on est plus pareil.

(Friend: Well yeah, you say Arab or Turk it's the same culture in fact, the same religion.

Sandrine: Really? For the French then?

Ami: For the French, but also for us, no? I think that it's the same.

Azouz: Yes, for me it's the same.

Sandrine: You feel close?

Friend: Uh yes, the culture and especially the religion... only the language changes in fact, but otherwise we are more the same.) (Interview 1, September 20, 2015)

In alignment with Jasmine and Khaled, Azouz and his friend agree that their religion is what makes them feel close but in their case, religion is presented as the main deciding identity factor, even if they don't share a home language or a country of origin. Azouz's friend's usage of the comparative adjective "more" suggests an implicit comparison with other people who are not Muslim. I was surprised that Azouz agreed with his friend's statement, because he had initially said he did not want to be identified with a religion and nothing in what he said implied he was practicing his religion the way the other students did by going to the mosque or reading the Qur'an. However, as Shah (2006) reported, "there is abundant research claiming that even when

the Muslims may not be practicing faith in many matters, they tend to emphasize their religious identity,” and this identification is no longer connected to the practice of the religion but rather to a “political opposition to racism” (p. 223). I believe Azouz’s affiliation to Islam acted as a way of resisting the racism he had been exposed to: specifically, to the traumatic event Azouz and his friend faced in their history class and which I reported earlier in this chapter. This experience of “shared exclusion” (Shah, 2006) may have contributed to their need to distance themselves from “the French or the non-Muslim” and to create a shared identity as an expression of collective resistance.

Azouz and his friend’s narrative and their self-identification as Muslims illustrates how “a self-identity has to be created and more or less continually reordered against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life” (Giddens, 1991, p. 186). In addition, for Azouz and his friend the creation of this religious identity could partly be in opposition to the school humiliating them, and, as argued by Modood (2005), who studied ethnic minority students in Britain, the assertion of identity is “a politics of projecting identities in order to challenge racism and existing power relations” (p. 32).

Finally, for some students, claiming their religious identity became a way of contesting assimilation, especially in the face of a new and stronger interpretation of *laïcité*, where Muslims are discouraged from expressing their faith in the public sphere. Indeed, the conversation below between Nora and Asmae took place during a focus group. They had just been talking about the importance of their religion because it was part of their daily lives. Because other students had said religion unified them, I asked Nora and Asmae if they agreed:

Nora : ben c’est normal ouais !

Asmae : ben oui.

Nora : on va à la mosquée ensemble, on a fait des cours d'arabe ensemble, enfin...

Sandrine : ok, et ça vous permet de vous identifier ?

Asmae : oui !

Sandrine : et est-ce qu'elle vous différencie ?

Nora : oui, elle nous différencie, mais pour moi, c'est bien d'avoir une différence.

(Nora: well it's normal yeah!

Asmae: Uh yes.

Nora: We go to the mosque together, we go to Arabic classes together, well...

Sandrine: Ok, and does it allow you to identify?

Asmae: Yes!

Sandrine: And does it differentiate you?

Nora: Yes, it differentiates us, but for me, it's good to have a difference.) (Focus group, June 2, 2016)

Nora and Asmae agreed their religion unified them and allowed them to identify with each other because they both engaged in similar sociocultural and literacy practices such as going to the Mosque and learning Arabic. In this sense, their comments are similar to what Khaled, Jasmine, Salima, and Azouz said, but Nora and Asmae added a new nuance which was that Islam allowed them to claim a difference. I interpret this as an expression of “a new cultural politics which engages rather than suppresses differences” (Hall, 1992, p. 257).

While Duran (2004), in her study on French minority youth, identified their usage of Verlan as “a tool (...) to enact social realities and perform identities which diverge from the models offered by mainstream French society” (p. 95), my data suggest Islam played a similar function. Scholars in anthropology have made similar claims. For example, in his book, *Can Islam be French?* Bowen (2010) argued, Islam provides French Muslim youth with “a third

possibility for constructing a subjective identity, beyond the undesirable “North-African,” or in my data “Arab” and “the unattainable “French”” (p. 22). Similarly, in her work on Muslim Turkish women in Germany, Pratt Ewing (2006), a professor in cultural anthropology and religion, found that “Islamic discourse deliberately recasts and reorganizes this space of difference, offering quite a different, politically charged solution to the problem of integration. As an alternative to the cultural violence of the dominant German discourse, several Turkish Islamic groups in Germany promote a renewed and purified Islam” (p. 268). I then argue that for most student participants Islam represented “a third space of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994), which initiates the creation of new identities as well as sites of collaboration and contestation. My data therefore highlight the link between language, religion, and the expression of a Muslim identity. With its related social and literacy practices, Islam represents an alternative discourse or a third space through which participants can align with their peers while resisting the dominant monolingual, monocultural, and monoideological discourses of the school environment that marginalize Franco-Maghrebi students and their cultural backgrounds.

In this section I have demonstrated how the way students positioned themselves clashed with how they were positioned by others. I have shown how students had to negotiate and resist identities that were imposed onto them, but also how they invested in and created new identities. In the next section, I explain how the recent violent political events in France caused major shifts in the students’ sense of selves.

New Identities as Reactions to Sociopolitical Events

During my research, two major violent attacks occurred which deeply affected French society. The first one occurred on January 7, 2015. 11 people were killed in the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, a French satirical magazine that had published controversial cartoons of the Prophet

Mohammed. This was the deadliest attack in France for 50 years, and the French media and French people have commonly referred to as the French 9/11 (see Figure 8.). The men responsible for this attack were two brothers born and raised in Paris. Their parents had immigrated from Algeria.

A few months later, on November 13, 2015, a series of coordinated attacks occurred throughout the night in Paris, best known of which was the massacre at the Bataclan nightclub and referred to as “Terror in Paris” in Figure 8. This time 130 people were killed – for which the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant claimed responsibility.



Figure 8. The front pages of *Le Monde*, the main French newspaper the day after each attack.

My research was conducted over the course of a year and a half, with my data gathered during three trips to my study site. I started interviews for my pilot study the day after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack and, between my second and third visit, the Paris attack on November 13th had

taken place. As a consequence, the terrorist attacks were often at the heart of my conversations with the participants.

I realized during each of my visits that these attacks impacted the participants in many ways, and especially how they were positioned by others. This in turn affected their sense of belonging and their sense of selves. Using MAXQDA, I counted 40 occurrences of the word “attentat” (terrorist attack) in my data, 23 of the name “Charlie Hebdo” and 15 of the word “terrorists.” The students expressed their indignation at the fact that the term terrorist was commonly associated with Arab, Islam, or Muslim in the public discourse. As Duff (2015), posited, individuals’ perceptions of themselves and alignments with communities can change over time but, in the case of violent events, these changes can be sudden. Nobody expressed this sudden shift as well as Abdel when recounting his visit to Paris shortly after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks:

Abdel : Oui des fois je suis français, on a fait gagner l’équipe de France, après les attentats on va dire, pour ceux qui sont vraiment extrémistes, on va dire terroriste.

Sandrine : C’est vrai ? carrément ?

Abdel : Ah oui, le regard... terroriste, métro, parce que je suis monté à Paris après *Charlie* et tout, et je peux vous dire qu’il y a certaines personnes qui quand on prend la ligne 1, la ligne 1, c’est un peu... même si on est bien habillé et tout, il y a quand même...

Sandrine : Donc après les attentats ?

Abdel : Oui après les attentats.

(Abdel: Yes, sometimes I am French, we made the French team won, after the terrorist attacks let’s say, for those who are really extremists, let’s say terrorist.

Sandrine: Really? That bad?

Abdel: Oh yes, the gaze... terrorist, metro, because I went up to Paris after *Charlie* and all,

and I can tell you that there are certain people when we take the Line One²⁶, the Line One it's a bit... even if we are well dressed and all, there is still...

Sandrine: So, after the terrorist attacks?

Abdel: Yes, after the terrorist attacks.) (Interview 4, May 13, 2016)

Abdel says with irony that he is perceived as French if the French soccer team wins, making a reference to a high percentage of players in the national team of Maghrebi descents and who have often been known to bring victory. However, he felt he quickly lost this status after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, as he felt the gaze of people looking at him as if he were a terrorist. Like Abdel, other students reported feeling judged after the attacks, the two most common feelings they reported were shame (Abdel, Farid, Nora, Asmae) and fear, especially among female students. In the excerpt below, Asmae explained how she felt just after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack:

Ben c'était un problème pour moi la semaine où il y avait l'attentat de Charlie Hebdo, j'avais rien fait mais j'avais peur quand même. Comme on m'associait à quelque chose, comme on me met dans le même sac et tout et la voiture, j'étais en train de traverser et la voiture elle s'est arrêtée et j'étais contente, je sais pas pourquoi (...) parce qu'ils avaient une mauvaise image de nous, faut le dire. Et quand la voiture s'est arrêtée pour que je traverse, j'étais contente. Ch'sais pas ça m'a touchée.

(Well it was a problem for me the week when there was the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack, I had not done anything but still I was scared. Because people associated me with something, because people put me in the same bag and all and the car, I was crossing the road and the car it stopped and I was happy, I don't know why (...) because they had a bad image of us, it's true. And when the car stopped to let me cross, I was happy. I don't know it touched me.) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015)

Asmae's narrative conveys the whirlwind of emotions she experienced after the attack. In this episode, she is outside in the street and she feels people are associating her with what happened and she is scared, so scared that when a car stops to let her cross the street, she is

²⁶ The metro line 1 in Paris goes across the wealthy areas, tourist sites and the business center.

happy, she is relieved. What is most troubling in this narrative is what Asmae does not say. Why would a person feel relieved when a car stops to let them cross the street? She felt guilty by association and was scared people would retaliate.

Later when I came back in April after the attacks in Paris, Asmae talked again about her feeling wrongly judged and afraid. She also said she had the impression she did not belong, that she was “rajoutée à ce pays” (added to this country). The verb “rajouter” conveys the idea of being added afterwards, like she did not initially belong, which is reinforced by her saying she felt “plus étrangère” (more alien) at the time. Asmae’s sense of self echoes the disenfranchisement experienced by what Mehta (2010) calls “the residents of the other France” (p. 174). Asmae felt the attacks had caused her to be even be more “othered” than usual, as I have previously discussed. She then came to the conclusion, “c’est pas mon pays... heu... je suis juste venue comme ça pour étudier dans ce pays, et c’est pas mon pays en fait.” (it’s not my country... hmm... I just came here to study in this country, and it’s not my country in fact) (Interview 3, April 28, 2016). Faced with rejection, Asmae found some comfort in telling herself she was just here temporarily, and that France was not her country anyway.

Although Asmae expressed fear of retaliation against her, she was relieved to say that nothing happened. Nora and Jasmine were less lucky and they both reported being victims of aggression or insults after the attacks, which impacted their feelings of belonging to the point that they disengaged from the French community. In the next section, I focus on Jasmine and Nora senses of change over the course of my study.

Two female students’ reactions to the violent events. I start by analyzing the similarities and differences between Jasmine and Nora in order to understand how the violent events impacted their sense of self and attitudes, some of which are summarized in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2

Summary of basic information about Jasmine and Nora

Name	Age	Generation	Track	Origin	Linguistic resources
Jasmine	17	2 nd	Technical	Kabylia (Algeria)	Kabyle & French
Nora	17	2 nd	Mainstream	Morocco	Darija & French

As a reminder, Jasmine and Nora are both 17-year-old second-generation students. Nora's parents were born in Morocco and Jasmine's in Algeria, or rather, as she insisted, in Kabylia.

This distinction between Kabyle and Arabs mattered a lot to Jasmine, because she did not want to be positioned as an Arab. It is important to consider the differences between their countries of origin because, as I will demonstrate, this may have played a role in the way they reacted.

Though Morocco and Algeria are both former French colonies, they have different historical relationships with France. The Algerian war of Independence was longer and much more brutal than in Morocco. What's more, the Algerian war of independence was particularly violent in the Kabyle region, where Jasmine's parents and grand-parents were born. As a consequence, Jasmine often talked about this war, like the three other participants whose family were originally from Algeria, illustrating that the war was still part of their collective memory and habitus. Indeed, according to Bourdieu, because the habitus is a product of history, it leads to "individual and collective practices (...) in accordance with the schemes engendered by history" (1977a, p. 82).

Jasmine and Nora had both kept close links with their countries of origin and travelled there regularly to visit their families. Jasmine reported that Kabyle was both her native and dominant language and she had a negative perception of her ability to use French. In contrast, Nora reported that French and Darija were both her native languages and she was confident

using both. Nora had opportunities to use Darija with friends in her community and at school. Jasmine said that at school, she could only communicate with Khaled because he was Berber and their home languages were similar, whereas other Franco-Maghrebi students in the classroom spoke a different language and were “not at all like us.” This suggests Jasmine did not identify with other Franco-Maghrebi students and was isolated.

Nora was generally doing well at school. She liked her French class and she had good grades, some of the highest in her class. She was preparing for the mainstream *baccalauréat*, which was more prestigious than the technical field in which Jasmine had been tracked. Jasmine was struggling at school especially in her French literature course, where she was getting some of the lowest grades in her class.

When I first met Jasmine in September, a few days after the beginning of the school year, she appeared to be happy—she was laughing and seemed confident. She described herself as “sociable,” explaining that she spoke with everybody and got on well with everybody. When I came back in April, five months after the November attack in Paris, Jasmine had changed. I asked how she was doing in her French class. She replied, “Je comprends rien et du coup j’ai un peu abandonné.” (I don’t understand anything and so I have given up a little bit) (Interview 2, April 28, 2016). She reported that at the beginning of the school year she had participated “a bit,” but now she had given up. Her grades in French had dropped. On two mock French written *baccalauréat* exams, she got 10/20 on the first—which in France is an acceptable grade—but she got 4/20 in the second one, one of the lowest grades in her class. The first exam took place in October, before the terrorist attack and the second one in April.

This change of attitude and grades happened in parallel with a major change in Jasmine’s life. At the beginning of the school year, she was wearing the *voile*. After the November terrorist

attack, however, she decided to stop wearing it because, as she said, “j’aurais un peu peur, du coup comme je vous avais dit je portais le voile, et ben je l’ai enlevé.” (I was a bit scared, and so like I had told you I used to wear the voile, and well I took it off) (Interview 2, April 28, 2016).

In the excerpt below, still from the April interview, Jasmine explains what prompted her to stop wearing the *voile*:

Oui parce que ma mère elle voulait plus, elle avait peur que je me fasse agresser. Parce que j’ai plein de copines qui se sont fait agresser ici et une à Lyon qui s’est fait agresser à coup de couteau. Et elle sortait du travail en fait, elle a 21 ans, elle sortait du boulot et c’est son chef ou un de ses collègues, il a voulu lui rentrer dedans et après il l’a menacée avec un couteau.

Sandrine : Quelle horreur. Donc ça c’était juste après les attentats.

Jasmine : Oui, 15 jours après je crois.

(Jasmine: Yes, because my mother she no longer wanted me to, she was afraid that I would be attacked. Because I have many friends who were attacked here and one in Lyon who was attacked with a knife. She was coming out of work in fact, she is 21, she was coming out of work and it’s her boss or one of her colleagues, he wanted to let her have it and after he threatened her with a knife.

Sandrine: That’s horrible. So, it was just after the terrorist attacks?

Jasmine: Yes, 15 days after I think.) (Interview 2, April 28, 2016)

Just after the November Paris attacks, Jasmine’s fear was partly fed by stories of people who have been attacked like Jasmine’s friend in the narrative above. In September, Jasmine had already said her mother did not want her to wear the *voile* but Jasmine argued with her and persisted in wearing it. Now, after the latest attacks and in reaction to how female Muslims have been targeted²⁷, Jasmine decided to give up wearing the *voile*. When I asked her how she felt

²⁷ According to a French news channel, on November 20, 2015, one week after the Paris attacks, the French council of Muslims reported 32 attacks against Muslims all over the country, and within five days after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, there were 50 attacks (Makooi, 2015).

about it, Jasmine explained that at first she wasn't feeling good – she didn't like this at all: she felt “naked” and “not safe.” Indeed, in contrast to a commonly held view in France by those who support ban on the *voile*, she said that she felt not free to do what she wanted.

Clearly frustrated about having to stop wearing the *voile*, Jasmine was no longer the happy young student I had met only a few months before. She had changed noticeably between my two visits. It was apparent that the attacks had affected her sense of self and attitudes towards school, and I cannot help but draw a parallel between her telling me, “and so I have given up a little bit” while talking about her French class and “and so I took it off” while talking about her *voile*. In the face of these events and the institutional constraints, her personal response was to stop practicing her religion the way she had done and to disengage from school and even from French society. Indeed, towards the end of my research, I asked Jasmine how she would quickly introduce herself to someone who did not know her. She first answered: “ben y a rien dans ma vie en fait...” (well there is nothing in my life in fact...) (Interview 3, May 18, 2016). When I asked if she could not think of anything at all, she answered, “je suis musulmane, je suis Kabyle...” (I am Muslim, I am Kabyle.) Her answer shows how much she had disengaged from the school and French society. She did not identify as French, although she was a French citizen by birth, she did not mention she was a student, although she was in the midst of preparing for the national exam. To sum up, she did not sound like the self-confident and happy person I had met in September, she was much more withdrawn.

Now I want to shift the focus to Nora. I first met her during my pilot study, the day after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in January 2015, a day the entire country was in shock. When Nora walked into the room she was in tears. She had agreed earlier in the day to take part in my study but, when I saw how upset she was, I let her know that we could cancel the interview. She sat,

took a deep breath and said that she was ready. During this interview, she expressed her disgust with the media's bias and her desire to leave France. When I asked her with which country she identified with most she replied, "Ben le Maroc, vu ce qui se passe en France, je peux plus... j'ai même pas envie de rester. J'arrive pas enfin, c'est tous les médias et tout... c'est trop trop tout le temps." (Well Morocco, given what is happening in France, I am fed up... I don't even feel like staying. I can't, well, it's all the media and all, it's too much all the time.) Nora used to wear the *voile* before the *Charlie Hebdo* attack and decided to stop wearing it because of a frightening event that had happened to her and a friend, which she described in the excerpt below:

En fait une fois, vous savez, j'étais avec une amie, on allait à la mosquée avec le voile et il y a une voiture, elle nous a vu traverser, elle a accéléré, pour heu... pour nous faire montrer... et après sur le retour de la mosquée, on a vu des gens de notre âge, hein ! qui nous insultaient, en nous montrant du doigt...

(In fact, once, you know, I was with a friend, we were going to the mosque with our voiles and there is a car, they saw us cross and they accelerated, to hmmm...to show us... and after on our way back from the mosque, we saw people our age, yes! Who insulted us, pointing at us...) (Interview 0, January 8, 2015).

Despite this dreadful experience, Nora had not given up on the idea of wearing the *voile*, she had just accepted that it was not in her own interest to wear it now. Because she wanted to apply for prestigious schools, she said she did not want to risk being rejected because of her *voile*. She explained she would wear it when she was older, living in Dubai or Morocco, countries which would allow her to do so. Nora was aware of rules and she knew how to navigate them to her own advantage. She was wise, confident, and social and as she said: "I get on with everybody." She was one of the most active students in her French class. But what made Nora really stand out was her strong sense of justice and how outspoken she was. The more I got to know her the more I thought she often acted as a spokesperson for her and her friends.

When I came back in April, I noticed that the latest attack in Paris had had an impact on Nora. She reported feeling numb because the attacks were becoming so common that it no longer shocked her. I noticed a change in her personality. She had become even more outspoken and had developed a clear understanding of the current sociopolitical climate. For example, she commented on the futility of the ban in its effort to erase differences by saying, “because of our personality, we will never be all the same, there will always be differences, even if they want to remove differences at school... there will still be differences, it’s pointless...” Besides her critical awareness, Nora’s sense of self shifted during the period of my study. Indeed, the way she identified herself varied during each of my visits. When I first met her in January, as I said, she was angry and wanted to leave France because of the way the media portrayed Muslims. She then said she was Moroccan. When I came back in September, she was more calm, she said she was Franco-Moroccan, which accurately reflected the fact that she was born in France of Moroccan parents. Toward the end of my last visit, I asked her how she would introduce herself to someone who knew nothing about her, and she said, “ch’suis issue d’une famille maghrébine, ch’suis Musulmane, je vis en France” (I’m from a Maghrebi family, I am Muslim, and I live in France) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016). She first introduced her origin, then her religion and this time she did not identify as French, but said she was living in France. I felt this shift in her positioning was telling of how much these violent events had an impact on her sense of self and her attitudes toward French society.

To summarize how Nora and Jasmine reacted to the attacks, Jasmine altered her religious practices and disengaged from the school and its “communities of practice,” which Wenger et al (2002), defined as “groups of people who share a concern, (...) and who deepen their knowledge (...) by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4), or in Jasmine’s case, a group of students and

teachers who share the common goal of preparing for the *baccalauréat*. Her reaction could be seen as an act of resistance, but one that did not benefit her. In contrast, Nora grew more aware of the implicit rules and became more critical. I see her questioning of the rules as an act of resistance and I believe that her understanding of their social construction could lead Nora to initiate social change, because as Freire (1971) pointed out, for people to overcome oppression they “must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (Freire, p.29). What’s more, while Bourdieu (1991) wrote “the social world is, to a great extent, something which agents make at every moment,” according to him, change only occurs “on the basis of a realistic knowledge” (p. 242), which Nora had clearly acquired.

Next, I want to illustrate how Nora and Jasmine’s habitus influenced their reactions to violent political events.

Students’ habitus mediated their reactions to the attacks. First, I look at the connection between the body and the mind, or more precisely in this case, the external embodiment of habitus represented in *le voile* and the internal attitudes Nora and Jasmine expressed during their interviews. As Nora and Jasmine both struggled internally with the current events and the school constraints, this had an impact on their decision to wear the *voile*. When they stopped wearing their *voile*, this influenced their attitudes but also their environment. Indeed, they both commented on how people perceived them differently if they wore the *voile* or not. For example, Nora thought the car incident was due to her wearing the *voile*, and Jasmine reported that only six months after she had started wearing the *voile*, she was insulted on the bus and she was told to go back to her country. She also described how the way people looked at her varied depending on what she wore:

Mais j’ai remarqué que quand j’étais dans la rue avec un jean on me regarde moins mal que quand j’ai une jupe. (...) ça fait plus la tenue vestimentaire d’une musulmane, qui

montre pas ses formes. Du coup ils nous regardent plus mal je trouve. Des fois c'est méchant je trouve.

(I noticed that when I was in the street wearing jeans people looked at me less bad than when I have a skirt. (...) it looks more clothing of a female Muslim who does not show off her figure. And so, they look at us worse I think. Sometimes it's mean.) (Interview 1, September 21, 2015).

From Jasmine's narrative, we have an insight to what it feels like to dress like "a female Muslim." People looked at her in a mean way, which scared her. On the other hand, if she wore jeans, this would not happen, but she did not feel free to dress the way she chose.

I suggest that Nora and Jasmine's stories illustrate the dialectic relationship between the external embodiment of habitus (in *le voile*) and the internal (attitudes and beliefs). Second, I want to identify connections between their habitus and their reactions. Bourdieu (1988) suggested that there is always a certain degree of uncertainty in every social situation, even if there is a probability that previous experiences will confirm the habitus: In other words, "people will have experiences consistent with the experiences which have shaped their habitus" [My translation].

When threatened by violent events, Nora and Jasmine reacted differently. This could be explained by the fact that Nora and Jasmine had different cultural backgrounds, different childhoods and their personal histories and individual experiences shaped their dispositions, which in turn shaped their actions and reactions in the present. I cannot conclude that there are any definite correlations. Nevertheless, some possible connections I can observe are for example, Jasmine, being Kabyle, inherited from her family the memory of a violent past. What's more, her personal religious practices were in direct opposition to the school regulation and this led to frustration and changes in her practices. These strong points of contention between Jasmine's habitus and her social environment could account for her reaction.

Other practice theorists have highlighted the dialectic between individual personal histories and individuals' actions and the need to place this dialectic within its larger historical, political and cultural contexts. In anthropology, Holland and Lave (2001, 2009) have developed a framework—*history-in-person*—which integrates the study of personal, local practice, and long term historically institutionalized struggles. As the authors claim, their framework “pays particular attention to differences among participants, and to the ongoing struggles that develop across activities around those differences” (2009, p. 1). In other words, in relation to my own work, their framework attempts to account for the factors which differentiate Nora and Jasmine's responses in times of crisis within the French education system. Teachers are aware that students bring their personal histories to the classroom, which justifies the need to know the students' histories. I argue, though, that Jasmine's story shows that in times of social crisis, drastic changes can occur in students' lives and as a result what they bring or not to the classroom can change in ways which are hard to understand or predict.

Finally, I believe that Jasmine and Nora's reactions may influence their future lives and to some extent their environment. I think that Jasmine's rejection and silence will have an impact on her environment and that Nora, who is vocal, informed and active, might initiate change in society. Nora's and Jasmine's stories of their reactions to violent events illustrate the dynamic relationship between social structures, events and habitus, which is a core aspect of practice theory: Society makes people, but people make society. To conclude my data analysis, I want to talk about the new perspectives and possibilities for participants that may have begun taking part in my research.

Taking Part in my Research and the Signs of New Worlds

During exit interviews with the student participants, they all reported that taking part in my research had been a positive experience. The main reason they gave was the issues discussed were not used to being asked about, but were issues that “concerne que nous” (concern only us). Asmae said that she felt “valorisée” (valued) because she was able to talk about her “vrais problèmes” (real problems). She also pointed out that her participation had been cathartic because:

On a extériorisé avec vous, on a pu parler...après nous entendre pour chaque personne et tout...vous nous avez pris à part et tout, ben c'est bien parce que on le fait pas ça dans le lycée. Les gens y vont pas prendre 20 minutes ou 30 minutes avec nous pour savoir ce qu'on a sur le cœur, mais vous vous l'avez fait.

(we brought things in the open with you, we were able to speak...and to listen us, to each person and all, well it's good because we don't do that in high-school. The people they are not going to take 20 or 30 minutes to know what is on your heart, but you, you did it).
(Focus group, June 2, 2016)

Jasmine and Leila said they enjoyed being able to talk about topics that they did not “adresse tous les jours” (tackle everyday) and Leila said she would remember me as the person who took an interest in her culture, in her religion, which she described as being “rare and cool.” As for Azouz, he admitted that he had actually never talked about his culture in this way before but also that taking part in my research had a rather profound effect on him, on his way of thinking and his sense of self. Indeed, he said that it made him question “comment je pensais et comment ça se faisait que je pensais comme ça et qui je suis” (how I thought and how come I was thinking like this and who I am). (Interview 5, May 26, 2016)

While students, generally reported feeling good about taking part in my research because they felt heard, Mme. Richard actually went through noticeable changes, which she directly attributed to taking part in my research.

The French literature teachers' responses to taking part in my research. Though I interviewed two French literature teachers, M. Lambert and Mme. Richard, I worked more closely with Mme. Richard. I met her during my pilot study and from the day I met her, she expressed a strong interest in my research. During my pilot study, as we were walking to her class and talking about the theme of my study, she said, “il y a une grande diversité dans cette école, mais c’est dommage, on en fait rien” (there is a great diversity in this school but it’s a pity we don’t do anything with it). This comment shows she had already formed a certain opinion about the way diversity was not acknowledged in the school. She also often questioned her own practices and the rules of the institution. Indeed, she felt concerned that she was not able to reach out to all of her students, and she noticed a sense of separation between Franco-Maghrebi students and Franco-French students. As she told me during our last interview, taking part in my research made her question her practices and the rules of the institution even more. For example, her view of *laïcité* changed drastically. At the beginning of the school year, she felt the ban on the *voile* was a way of protecting female students from parental pressure. During our last interview she expressed a different opinion:

D’un point de vue assez naïf, je pense, enfin moi sincèrement, j’en discutais avec pas mal de personnes qui ne comprennent pas forcément mon point de vue, euh... moi je serai plutôt pour l’autorisation du voile, de la croix, voilà. Peu importe finalement, chacun vient avec ses attributs religieux, au contraire, justement, puisque ça permettrait une plus grande discussion, un plus grand partage...

(From a rather naïve point of view, I think, well me sincerely, I was talking about it with several people who don’t necessarily understand my point of view, hmm, I would rather be in favor of authorizing the *voile*, of the cross, there. No matter in the end, everyone

comes with their religious symbols, on the contrary, actually, because it would allow for a larger discussion, a larger sharing...) (Interview 2, May 11, 2016)

This excerpt contains several places where Mme. Richard reveals how she really feels about *laïcité*. At the beginning, Mme. Richard is hesitant, almost embarrassed, as she qualifies her comment as “naïve.” We then learn that she has actually shared this point of view with several people who do not agree with her, or rather do not understand how she could think this way. When she first reveals her opinion, she uses the conditional tense as though this is still hypothetical (I would rather be in favor) and in the last sentence she is finally letting her “sincere” opinion in the open when she says, ‘no matter in the end everyone comes with their religious symbol.’ This time the use of the present makes it sound much real, almost performative.

Mme. Richard was the only staff member who openly disagreed with state policy. This was in stark contrast with M. Lambert who saw the ban on the *voile* as a means to ensure equality and freedom among students, thereby reproducing the dominant discourse. His opinion remained the same during the school year and during our last interview he said, “Oui, je trouve que c’est bien, comme ça chacun est libre de penser ce qu’il a envie de penser (...) donc la liberté voilà de penser, et ça n’empêche pas de pratiquer sa religion, c’est juste en classe. Comme ça tout le monde est à égalité.” (Yes, I think it is good, this way everybody is free to think what they want to think (...) so the freedom yes of thinking, and this does not prevent from practicing ones’ religion, it’s just in class. This way everybody is equal.) (Interview 2, May 12, 2016).

M. Lambert still perpetuated this dominant discourse, that *laïcité* was about freedom and equality, whereas Mme. Richard said being allowed to wear religious symbols would lead to more “discussion,” “more sharing.”

During my study, M. Lambert never seemed concerned about Franco-Maghrebi students, because according to him they were all well “integrated” and “anyway we are all the same.” Just like Jasmine and Nora responses differed in times of crisis, M. Lambert and Mme. Richard responded differently to taking part in my research. And in a similar way, I believe their habitus mediated their responses. M. Lambert was born in France and married to a French woman. Mme. Richard had studied abroad in the USA and had been married to a man of color with whom she had children. I believe that having children of mixed culture had probably made her aware of issues related to identity and would explain her interest in my research on identity negotiation. It could also explain why she frequently asked herself what could be done at school to better accommodate children with multiple identities. In other words, taking part in my study made her question her practices, but I think this happened because her habitus had already sensitized her to these issues.

Mme Richard. initiates changes. As a result of her questioning her practices Mme. Richard initiated two major changes. I want to point out that in addition to her critical stance, Mme. Richard enjoyed a certain degree of agency, which according to Duff (2012), refers to people’s “ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation” (p. 15), however, Duff recognized that “social circumstances may constrain their choices” (2012, p. 7).

First, towards the end of my study, she contacted the inspector of the academic region to ask if she could make changes to the official list of texts for the French *baccalauréat* because she objected to the fact, as I have previously pointed out, that the list only contained Franco-French writers. She wanted to introduce more texts written by more diverse, Francophone authors,

thereby better representing the mixed composition of France today and reaching out to students' wider cultural backgrounds.

L'année prochaine je vais réfléchir cet été à faire donc mon programme de français traditionnel entre guillemets, hein, Voltaire et compagnie... et puis aller piocher des textes sur internet équivalents, euh... dans d'autres langues. En turc, voilà... euh... en italien, peu importe hein, en marocain, et puis dire « ben voilà, il y a des équivalences, des passerelles...euh... Voltaire, mais après des Voltaires turcs, des Voltaires iraniens...

(Next year I will think this summer how to write my traditional French syllabus into brackets, eh, Voltaire and co... and then pick equivalent texts on the internet, hmm... in other languages. In Turkish, there... hmm... in Italian, no matter eh, in Moroccan, and then say “here you are, there are equivalences, walkways... hmm...Voltaire, but after some Turkish Voltaires, some Iranian Voltaires...”) (Interview 2, May 11, 2016).

In this quote Mme. Richard expresses her wish to change the program. Though she starts by saying she will cover the required “traditional syllabus,” illustrating she does not have full control in this matter, she then suggests creating bridges between these French texts and texts from other cultures. This practice would allow for a more diverse view of the world and a move away from a curriculum, which, as my data shown, excludes students. I also argue that through this slight change to the curriculum Mme. Richard is resisting dominant monolingual and monocultural discourses and she is shifting relations of power by giving more value to Franco-Maghrebi students' cultural capital because as Cummins (2003) pointed out:

when educators within a school (...) organize their curriculum and instruction in such a way that the linguistic and cultural capital of children and communities is strongly affirmed in all the interactions of the school, then the school is rejecting the negative attitudes and ignorance about diversity that exist in the wider society. (p. 64)

Mme. Richard was successful and had started an interesting dialogue with the decision-makers at a higher level. Indeed, a few days before I left the field, she was delighted to announce that after a long talk with the inspector, he had allowed her to include other texts in the list for the French baccalauréat – texts which were not yet in the national list.

Second, Mme. Richard initiated a project in her classroom to increase students' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity by making languages more visible. This project consisted of her writing a word in French in the middle of the black board at the back of the room and asking her students who knew how to say this word in another language to write it down. When I left she had done this once, but she intended to repeat the experience and to change the word every month. She wanted the words to have an inspiring connotation, for example “sagesse” (wisdom). I took a picture in Mme. Richard's class towards the end of my fieldwork (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Blackboard in Mme. Richard's classroom with translations of the word *sagesse*.

Though the French word “sagesse” is in the center and is written in bigger letters than other languages, I see in this practice the signs of a shift from the monolingual paradigm of the

school environment to a multilingual one. Indeed, in their “model of linguistic and cultural reconciliation practice,” which I will further explore in the implications for this research, Lory and Prasad (2018), posit that “recognizing linguistic and cultural diversity” is the first phase towards more equitable and ecological school spaces. The authors state that this phase requires that “teachers and students become conscious of the linguistic ecology of their school,” which is what Mme. Richards attempted to do by making several languages visible in the classroom.

I believe both Mme. Richard’s initiatives may lead to a more inclusive environment for Franco-Maghrebi students, where their languages and cultures may no longer have to be left at the school gate. These changes may be small and impact only a few students, but these new perspectives may slowly lead to new worlds where Franco-Maghrebi students’ hybrid identities can all coexist. This may be the beginning of social change, indeed, as Nieto (2002) wrote, “the process of affirming the diversity of students begins first as a teacher’s journey. A journey presupposes that the traveler will change along the way, and teaching is no exception...” (p. 212). The many ways in which Mme. Richard changed during my study suggest she is indeed on a journey and I hope she will continue to question her practices and the constraints of the institution in order to transform the experiences of all students, especially the most marginalized ones, such as the participants in my study.

Summary

In this chapter, first, I demonstrated that students positioned themselves in multiple ways which clashed with the essentialized way they were positioned by others. Indeed, while the students often claimed hybrid identities, they were mainly positioned as Arabs, which is reinforced by the fact they live in a rural area where they represent a small minority. I have also shown how students had to negotiate and resist identities that were imposed onto them and how

they invested in and created new identities. For some students, these negotiations represent painful sites of struggles due to a pervasive institutionalized racism, which I identified as a residue of colonial power dynamic. But these negotiations also resulted in the creation of new identities and I have argued that Islam constitutes for many of the participants a third space, where they can identify with each other while diverging from the main discourses that have excluded and stigmatized them. What's more, my data illustrate how the recent violent political events in France had a damaging impact on the students' sense of selves. This is especially acute among female Muslim students—Jasmine, Nora, Asmae—who felt they were being held responsible for the terrorist attacks and in some cases had been physically or verbally threatened. Faced with this even stronger rejection of their identities, Nora and Jasmine's reactions were mediated by their habitus, which may account for their different ways of coping with the situation. Finally I show how Nora's growing awareness of the institutionalized and exclusive structures as well as Mme. Richard's self-reflection and critical mind—initiated by taking part in my research—may lead to social changes. In my final chapter I will reflect on the main findings of my study and what the implications may be.

Chapter 9: Implications and Conclusions

In this final chapter, I summarize the main findings of this study and I propose some implications for research, teaching and policy making in light of these findings. I conclude by reflecting on the limitations of the different aspects of my research design and I offer directions for future research.

Summary of Main Findings

Research question 1. In chapter 6, I answered the first research question: What communicative resources do Franco-Maghrebi students have and how are they deployed in the classroom and in the community?

In response to this question, I have found that a majority of the students have a wide linguistic repertoire from which they draw to accommodate their various needs in various contexts. However, the students' communicative resources also varied according to their family histories and three participants reported not being able to use their families' dominant language. In addition, these fluid language practices were affected by the school's monolingual and monoglossic discourses and policies, represented mostly in a school regulation which reinforced the exclusive use of formal French in the school context.

Further, the French teachers had adopted a subtractive view of their students' bilingualism and a deficit view of their Franco-Maghrebi students' literacies in French. The students had in turn internalized these deficit views and many did not perceive themselves as legitimate speakers of French. Finally, with French as the language of the hegemony within the school, Franco-Maghrebi students' home language was devalued, stigmatized, and discriminated against, with Arabic particularly targeted as a threat to this hegemony and therefore actively

excluded from the school environment. I argue that the school system ensured the reproduction of national ideologies of languages and the dominance of French.

Research question 2. In chapter 7 I answered the second research questions: What are Franco-Maghrebi students' experiences of schooling? How does participation in schooling impact the identity negotiation process; that is to say, how do Franco-Maghrebi students position themselves within the school and how are they positioned by agents and discourses of the school?

In relation to this question, I have explored the three main themes which emerged from the data when I asked the participants about their schooling experience—*baccalauréat*, *culture générale*, and *laïcité*. First, the data illustrated how the *baccalauréat* dictates behaviors in the classroom, controls the relations between teachers and students, and justifies the imposition of a Franco-French syllabus. This national standard exam was a significant factor in the creation of a reductive and exclusive learning environment, which does not accommodate the needs of Franco-Maghrebi students nor acknowledge their funds of knowledge.

Second, I have demonstrated how the false assumption that all students share a common knowledge of *culture générale* imposes a Franco-French interpretation of a single legitimate culture, with its content prescribed by the Ministry of Education and its dominance ensured by the school. The data also pointed out the implicit and exclusive nature of *culture générale*, which on the one hand favors students who were “born into the game” and on the other hand delegitimizes and devalues Franco-Maghrebi students' home literacy practices, cultures, habitus, and identities.

Third, I have explored the concept of *laïcité*—which is considered by the school and by French society as a founding and equalizing principle of the Republic—but which in practice leads to hegemonizing and further negation of Franco-Maghrebi students' identities. The

students' narratives provide a first-hand account of the stigmatizing and discriminating effects of *laïcité*. I thus have argued that in current practice, *laïcité* is used as an instrument of institutionalized “republican racism” (Gèze & Manceron, 2017), targeted against the Franco-Maghrebi Muslim population and legitimized by its association with the founding principles of the Republic.

Research question 3. In chapter 8, I answered the third research question: How does the negotiation process discussed in the previous question impact Franco-Maghrebi students' sense of selves? How do the participants negotiate identities and create new worlds?

First, the data highlight the multiple ways in which the students positioned themselves through “hyphenated” or “hybrid” identities, with various levels of attachments and affiliations. However, the students' reflective positioning clashed with the essentialized way they were positioned by others—as Arabs, as foreigners, or simply as not belonging. Faced with this rejection the students resisted through sociolinguistic practices that were opposed to these dominant discourses by investing in and creating new identities. Indeed, the data highlight the importance of Islam in the students' lives and how, for many, it has allowed them to identify with one another by creating an alternative discourse or a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994). Additionally, because my study took place in times of crises, when France was undergoing a series of terrorist attacks, many students, especially those young women practicing Islam expressed how these violent political events impacted their sense of selves, leaving some of them feeling even more rejected. Finally, I found that some participants' growing awareness of power dynamics and social structures may lead to social changes.

My own takeaway. The data I gathered tell the stories of ten smart, caring, fun, and creative students, and their devoted and caring literature teachers in a rural French high school. At

the same time, it shows how social and institutional structures constrain the full expression of the students' identities. Adopting a wider lens, it is also the story of young people who are caught between the history and power dynamic of a colonial past that has never been resolved, and a time of sociopolitical crisis, for which their communities are being blamed in the national discourse. What's more, the data (the students' narratives, the observations of how agents of the school interacted with each other, and how wider societal discourses impacted these interactions and reactions) account for the dynamic relationship between social structures, events, and habitus which illuminates Practice Theory. As a matter of fact, in chapter 8, I reported some potential for changes, however, the findings in my research often highlight the impact society has on people, and thereby the reinforce the need to attend both to the macro conditions and the micro processes and practices of individuals within those conditions.

While this could be perceived as a limitation, I argue that attending to the impact social structures have on individuals is not being deterministic, but it is a necessity to unveil actual struggles and inequalities and I want to share my insights on this matter.

Implications for Researchers

I want to reinforce the relevance of Practice Theory as it attends to both the 'micro' and 'macro' levels of society (Wortham, 2012). Indeed, placing the students' narratives and the interactions I observed within their wider socio-political context allowed me to have a broad picture and led to a deeper understanding. With this approach, I uncovered many implicit, micro-processes of power, and illustrated how they are implemented and reproduced, while reporting participants' agency. However, I did not adopt a naïve interpretation by overestimating people's power to act, which as I explained in the literature review has become a tendency in research on identity. Block (2013) examined publications based on empirical studies focusing on the

relationship between language and identity—all of which all adopted a poststructuralist approach—he then commented on the tendency, “to grant much more weight to agency than to structure in the making sense of how individual makes their way through social worlds” (p. 23). In line with this view, in my analysis of students’ hybrid identities and Islam as a third space I have refrained from what Kubota (2016) referred to as “a superficial celebration” of hybridity (p. 477). Instead, I have highlighted the asymmetrical relations of power that stigmatize the participants often due to their hybridity.

In reaction to poststructuralist approaches to inquiry, I call for a more critical and realistic approach in order to address real-world problems and challenge the political and educational discourses and practices that exclude minoritized youths. As Kubota (2016) claimed, we need to resist the “academic culture that compels us to ignore social problems and instead celebrate plurality and hybridity for our own cause” (p. 491). I argue that downplaying the power of structures over individuals is a view which emerges from a place of privilege. Indeed, there is, on one hand, a need to recognize this plurality in identity construction and language use and, on the other hand, there is a need to critique how inequality is often solidified or even intensified within plurality and hybridity. I argue that this will make our work in research more impactful and transformative.

Next, I consider some implications for teaching and policy making. Because power is realized at all levels of the institution studied, I will address teachers, the principal, the school counselor, the “surveillants,” and policy makers, without explicitly differentiating their roles, though I am aware that they do not all share the same decision-making power within the institution.

Implications for Policy Makers and Teachers

The overarching theme of this dissertation has been how the one-way assimilation process has been harmful to Franco-Maghrebi students and that the responsibility to change lies with the French education system and its agents, not on the students themselves. In order to understand how this change can be realized I will now look at different implications at the level of structure. I explore two major implications in connection to my research questions: students' communicative resources and their experiences of schooling.

Implications concerning students' communicative resources. Given the disconnect between Franco-Maghrebi students' communicative practices inside and outside the school, the first obvious implication is for teachers and leaders to acknowledge, accept, and value the linguistic and cultural diversity and resources of every student. Teachers need to actively seek to understand their students' communicative resources in order to avoid assumptions and recognize their own monolingual bias and deficit views of bilingualism. In addition, administrators and teachers need to be aware of the negative impact which a French-only policy has on bilinguals—how it limits not only their cognitive abilities, but also the expression of their identities.

I argue that students should be allowed and encouraged to use their full linguistic resources in the classroom, thereby recognizing that translanguaging is both the natural mode of communication among bilinguals and a tool for learning and making sense of the world (García 2009). In addition to supporting the development of emergent bilinguals, who should not have to choose between committing to one language to the exclusion of another, this would allow for the participants' languages and identities to be present and visible in the school instead of being seen as threats.

Additionally, given that Arabic is the second most widely spoken language in France, I support the case for bilingual education in French and Arabic, in alignment with trends to include the languages of minority populations that are increasingly prevalent in many countries, as for example some parts of the USA with Spanish. I am aware of the debate over which variety of Arabic should be taught in schools and I argue in favor of teaching the varieties of Arabic and of Berber languages most commonly used by Franco-Maghrebi youth. Bilingual education would further legitimize Franco-Maghrebi students' linguistic and cultural home practices. In addition, as Hélot and Erfurt (2016) claimed, bilingual education is the only type of education that is really equitable. Because bilingual education implies sharing the education space with another language, it would result in a more inclusive environment where several languages would coexist and be granted equal status.

Implications concerning students' experiences of schooling. Cummins identified several transformative pedagogies that have emerged in the past three decades, including the pedagogy of multiliteracies as envisioned by the New London Group (1996) and other New Literacy Studies scholars such as James Gee and Richard Kern. While aware of the danger of a “one-size-fits all approach” (Ortega, 2012), I argue that transformative pedagogy is relevant to my study precisely because, as the New London Group proposed, it leads to teaching practices whose role is “to develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without people having to erase or leave behind different subjectivities” (p. 72). This pedagogy, particularly multiliteracies, has influenced my own teaching over the past 10 years, and I have explored ways in which it can shift unequal relations of power in the classroom. More specifically, I find three curricular components of this pedagogy—first coined by the New London Group (1996) and updated by

Cope and Kalantzis (2015)—to be most relevant to both an identity perspective and transformative pedagogy.

The data in this study highlight how the teaching practices, the curriculum content, and the imposition of a Franco-French culture exclude and marginalize Franco-Maghrebi students. I urge teachers and policy makers to question their own biases, to identify and challenge the imbalanced relations of power, and to strive for more inclusive practices, policies, and pedagogies. To counter the devaluation of the linguistic and cultural identities of marginalized groups which often plays out in the interactions between students and educators, Cummins called for transformative pedagogy that attempts to foster collaborative relations of power or empowerment, which, he writes, “results from classroom interactions that enable students to relate curriculum content to their individual and collective perspective experience and to analyze broader social issues relevant to their lives” (2000, p. 246).

The first component is *situated practice*, which posits that human cognition is situated and contextual and meanings are grounded in students’ experience, action, and subjective interest (Gee, 2004). One key pedagogical implication is the importance of relating school learning to the practical out-of-school experiences of learners and building on the existing funds of knowledge students bring to the classroom. Because this component draws from students’ experiences, it considers their affective and sociocultural needs and their identities. This component was missing from the classes I observed and as a result the students’ existing knowledge and interpretation were not valued and the students’ needs were rarely met. An illustration of this is when Nora’s interpretation of *The Plague* was rejected and viewed by M. Lambert as simplistic, which affected Nora’s sense of self and belonging.

The second component is *overt instruction*, which posits that knowledge, especially academic knowledge (in the case of my study, *culture générale*) is based on concept and theory, typically developed by experts in a specific field. During this learning process, learners become active conceptualizers, making the tacit explicit. This component would mitigate the implicit nature of *culture générale*, which keeps Franco-Maghrebi students from fully participating in the classroom discourse. An illustration in my data is Mme. Richard's assumption that everybody knew a certain poem, which had the effect of excluding Jasmine.

The third curricular component is *critical framing*, which posits that learning also entails a certain kind of critical capacity based on analyzing discourse functions and critically interrogating the relationships of power and the interests of participants in the communication process. This component contextualizes the historical, cultural, sociopolitical, and ideological roots of knowledge and social practices. This critical awareness could initiate a discussion around the symbolic domination of French and the Franco-French syllabus imposed by the *baccalauréat*. It also underlines the need for schools in France to redefine curricula to better represent the diverse and changing population and to acknowledge new forms of literacy.

As a final implication, I consider Lory and Prasad's (2018) model of linguistic and cultural reconciliation. The authors foreground the concept of reconciliation within colonial contexts where minoritized languages and cultures have been devalued, and they highlight the necessity for schools to challenge the legacies of oppressive policies by decolonizing curricula and forms of instruction. This model should be seen as a social process, which must involve the minoritized communities and the dominant ones coming together to think about how power can be shifted, how the harm being done can be stopped and be repaired. It entails challenging the

assumption that school practices which fail to acknowledge students' differences do not set up everybody for success but instead do harm to marginalized communities.

Within the context of my study, the process of reconciliation creates the very much needed opportunity to unveil the tacit processes that have harmed Franco-Maghrebi students by devaluing and rejecting their linguistic and cultural identities. Additionally, it offers a path for France to adopt postcolonial discourses and practices by acknowledging darker aspects of its past, which continue to negatively impact minoritized communities, and deeply embedded beliefs which ensure social inequity. I suggest this model as an alternative to the principle of *laïcité*, which under the pretenses of promoting equality, stigmatizes Franco-Maghrebi students. I agree with Moïse's (2007) remark that "everything falters when equality, as decreed by the holders of the dominant power, is questioned by those who feel wronged by it when access to their own recognition [...] is denied" (p. 224). France needs to abandon discourses portraying the "good deeds" of colonialism—what the students called a "French version" of history. Instead curriculum must allow for other perspectives to be heard, like the ones reported in this paper. This could lead to interrogating and repairing the damaging power dynamic inherited from this colonial past.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Before commenting on directions for future research, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present study. The first is that the data about the student participants' linguistic practices at home was self-reported as I did not observe them in their home and their community. Second, in regard to the type of tools I used to collect my data, semi-structured interviews have some limitations, mainly because the researcher leads the process and therefore participants' input is limited or controlled. Lately, I have been inspired by the work of Prasad (2013, 2014,

2015, 2016) and her use of collaborative plurilingual multimodal texts to access culturally and linguistically diverse children's views of their plurilingual literacy practices. Based on Cummins's (2000) notion of "identity texts," Prasad uses creative visual and multimodal methods such as linguistic portraits and family language maps. Once her participants have drawn these portraits and maps, they are then asked to construct their own narrative. By describing what they drew, they offer their own interpretation and thereby become co-researchers. Prasad (2013) advocates a shift in research design, from conducting research *about* children to researching *with* children. My research design did not lead to such co-construction of the participants' narratives. In addition, these research tools help bilinguals talk more abstractly about how they navigate their complex communicative repertoires and their multiple identities. Indeed, in a special issue of *Applied Linguistic Review*, Kalaja and Pitkänen-Huhtha (2017) called for "*a visual turn*" in research methodologies in Applied Language Studies. They argued that visual methods "have a place in research into the personal experiences, beliefs and identities of multilingual subjects," because they "offer researchers a way into the inner selves and histories of language users and language learners" (p. 176).

In the light of these limitations, I propose several new directions for future research.

Directions for future research. First, I would like to continue studying this research-neglected population—Franco-Maghrebi students, specifically in rural France. However, I would like to extend the work I did in the school context to their home and communities, adding their parents' and members of their communities to the discussion. I believe this will further the understanding of the negotiation process between public and private spheres.

Second, as I mentioned above, the use of collaborative plurilingual multimodal texts is an area of research design that I want to pursue in my future work, because I believe it can be a

more faithful representation of the participants' narratives and because these tools and narratives, if shared with teachers and administrators, can help counter the prevailing views of the students as deficient users of French.

Specific to my study site, when I left the field in June 2016, some teachers and I had talked about the prospect of organizing a symposium in the school on the theme of diversity. This symposium would involve the participation of several teachers in various subjects (history, French, geography) and students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This event has not taken place, but I believe such intervention could be meaningful, especially alongside more collaborative research shared between students and teachers. Although my collaboration with Mme. Richard only involved my observing her class and her being interviewed, it still led her to questioning her practices—and this gave me a sense of how change can be initiated at this level, through opening a dialogue about current practices and the consequences of those practices.

Lastly, I hope to further explore the relationship between language, religion and identity construction. Shah (2006) conducted a study among Muslim youth in the UK and claimed that “recognition of religion as a category of influence for identity construction [...] is not a fully explored phenomenon” (p. 217). Nine years later Engman (2015) studied religious identity in an Arabic language classroom in the US, and also stated that religion is under-studied as an influential factor in identity construction as opposed to categories such as race, ethnicity, and gender.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have summarized the main findings and I have considered the implications for research on identity and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in French schools. I have also commented on the limitations of the study and offered suggestions

for future research. I will conclude with two important realizations that I have come to through doing this research.

First, I have developed a vision of rural France as being frozen, rigid and obsessed with national unity and homogeneity, a rigidity that is mainly preserved by schools. What's more, in response to violent events, I have witnessed France hardening its nationalist and universalist vision through the principle of *laïcité* and monoglossic discourses, thereby revealing its fear and rejection of diversity, especially when this diversity is a reminder of its colonial past and implicated in present day conflicts. France's obsession with equality and uniformity has resulted in a systematic assimilation process and it needs to shift its core values to inclusivity and diversity. I have come to the conclusion that for France to shift its relation of power, and to equally include all its inhabitants, it must let go of its "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991). In her contribution to Duchêne and Heller's book *Discourses of Endangerment*, Moïse shared a similar view:

France will not be able to solve its domestic tensions without questioning the political order and universalism; a political and ideological order which only serves to reproduce the social assets of the dominant group and legitimize the power holders. In the end, it is the whole social functioning that needs to be rethought before the break occurs too violently from the margins. (Moïse, 2007, p. 236)

For my closing thoughts, I return to the words of Asmae, who captures the situation and voices the need for change:

"En plus, nous on est à côté, enfin, déjà il y a nous dedans, faut qu'ils s'adaptent à nous aussi un peu, nous on s'adapte ici mais c'est que dans un sens et aussi ben nous au Maroc, c'est les pays francophones, ça parle français... il faut que ça passe dans les deux sens."

(Besides, we are right next to them, well, first we are already inside, they have to adapt to us as well a little bit, we adapt here but only one way and also, well, us in Morocco, it's the francophone countries, we speak French... it must happen both ways) (Interview 4, May 4, 2016)

Asmae points to the inextricable ways in which France and Morocco—which can be extended to the rest of the Maghreb—are related by their shared history of colonialism and the simple reality that people from the Maghreb live in France, and speak French—they are not only close, they are “inside” (dedans). Stating this truth, Asmae imagines a France where adaptation is mutual and where Franco-Maghrebi youth can be recognized and respected without having to alter the very essence of who they are to be accepted.

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Appendix A: Letter from Emmanuel Macron

CITOYENNES, CITOYENS,

J'ai décidé de me présenter à l'élection présidentielle car je veux construire une vraie alternance, redonner à chaque Française et chaque Français confiance en soi, confiance en la France et dans notre capacité collective à relever nos défis. Ce faisant, nous redonnerons à l'Europe et au reste du monde confiance en notre pays.

**“Le projet
que je vous
propose,
c'est de bâtir
avec vous
une France
nouvelle.”**

Depuis plus de trente ans, nous ne parvenons pas à régler le problème du chômage de masse, de la sécurité ni celui de l'intégration.

Des transformations radicales nouvelles bouleversent nos vies et nos certitudes.

La révolution numérique change nos manières de produire, de consommer et de vivre ensemble.

Le changement climatique nous oblige à repenser notre organisation et nos modes de vie.

Le terrorisme djihadiste a frappé notre pays ces dernières années et demeure la première menace.

Le monde est de plus en plus incertain.

Pour faire face à ces transformations et ces défis, je propose de bâtir avec vous une France nouvelle qui crée et entreprend, une France de sécurité et de progrès pour chacun. Une France plus forte dans une Europe plus efficace. Une France qui répare les injustices de départ et protège les plus faibles. Une France qui dépasse les vieux clivages pour mettre en place les solutions qui marchent, et qui conduit enfin une vraie moralisation de sa vie politique.

Je veux que nous soyons à nouveau fiers d'être français, grâce à notre culture, notre rayonnement international et notre langue.

Je veux que nous soyons libres d'entreprendre, d'innover, de réussir quel que soit notre milieu d'origine.

Je veux que nous soyons solidaires car la réussite de quelques-uns ne peut pas être le projet pour tout notre pays.

Je veux auprès de vous prendre des engagements clairs sur les chantiers essentiels pour l'avenir de notre pays. Car présider, ce n'est pas s'occuper de tout. Ce sont ces mêmes engagements que je demanderai à l'ensemble des parlementaires qui constitueront la majorité présidentielle, parce que nous avons besoin de transformations innovantes et radicales, pas de petits ajustements.

*Je veux qu'ensemble nous retrouvions l'énergie
du peuple français : être fiers, libres et solidaires -
Car la France est une chance.*

Emmanuel Macron

Principes de vie dans l'établissement

- ① ☞ L'élève doit **assister** à tous les cours et activités prévues.
- ② ☞ L'élève doit **faire**, en classe et à la maison, l'intégralité du travail demandé par les professeurs.
- ③ ☞ L'élève doit **posséder** l'ensemble de son matériel scolaire (livres, cahiers, calculatrice, tenue de sport...).
- ④ ☞ L'élève ne doit, durant les cours, ni bavarder, ni se déplacer, ni utiliser des objets inutiles à la scolarité.
- ⑤ ☞ L'élève ne doit pas quitter la salle de cours avant la sonnerie.
- ⑥ ☞ L'élève doit parler la **langue française** en dehors des cours de langues vivantes.
- ⑦ ☞ L'élève doit pouvoir présenter à tout moment son **carnet de correspondance** à tous les personnels adultes de l'établissement.
- ⑧ ☞ L'élève doit avoir une **attitude respectueuse** des biens et des personnes, et bannir de son vocabulaire les injures et les grossièretés.
- ⑨ ☞ Tout **comportement perturbateur** est passible de punitions et de sanctions. Les déplacements au sein de l'établissement doivent s'effectuer dans le calme.
- ⑩ ☞ L'élève doit **justifier** ses absences et retards auprès de la vie scolaire.

Signature de l'élève :

(Précédée de la mention : *Je m'engage à respecter les principes de vie dans l'établissement*)

Appendix C: Charte de laïcité

CHARTE DE LAÏCITÉ

1 La France est une **République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale**. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi, sur l'ensemble de son territoire, de tous les citoyens. Elle respecte toutes les croyances.

2 La République laïque organise la **séparation des religions et de l'État**. L'État est neutre à l'égard des convictions religieuses ou spirituelles. Il n'y a pas de religion d'État.

•• LA RÉPUBLIQUE EST LAÏQUE ••

3 La laïcité garantit la **liberté de conscience** à tous. **Chacun est libre de croire ou de ne pas croire**. Elle permet la libre expression de ses convictions, dans le respect de celles d'autrui et dans les limites de l'ordre public.

4 La laïcité permet l'exercice de la citoyenneté, en conciliant la **liberté de chacun avec l'égalité et la fraternité de tous** dans le souci de l'intérêt général.

5 La République assure dans les établissements scolaires le respect de chacun de ces principes.

CHARTE DE LA LAÏCITÉ
À L'ÉCOLE

La Nation confie à l'École la mission de faire partager aux élèves les valeurs de la République.

6 La laïcité de l'École offre aux élèves les conditions pour forger leur personnalité, exercer leur libre arbitre et faire l'apprentissage de la citoyenneté. **Elle les protège de tout prosélytisme et de toute pression** qui les empêcheraient de faire leurs propres choix.

7 La laïcité assure aux élèves l'accès à une **culture commune et partagée**.

8 La laïcité permet l'exercice de la **liberté d'expression** des élèves dans la limite du bon fonctionnement de l'École comme du respect des valeurs républicaines et du pluralisme des convictions.

9 La laïcité implique le **rejet de toutes les violences et de toutes les discriminations, garantit l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons** et repose sur une culture du respect et de la compréhension de l'autre.

10 Il appartient à tous les personnels de **transmettre aux élèves le sens et la valeur de la laïcité**, ainsi que des autres principes fondamentaux de la République. Ils veillent à leur application dans le cadre scolaire. Il leur revient de porter la présente charte à la connaissance des parents d'élèves.

11 Les personnels ont un **devoir de stricte neutralité** : ils ne doivent pas manifester leurs convictions politiques ou religieuses dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

•• L'ÉCOLE EST LAÏQUE ••

12 Les enseignements sont **laïques**. Afin de garantir aux élèves l'ouverture la plus objective possible à la diversité des visions du monde ainsi qu'à l'étendue et à la précision des savoirs, **aucun sujet n'est a priori exclu du questionnement scientifique et pédagogique**. Aucun élève ne peut invoquer une conviction religieuse ou politique pour contester à un enseignant le droit de traiter une question au programme.

13 Nul ne peut se prévaloir de son appartenance religieuse pour refuser de se conformer aux règles applicables dans l'École de la République.

14 Dans les établissements scolaires publics, les règles de vie des différents espaces, précisées dans le règlement intérieur, sont respectueuses de la laïcité. **Le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit**.

15 Par leurs réflexions et leurs activités, **les élèves contribuent à faire vivre la laïcité** au sein de leur établissement.

Appendix D: Chart of 1st round of questionnaires and observations

1st round of questionnaires and observations

What's your name? How old are you? Where were you born? Your parents? Your grand-parents?

Research concept and key theoretical concept	Student interviews	Instructor interviews	Classroom observation
<p>1. What linguistic resources do Franco-Maghrebi students have and how are they deployed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language as symbolic power • discourses 	<p>Languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What languages do you speak? • Where and with whom do you speak them? • How proficient are you in these languages? • How proficient do you think your teachers would say you are in these languages? • How do you feel about using these languages in class? Outside the class? • How do other people feel when you use them? • Do you think you are the same person in French and in Arabic? (Can you express yourself in the same way?) • If you could use a metaphor to describe what French represents in your life, what metaphor would you use? How about Arabic? 	<p>Students' linguistic resources and practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What languages do you think the students who have Maghrebi origins speak? With whom and where? • What languages do they use in school? • What do you generally think of their language skills? • What are some of the common difficulties they encounter? • Do you see them as functional bilinguals? Why/why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What languages are used, by whom, for what? • What linguistic registers are used, by whom, for what? • How is speech distributed? • Who initiates talk?
<p>2. How does participation in schooling impact the identity process; that is how do Franco-Maghrebi students position themselves within the school and how are they positioned by agents and discourses of the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identities • Negotiation of identities • Positioning • Agency 	<p>School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you describe a typical day in this school? • Could you describe a typical French lesson? • What is your relation with other students? With the teacher? • How do you feel in class? • Who are the students in your classroom? Do you know them well? How do you think they describe you? • Who do you talk with in class? What do you talk about? 	<p>Teaching this population of students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you like teaching this population? • What are the positive aspects? • What are some of the challenges? • Do you see them as functional bilinguals? Why/why not? (as above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are they seated? • How do they communicate between themselves, other students and with the teacher? • How is speech distributed?

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- Discourses
 - Who do you talk with outside of class? What do you do with them?
 - Give an example of a time you were frustrated by something at school.

Future/past

- What do you want to do later in life?
- What are your dreams?
- Do you think you will realize them? Why? Why not?
- What country do you identify most with?
- Do you think your life is easier than your parents' life? Why? What are some of the obstacles they had to face? How about you? Are they the same obstacles?

3. How does this negotiation process impact their literacies?

- Literacy
- Multiliteracies
- Agency
- Investment

- Could you describe a typical French lesson?
 - If you could use a metaphor to describe what French represents in your life, what metaphor would you use? How about Arabic?
 - Do you think school manages to support their needs? Why/why not?
 - In what way does school succeed in supporting them? In what ways does it fail?
 - What are the obstacles? (e.g. the syllabus, the testing system)
 - Do you think the pedagogy used with them is appropriate?
 - If you could change the way you work with this population what would you change?
 - What are students asked to do? And what do they do?
 - How is the atmosphere? (relaxed, tense)
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Appendix E: Chart of 2nd round of questionnaires and observations

2nd round of questionnaires and observations

How have you been? How is your French class going? How do you feel about the bac? How has it been since the attack in November? At school? In Vire? In your classroom?

Research questions and key theoretical concepts	Student interviews	Instructor interviews	Classroom observation
<p>1. What communicative resources do Franco-Maghrebi students have and how are they deployed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language as symbolic power • discourses 	<p>Culture générale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is culture générale? • How would you define it? • Is it important? Why? For what? For whom? • Who decides what it is? • How do you acquire it? Where? • Do you all have the same? • Which one is valued? • Are you acquiring some in your French course? During your schooling? How? • Do you feel that your cultural knowledge is valued? Useful? 	<p>Culture générale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is culture générale? • How would you define it? • Is it important? Why? For what? For whom? • Who decides what it is? • How do you acquire it? Where? Examples of activities in your class to develop it? • What are the sub actions? Reading, being aware of? Dates? Authors? • Do all your students have the same? • Which one is valued? • Are you helping students to acquire some in your French course? How? • Do you make use of what your students bring to class? Why? Why not? How? 	<p>Available design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources do students use/have during lessons? • What resources are valued? (linguistic, social, cultural...) • How do students and teacher make meaning of a text? • How are these resources drawn? What are the connections made about form and meaning? • What are the teachers' expectations of students' existing knowledge? Skills? • Different styles/interpretation
<p>2. How does participation in schooling impact the identity process; that is how do Franco-Maghrebi students position themselves within the school and how are they positioned by agents and discourses of the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identities • Negotiation of identities 	<p>Participation in school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you describe a typical French lesson? • What are you asked to do? Why? • What do you do? Why? • Do you participate in class? Why? Why not? • Do you feel you are getting sufficient help? Support? 	<p>Teaching this population of students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is their writing in French like? • How do they write? • What are their strategies? • What are their limitations? • What do you do in class that you think facilitate their learning? 	<p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the focus of learning?(interpretation? Collaboration? Conventions? Cultural knowledge? Problem solving? Reflection & self reflection? Language use? Ref (Kern, 2000)

- Positioning
- Agency
- Discourses

- What does the teacher do that helps you learning and making progress?
- What could the teacher do differently to help you more?
- How about the school in general?

Laïcité

- What is laïcité?
- Why is it important? For whom?
- Who define what it is?
- Who does it concern?
- How is it interpreted in your school?
- What are some of its practical applications?
- How does it affect students?
- Does it concern all students?
- Does it affect all students in the same way?
- Do you agree with its principle? Why? Why not?
- If you don't agree, what would be a better principle?

- What skills do you want them to develop? What do you do for these to develop?
- What do your students do in class?
- What could you do to facilitate their learning?
- What would be the ideal set up/pedagogy/program?

Laïcité

- What is laïcité?
- Why is it important? For whom?
- Who define what it is?
- Who does it concern?
- How is it interpreted in your school?
- What are some of its practical applications?
- How does it affect students?
- Does it concern all students?
- Does it affect all students in the same way?
- Do you agree with its principle? Why? Why not?
- If you don't agree, what would be a better principle?

- What tools are used by the teacher to help students make meaning?
- What tools are used by students to gain access to meaning?
- What is valued in the classroom? (participation, knowledge...)
- Who speaks in class?
- Who does not speak?
- Who says what?
- What do they do?

Laïcité

- How do students interact with each other in the classroom and outside?
- How do they address each other? (boys/girls/Franco-French/Maghrebi)
- What do students wear in the school?
- What do boys wear?
- What do girls wear?
- Outside of school?
- Are Franco-French and Franco Maghrebi dressed differently?

3. How does this negotiation process impact their literacies?

- Literacy
- Multiliteracies
- Agency
- Investment

Literacy practices

- Could you describe a typical French lesson?
- What are you asked to do?
- What do you find helpful?
- What do you find challenging?
- What do you do in class?
- Can you describe a typical week day and your use of both languages?
- A typical holiday and your use of both languages?
- What do you do with your French? And Arabic?
- What do you use it for?
- What can you do with it? What can you not do?

Literacy practices

- Could you describe a typical French lesson?
- What are your goals for your students' learning? For your next lesson?
- What are your recurrent activities?
- How do you equip them for their writing/oral assignments?
- What is their writing in French like?
- How do they write?
- What are their strategies?
- What are their limitations?

Pedagogy/curricular components

- What is the teacher's explicit objectives ?
- Instruction practices?
- How is the class organized? (what are the component of a class? Critical framing? Situated practice? Overt instruction? Transformed practice?)
- Can identify situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, redesign?
- What language/register do students use in class?
- Outside of class?

-
- What do you wish you could do?
 - Do you wish you were more fluent in French/Arabic?
 - Do you feel you have been able to keep both languages the way you would have wanted?
 - Do you move freely between your languages? Your cultures? Or are there any barriers?

Identification

- Can you describe your personality?
- How would you like me to refer you as? FM? Musulman?

Final interview:

Did you enjoy taking part in this study? Why? Did it make you think differently?

Do you think there is a difference between the way you see yourself and the way you are seen?

What do you think make you connect more with your F/M friends? Cultural background? Religion? The way people see you?

- What do they write in class?
- Outside of class?
- What is their writing in French like?
- How do they write?
- What are their strategies?
- What are their limitations?