

Particular universalisms: North African immigrants respond to French racism

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Abstract

This article examines how ordinary victims of racism rebut racist beliefs communicated to them by the mass media and encountered in daily life. We describe the rhetorical devices that North African immigrant men in France use to respond to French racism, drawing on thirty in-depth interviews conducted with randomly selected blue-collar immigrants residing in the Paris suburbs. We argue that while French anti-racist rhetorics, both elite and popular, draw on universalistic principles informed by the Enlightenment as well as French Republican ideals, North African immigrants rebut racism by drawing instead on their daily experience and on a 'particular universalism', i.e. a moral universalism informed by Islam. Their arguments frequently centre on claims of equality or similarity between all human beings, or between North Africans and the French. Available cultural repertoires and the structural positions of immigrants help to account for the rhetorical devices that immigrants use to rebut racism.

Keywords: Anti-racism; France; immigrants; North Africans; racism; rhetoric.

Introduction

This article analyses how ordinary victims of racism rebut racist beliefs communicated to them by the mass media and encountered in daily life. While Feagin (1991) and Essed (1991) have examined how ordinary victims of racism interpret their personal experiences of racism, and Morris (1984) and McAdam (1988) have studied the anti-racist activities of social movements that include both victims and sympathizers (see also Lloyd 1998, Abdallah 2000), sociologists have yet to study anti-racism from the perspective of ordinary victims who are unaffiliated with activist associations.¹ Filling this gap is an important step in improving our understanding of processes of resistance (Scott 1985).

In this article we describe the rhetorical devices that North African immigrant men deploy in response to French racism by drawing on thirty in-depth interviews conducted with randomly-selected blue-collar workers residing in the Paris suburbs. We argue that while elite and popular forms of French anti-racism draw on universalistic principles informed by the Enlightenment and Republican principles, North African immigrants rebut racism primarily by drawing on their daily experience and on a moral universalism informed by the Koran.² We maintain that the types of arguments respondents make are also shaped by their structural position in France and the cultural repertoires available to them.

North African immigrants confront French racism

North African immigrants are the prime victims of French racism. Not only do they make up a large share of all immigrants in France – approximately one-third (Boeldieu and Borrel 2000) – but they are also particularly targeted by French racist sentiment. In its 2001 Annual Report, the *Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme* reported that 63 per cent of its survey respondents said there were too many 'Arabs' in France, compared to 43 per cent who said there were too many blacks and 21 per cent who said there were too many Asians (Zappi 2001).³ The far-right *Front National* points to North Africans as one of the main causes of crime and unemployment in France and routinely campaigns on a platform of expelling non-European immigrants.⁴

The racism that North African immigrants (and their children) face is often embodied in the complaint that they are too 'culturally different' to be absorbed into French society (Taguieff 1991; Lamont 2000a, ch. 5).⁵ As Taguieff (1988) and Wiewiorka (1996) have noted, racism need not rely on biological arguments for its power; as nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific notions of race have been discarded, new rhetoric centred on insurmountable cultural differences between groups has appeared (see also Todorov 1989). Silverman (1992, p. 8) further contends that culturally-grounded racism is not at all new in France, but rather that the longstanding 'idea of a common and trans-historical culture defining the French nation has been a powerful means of racializing the "French people"'. In recent years, proponents of the cultural chasm between French and North African have focused on religion (i.e. ostensible differences between Islam and Catholicism; see Etienne 1989) and particularly, presumed attitudinal differences towards the separation of religion and state (as highlighted in the 1989 *Affaire du foulard*; see Kepel 1997).

Despite the charge that they are too 'culturally different' to be integrated, North African immigrants in fact possess strong and enduring ties to France. Thus their position in French society is a highly paradoxical one, intermingling frequent rejection with close links. They are

tied to France by family history; many have fathers, uncles and grand-fathers who worked for colonists in Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia, or who died fighting for France in Indochina, Germany or Italy. Many have brought their wives and children to France. Others have children who are French citizens and few desire to return to the land of their fathers. Yet, because most North African immigrants have not taken French citizenship, they are in a weakened position from which to formally denounce discrimination and claim rights.⁶ As non-citizens, they remain second-class members of French society even if France is where they have spent most of their adult lives.⁷

In 1981 the French government lifted its restrictions on foreigners' ability to found organizations, leading to increases both in the number of immigrant-based associations (Wihtol de Wenden 1988) and in immigrants' voicing concerns regarding discrimination (Lloyd 1998).⁸ However, in the population of North African origin in France today, it is the second generation (i.e. *les Beurs*) that is much more active in anti-racist associative movements (such as *SOS-Racisme* and *France Plus*), as opposed to their immigrant parents (Dubet 1989).⁹ Tribalat (1995, pp. 130–31) found that fewer than one in six first-generation immigrants belong to a community association, and even fewer belong to religious associations or unions. Consistent with this finding, all but two of our thirty interviewees stated explicitly that they do not participate in any association. Consequently, it is not clear to what extent immigrants' new-found voice and visibility impact those who do not participate in formal associations. Researchers and policy-makers who seek to gauge the extent of discrimination in France often contend that immigrants are still unwilling to lodge formal complaints (Bernard 1995; Simon 2000).

Tools for rebutting racism

Outside the institutional structures of formal anti-discrimination associations, North African immigrants must cope on a daily basis with racism as they experience it and as it is depicted in the popular press and the mass media.¹⁰ In the process, they elaborate folk theories and rhetorical devices to demonstrate to themselves and others that racism is wrong-headed.¹¹ This is part of a cultural resistance that they *de facto* develop in the process of managing their coexistence with racism, and that we attempt to document through the use of interviews (Scott 1985).

A fairly wide range of sources might be expected to inform the cultural tool-kit (Swidler 1986) or repertoire of arguments from which our interviewees draw arguments to rebut racism. Prominent among these, however, would be the Enlightenment and Republican ideals that have shaped France's political culture since the Revolution of 1789, for they place an emphasis on equality, liberty and human rights that might well lend itself to anti-racist discourse. These ideals posit rational

citizens delegating their political sovereignty to the state whose role is to guarantee equal rights and to stand above particularistic interests in order to promote the common good and represent universal reason (Nicolet 1992).¹² Moreover, these ideologies shape the rhetoric of both elite and popular anti-racism among the white French that in turn might influence the strategies fashioned by North African immigrants. Drawing on interviews, we have shown in previous work that white French workers who oppose racism do so partly in the name of solidarity, which some associate with Republican values (Lamont 2000b). Immigrant organizations also follow the precepts of Republican citizenship in that they tend to claim rights and political citizenship rather than cultural membership: they are primarily concerned with the collective participation and insertion of migrant groups into the French political citizenry (Soysal 1994, p. 106). In this regard, many contemporary anti-racist organizations share the same regard for Republican universalism that Algerian anti-colonial associations held, rooted in the belief that the Revolution of 1789 epitomized freedom and the rights of men (Stora 1992).¹³

In contrast to the equation of Republican universalism with anti-racism, we find that North African immigrants develop very different themes when constructing their anti-racist arguments. First, they refute racism by culling evidence of universal equality from their daily lives, pointing to traits shared by all human beings, such as common morality, human needs, biology and destiny. Second, they alternatively refer to explicitly particularist and differentialist arguments and to conceptions of moral universalism¹⁴ informed by the Koran in order to disprove their inferiority in the eyes of the French. Thus, they seek to demonstrate that: a) all human beings are equal because all races, nations and religions are equal; b) North Africans are collectively equal or similar to the French; c) interviewees themselves are personally equal to or similar to the French; d) North Africans are collectively superior to the French; and e) racism can be accounted for by the characteristics of racist people. We conclude that immigrants' anti-racism is largely based on a particular conception of universalism, an Islamic-influenced framework, that differs from conceptions of universalism dominant in French political culture.¹⁵

It is important to keep in mind, however, that Islam in France is heterogeneous in terms of its adherents, their practices and beliefs (Kepel 1987; Etienne 1989; Cesari 1994). Moreover, the rhetorical devices used by North African immigrants are likely to reflect not only Muslim religious tenets, but also their associated cultural norms and beliefs. Indeed, although many of our respondents are illiterate and have only a rudimentary knowledge of the Koran, like many North African immigrants of fairly long standing in France, they fall into Cesari's (1994, p. 26) category of 'primo-migrants' for whom Islam 'is the principal

organizer of the sense of conduct and behavior in society'.¹⁶ We shall see that they adhere to what Etienne (1989, p. 208) describes as 'le fait islamique' – implying 'Islamic culture, institutions, and ethico-juridical codes that historically express Koranic principles' (our translation) – to an equal if not greater extent than to the literal Koranic teachings themselves ('le fait coranique').

Data and methodology

Immigrants represent 7.4 per cent of the French population, and of France's 4.3 million immigrants, 1.3 million come from the North African nations of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (Boeldieu and Borrel 2000). They are concentrated on the outskirts of major cities, particularly Paris, and the majority are blue-collar workers (Tribalat 1995, p. 156). In order to tap the range of anti-racist arguments used by this population, we conducted in-depth interviews in 1992–1993 with men having Arabic and Berber names who were randomly chosen from the telephone directories of a dozen working- and lower-middle-class suburbs of Paris.¹⁷ Potential interviewees were first sent a letter describing the project and asking for their participation.¹⁸ These letters were followed by a phone call where respondents were screened for criteria of gender, age, employment status, occupation, citizenship and country of birth.¹⁹ We would then go to a location of their choosing to conduct a taped interview.²⁰

We focus on randomly selected individuals because they are more representative of the diversity of the North African immigrant population than immigrants involved in immigrant associations, who are frequently the focus of research and tend to be more highly educated than the average immigrants who are often illiterate (Tribalat 1995, p. 138). We are interested in reconstituting the repertoire of arguments or the cultural tool-kits North Africans use. We consider them to be members of a symbolic community, i.e. members of a group who share a common identity²¹ and who are often described by the French mass media and other cultural institutions as a relatively coherent cultural unit.²²

Interviewees lived in the suburbs of Aubervilliers, Bobigny, Clichy, Créteil, Gennevilliers, Ivry-sur-Seine, La Courneuve, Nanterre, Puteaux, Stains, and Vitry-sur-Seine.²³ These *communes* are representative of those where the majority of North African workers live in France (Dubet 1989): most reside in old working-class towns where heavy industry was located at the beginning of the twentieth century. A number of these *communes* are part of the *banlieue rouge*, the set of *communes* surrounding Paris where the city government has been controlled by the French Communist Party for the better part of this century (Stovall 1990). A few are more modern and service oriented: notably Créteil, Nanterre, and Vitry. Some present higher concentrations of immigrants – Clichy,

Bobigny, La Courneuve – while others are more heterogeneous in ethnic composition: Créteil, Ivry and Vitry.

By drawing on interviews, we privilege breadth over depth: interviews make it possible to gather data from a larger number of individuals than observation, thereby improving the reliability of the data. Interviews do not provide the kind of nuanced information about racist thinking that could be obtained from participant observation (or from interviews conducted in the native language of the respondents).²⁴ However, they capture respondents' mental maps and are useful for documenting and comparing the saliency of various types of arguments across populations.²⁵

The interviews lasted approximately two hours and were conducted at a time and place chosen by the respondents – most often in *cafés*, but also in their homes and in public gardens. Interviewees included thirteen Algerians, fifteen Moroccans and two Tunisians. Six were between thirty-four and thirty-nine years of age, twelve were in their forties and twelve were in their fifties; *Beurs*, or second-generation immigrants, were excluded from the sample. All but a few had been in France for more than twenty years.²⁶ All had been employed steadily for the last five years as skilled or unskilled workers. The majority brought their families to France and a third own property in their country of origin.²⁷

The interviews were conducted in the context of a broader research project bearing on working-class culture (see Lamont 2000a). Immigrants were told that the explicit purpose of the interviews was to explore their leisure activities and how they choose their friends. Most of our conversations concerned how they draw boundaries between the people they like and those they dislike, whom they feel inferior and superior to, and whom they feel similar to and different from. The men we talked to were encouraged to answer these questions in reference to people in general and to concrete individuals they know, at work and elsewhere. Discussions of racism emerged in this context, often in descriptions of the types of people they dislike. However, at the end of the interview, immigrants were also probed specifically on their experience of and reaction to racism.

The data analysis proceeded as follows: interview transcripts were analysed thematically with the goal of identifying the criteria of evaluation that individuals used to assess the value of people.²⁸ Through close reading, we established an inventory of the taken-for-granted and explicit criteria that immigrants used when describing the relative value or status of their group (defined in racial, religious, or geographic terms) in contrast to the 'other' (which they generally define as the French, Christians, or Europeans). We relied heavily on Miles and Huberman's (1984) matrix display to find variations among interviewees as well as themes, patterns, and clusters among types of attitudes and types of individuals. This study of mental maps and frames draws on interpretive

methods widely used in cultural sociology and cultural anthropology (e.g. Geertz 1973).

Findings

1) People of all races, nations, and religions are equal

Interviewees demonstrate the existence of universal equality by pointing to criteria that apply or should apply to all human beings, independently of their race, country of origin, or religion; a third of the men we talked to subscribed to such a device.²⁹ They are particularly concerned with moral rules. A plumber says 'whether the person is black, yellow, or white, for me, if they don't do evil, they are OK'.³⁰ Similarly, a mechanic explains that it is important to

play the card of respect. At home or in other people's houses, this card will allow you to have good relationships with others. Whether you are Algerian or French has no importance, because people will judge you on the basis of your behaviour. We find this rule everywhere, independent of time and space. It is not because you are old or because it is the year 2000 that this rule does not apply. Respect is an immutable rule.

A large number of immigrants share with the warehouse worker the belief that 'everywhere, everywhere, in every country there are good people and bad people'.

Further evidence of universal equality is found in the fact that human beings share similar human needs and conditions for survival. A factory operative explains that 'everyone goes to get bread at the bakery for dinner, and everyone has to put their coat on to go to work in the morning, whether you are Arab or French. Everyone is the same, it is the same thing.' Similarly, a plumber says, 'We all have to work, Algerians or French, we all work the same, there is no difference.' Others find evidence of universal equality in the fact that similar physical characteristics are present in all races: one respondent reminds us that 'We are all nine-month babies' and 'we all have ten fingers.' Yet others focus on the universality of human destiny. Pointing to our common fate as human beings in order to demonstrate equivalence, an auto factory worker says that we all 'pass like clouds' over the earth, stressing our fragility and relative insignificance in the universe. Finally, others ground universal equality in the fact that one finds the same distribution of intelligence across all groups. While for a mason, 'there are intelligent people in all races, whether it is in the police, in society, in all races', a mechanic stresses the universality of human nature across nations when he says, 'The Canadian who is an idiot will be viewed as a Canadian imbecile

because there is this symbol of the flag. And the Algerian idiot will be viewed as Algerian because there are other symbols. But stupidity is the same when we take everything else away.'

In all these cases, interviewees use universalistic criteria that are not *a priori* biased in favour of one racial, national, or religious group: they are universalistic because they pertain to all human beings. Furthermore, whether pointing to morality, universal human needs, physical characteristics, universal human destiny, or intelligence, North African immigrants find evidence of equality in elements of daily life. These elements are generally *constant* 'facts' whose timelessness gives weight or truth to arguments. They are also frequently drawn from concrete naturalistic images (e.g. the clouds just mentioned), as if naturalistic metaphors demonstrated the a-historical, and therefore 'true', nature of precepts of action and beliefs.³¹

While Islam offers a view of the fraternity of all men as 'sons of Adam' (Kepel 1987, p. 334), its greater contribution to the outlook of our respondents is likely in its emphasis on the overarching importance of moral conduct. As Cesari (1994) points out, older first-generation North African immigrants are particularly likely to rely on Muslim strictures to make sense of daily life, and in this view, Islam represents a universal framework that is valid for all human beings and against which all human behaviour may be measured.

These elements contrast with the theoretical principles of the Enlightenment and Republican traditions, which privilege the individual, rationality, free will, the rule of law, and human rights. Interviewees are not concerned with our equal status as rational individuals (*à la* Descartes), as free individuals (*à la* Rousseau), or even as propertied individuals (*à la* Locke). They are often less concerned with demonstrating equality *per se* than with establishing equivalence, similarity, or compatibility.³² Only two interviewees refer to Republican principles in rebutting racism, and they do so to depict them as fantastic standards. For instance, a railway mechanic explains: 'We say that [in France] segregation does not exist, but it is not true. That it is the country of universal human rights, but it is false, completely false. Nothing is respected, there is no country that can criticize the other without seeing its own wrong-doing.' Similarly, another mechanic observes:

They said that France equals liberty, equality, fraternity. They used to tell us that when they needed soldiers to fight for France all over the world. But when it was time to share the cake, to create schools for us in Algeria, they were not saying it anymore.

In the context of the interview, only three immigrants claim universal human rights or vehemently protest against the racism they have experienced. A few interviewees even believe that it is the privilege of the

French to be racist.³³ In playing down Republican principles in opposing racism, immigrants present a stark contrast with French workers: the defence of formal equality and human solidarity is an important *leit-motiv* in the French opposition to racism (Lamont 2000b).

While some French intellectuals defend the Republican model of integration, others uphold the right to difference, a cultural relativist argument.³⁴ Like references to Republicanism, mention of the right to difference is conspicuously absent from the discourse of immigrants aimed at rebutting racism. Orientalist scholars such as Von Grunebaum (1962, pp. 55–63) have argued that the prophetic tradition is incompatible with cultural relativism: because the truth given by the Koran is taken for granted, Muslims refuse to take human beings as arbiters of the value of things and relativism is literally unthinkable. In this context, Caillouis (cited by Gosselin 1993, p. 93) and others suggest that relativism is a distinctively Western way of thinking. Although one has to be sceptical of such a sweeping and decontextualized characterization of Islam (Laroui 1976), it might help us to make sense of the striking absence of cultural relativistic themes in the interviews.

2) *The French are similar to North Africans*

A second rhetorical device, used by four of the North African immigrants, consisted in demonstrating cultural similarities between the French and Moroccans, Tunisians, Algerians, or Kabyles. Whereas the criteria of equivalence described in the previous section are a-historical, the opposite is true in demonstrations of proximity between the French and North Africans: interviewees make ample use of historical and socio-cultural evidence to show that the two groups are similar. They do not draw on universalistic standards but establish that the French and North Africans are close to or similar to one another because they engage in special, privileged, particular relationships.³⁵

For instance, an Algerian labourer explains that Moroccans are close to the French because ‘when there were French people there, Moroccans would give them gifts, so the French came to like the Moroccans’. Similarly, a Moroccan painter claims, ‘Moroccans say that the French are good, France is good, there is no problem. For us immigrants, we would say that they are like brothers. There is no problem between the two governments and when the French went there, Moroccans protected the French. It is normal.’

A phone booth cleaner argues, ‘Algerians are used to the French because almost three-quarters of us have learned French. Whether you are French or Algerian, it is the same thing’. Finally, drawing on particularist evidence, a mason explains that Kabyles are closer to the French than other Algerians are because like the French they eat pork and drink alcohol.³⁶ Here again, evidence of similarity is taken not from formal

political ideology, but from both daily experience and historical memory of colonial and post-colonial encounters.

3) *The good Arab*

A third rhetorical device used to rebut racism consists in providing evidence of personal goodness, i.e., the fact that respondents personally conform to what they perceive to be universal moral criteria highly valued by the host society. This individualist strategy involves abstracting oneself from one's race/nation/religion in order to show that a member is not necessarily defined by the group to which s/he belongs or that judgements about a group cannot be extended to each of its representatives. In so doing, they draw on a particular moral universalism that they associate with the Koran. This rhetorical device is used by a third of the men to whom we talked.

In interviews, respondents attempt to establish their personal value, partly in response to the anxiety raised by the experience of being surveyed. They establish their value by following a standard pattern that consists of demonstrating that they 'follow a straight path', are 'tranquil', and 'mind their own business'. It is illustrated by a mason who says

I tell you the truth, I am like Switzerland, I go one way. I don't go here and there. I am straight, neither left nor right. The only thing I look for is my bread, that's it . . . I only do my work and take care of my children, that's it . . . I have been in France for how many years, and I don't pay attention to politics . . . I don't go to bars, I don't walk around. Before my family came, I used to go to movies, but since they are here, I don't anymore.³⁷

Going directly from work to home is a way to assert that one does not get into trouble, i.e., is 'tranquil' (*tranquille* in French, which can also be translated as 'low profile'). A warehouse worker, a gold-plating craftsman, an electrician and a dressmaker explain that they have no dealings with racist people because they go directly from work to home and see no one. They attribute the fact that they have always worked and never experienced problems with the police to their seriousness and commitment to 'following the straight path.' In so doing, they blame the victims of racism for their situation, often justifying French racism by the fact that immigrants are intermingling with French society in a way that they should not instead of doing what they are supposed to do: that is, work. A roofer, for instance, says, 'I have been here for 24 years and I have never been arrested by the police on the street. They never asked me to show my identification papers. It is because I come to my room directly and I don't look for fights'. He adds that it is foreigners who make the French racists because 'they bring their children here, foreigners, blacks,

Arabs, and they do anything they want, write on walls. This is not normal. If you give your child paint and he writes on the walls and you say nothing, it is you who makes the French racist'. Along similar lines, an electrician explains what he means by 'seriousness':

It means not to hang out with anybody, with people who drink too much. I have never smoked, drunk, and I think it has helped me a lot because I never had any problems, I have always found work, never had problems finding work, I make a good impression on people. I have never done anything bad to anyone. Seriousness is my model. If you compare people who live here in this public housing project with my friends, there is a big difference. The French are racist and it is to be expected when you see people who destroy everything, who are aggressive. I understand the French. You come to his country, and you destroy everything. I am Arab, but when I see an Arab who is destructive or aggressive, it makes me racist toward him. Normally I should not be racist toward someone who is from my country or race, but I become racist.

Only three interviewees blame North Africans for the racism of which they are victims.³⁸

When describing the moral attitudes they value, these interviewees do not attempt to show that they are equal to or the same as the French. Instead, they argue that they meet criteria valued by the French. Yet, as they are prompt to point out, the moral traits they stress are emphasized in the Koran. 'Tranquillity' and 'following the straight path' are not especially valued in the Christian tradition but they are in the Koranic tradition; for instance, 'following the straight path' is mentioned in the first *surah* of the Koran.³⁹ Interviewees profess that they take their moral bearings from the Koran by suggesting that it provides them with guidelines for all aspects of everyday life and helps them to avoid problems. Hence, they mobilize criteria that they believe to be universalistic but which have a privileged place in their own tradition; they draw on a universalism different from the universalism of Republican principles, thus illustrating that both are in reality particular – or, in Balibar's (1998) words, 'fictive' – universalisms.

4) Self above the other

This same particular universalism is at work in the fourth rhetorical device used by immigrants to rebut racism, which consists of demonstrating the superiority of Muslims (or of one's own national group) in contrast to the French. They embrace an Islamic moral universalism, implicitly marking a distance between their own values and Western conceptions and explicitly affirming the moral superiority of their own

tradition and values.⁴⁰ The criteria of evaluation they use *are* universalistic in nature in that they do not privilege *a priori* one group above another; like 'following a straight path', they can be met by all. However, these criteria are privileged in their own religious tradition, making them dimensions of a particular universalism. Almost one third of the respondents use this rhetorical device.⁴¹

Interviewees say that Muslims are superior to the French because they put more emphasis on altruism towards the needy and the elderly and on strong family ties, and because they are less individualistic. A skilled worker who specializes in air conditioning explains that in France,

old people are badly treated and their children don't come to see them. In contrast, in our country, we live in the milieu, the old people stay with their children. We have to help them, live with them, and this is human warmth. Although the parents are old, they don't feel alone, they are there among their children and grandchildren . . . Here in France, if you have nothing to eat, you will cross your hands, stay with your wife at the table, look at one another, talk, discuss, watch TV. In Algeria, if we have nothing, it is not shameful. If we have nothing in the house, my wife or I, we will go to see someone and say, give me this, and he will give it to me.

Many mention that giving to the poor and taking care of the weak are required by the five pillars, or basic rules, of Islam, referring directly to religion to justify their privileging of specific aspects of morality.⁴²

A number of interviewees also believe that Muslims have a superior morality to the French because of their familial values. A packer in the textile industry says, 'Here, we often hear that a father has slept with his daughter. This is a catastrophe for us. Our parents have never heard of such a thing. If someone tells them there is a father who slept with his daughter, they become sick, they go crazy. This is how I react when I hear that a father slept with his daughter. I see this as an enormous earthquake.'⁴³ Family values are viewed as better protected by Islam than by Christianity, thus demonstrating the greater morality of Muslims, and simultaneously, the universal validity of the message of Islam.

Other interviewees perceive their culture as more humane, and therefore richer, than French culture. This is a recurrent theme that is best illustrated by a controller in the automobile industry. Speaking about French people who take the risk of penetrating his milieu, he says,

They appreciate a kind of human warmth that does not exist among them. It is bizarre. Human warmth is what gives us a taste for life, what helps us avoid being sad. It makes you forget when you hurt, when you are hungry, when you are cold.

The correlate of the lack of human warmth in French society is the greater isolation of the French and a lack of solidarity. A packer in the textile industry describes the disadvantages of France in reference to the fact that a woman who lived in his building disappeared. He says: 'I had never seen her, never, and I have lived there for five or six years. In my country, [my neighbours] would know my grandfather, my great-grandfather. Here, it is not the same, and this has a lot of value. We don't run as much, we see life more. Life is longer, the days are longer too'.

Others ground their moral superiority in the advantages of traditional societies over modern societies. For instance, a screw cutter criticizes France because it gives too much freedom to individuals and this causes the quality of life to decline. He concludes: 'Contemporary civilization has given us nothing, absolutely nothing. On the contrary, before it was much better . . . before, when you ate a fruit, it really tasted like something'.

Finally, another group of interviewees ground their superiority in their physical *qua* moral resilience. For instance, a gold-plating craftsman argues that Arabs are superior to the French because they are less lazy and do not get tired as fast. Also, a labourer believes that Muslims are superior as a group or a 'race' because they make up a larger part of the world population than Christians do.

Our interviewees clearly interpret Islam as protecting and nourishing an important sense of community and mutual aid (see similar comments in Kepel 1987, pp. 333, 363). Adherence to Islam also marks its adepts from the infidel (*les impies*), endowing them with a particular ethical code (Kepel 1987 calls it an 'internal fortress', p. 32). In contrast, France is seen as a land of family and community disintegration and thus a source of impurity (Kepel 1997), an image that has its roots in the North African colonial experience (Etienne 1989, p. 207).

5) *Blaming the racists*

The final rhetorical device consists of explaining racism by the characteristics of the racists and it is used by only a handful of interviewees. They attempt to sociologize racism to show that its sources are to be found not in the behaviour of Muslims, but in the life experiences that lead people in general, and the French in particular, to racism. In the view of a meat delivery man, racism is caused by a lack of experience and is more frequent in higher social classes,

among the young people who have never walked outside of their house, who are spoiled by their fathers and mothers, who came into the world all dressed up . . . they're rich from the beginning. You can make them believe anything. The ones who started small, who had lice, who have fallen down, who have tried all the professions to make a living, they are not racist, because they have been all over the world.

Another factory worker provides a properly sociological explanation of racism by linking racism to the fact that the French are now competing with North Africans for low-status jobs. He recalls that 'One day, De Gaulle made a speech to the French and told them, *'Maghrébins* will work, and you, you just stay there and rest, they will do the work for you'. But the French did not listen, they had minds of their own, and went to work and let their children work . . . If you study, you should not do the work I do. The French should be improving somehow, there is modernization, and this and that. They should all be chiefs, not work on the line'. Here, the particular social conditions in which racists live explain racism.

These sociological explanations are complemented by explanations that focus on the universality of racism as the dark side of human nature. In this sense, they are similar to the universalist justifications respondents offered for the equality of all races, religions, etc.: just as there are good people and bad people among all groups, racists are to be found everywhere. For some, racism is a negative disposition that, from the origin, is in the heart of certain people, as if it were part of their nature. For instance, a handyman who works in a hotel chain says that racist people are people who are naturally bad, or have a propensity to be bad. A mason says that someone who is intelligent is not racist because an intelligent person does not think to do evil: only someone who is stupid does evil. A decorator attributes racism to jealousy while others attribute it to evil. A labourer argues, 'I love everyone, but family is family, Algeria is Algeria. But I am not racist'. He suggests that preferring 'your own kind' is a universal tendency.

Immigrants use universalistic arguments that can be applied to all. In pointing to the role of human nature in explaining racism, they do not draw on political ideology, but on their reading of the world based on their own experience – which leads them to believe, for instance, that people who have been all over the world are less racist. This again underscores the importance of everyday experience in shaping the rhetoric of anti-racism.

Conclusion

We have described a wide range of rhetorical devices that North African immigrants use to rebut racism. We showed that they appeal to a moral universalism borrowed directly from the Koran and from a more diffuse Muslim culture and have suggested that it thus constitutes a particular universalism. This universalism is particularly apparent in the first, third, and fourth rhetorical strategies we described: 'People of All Races, Nations, and Religions are Equal'; 'The Good Arab'; and 'Self Above the Other'. In these discourses, moral conduct including 'tranquillity', 'following a straight path', altruism toward the poor and the elderly, and

rejecting an excess of freedom are privileged as undeniable universal virtues. Workers link these virtues to the five pillars of Islam and to the Koran more generally. This moral universalism is central to what defines a good Muslim and what makes some claim superiority over the French.

In a departure from universalism that rests entirely on a distinct historical period and a specific set of relationships, some interviewees also rebutted racism by referring to commonalities in French and North African history (i.e. the 'French are Similar to North Africans' theme). And the final rhetorical device we explore – 'Blaming the racists' – is something of a hybrid, alternating the universalist argument that racists can be found in any society with the particularist explanation that certain social conditions are more propitious for the development of racism. What is common to all five anti-racist strategies that we document, however, is the recourse to evidence culled from everyday experience and presented as proof of common morality and of human physiology, nature, destiny and needs.

This article also points to the positions not taken by our interviewees. Most importantly, respondents do not refer to the principles of the Enlightenment and Republicanism, or to the right to difference stressed by cultural relativists. As we saw, the literature suggests that these themes are instead central in elite and popular anti-racist rhetoric in France. An important contribution of this article, then, is to refocus attention away from Western types of universalism and towards other forms that the ordinary victims of racism in France uphold.

How can we account for our findings? Our analysis has already pointed to the importance of available cultural repertoires. French civic culture does not appear to have penetrated the immigrant population significantly. This affects the extent to which immigrants are exposed to Republican and Enlightenment principles pertaining to the rule of law, human rights, equality, etc. Undoubtedly, the high rate of illiteracy, the uneasy relationship that immigrants have with the educational system, and strong ethnic enclaves influence which cultural tools immigrants use to rebut racism. Moreover, the strains of Republican universalism to which North African immigrants are exposed may be met with scepticism for several reasons. First and foremost is the Republican secular vision of the division between state and religion; Muslims do not consider secularism to be a universal value (Etienne 1989, pp. 200–207). Similarly, Muslim scholars have criticized the notion of human rights for its ethnocentrism because it presumes a high degree of individualism and assigns to the state the role of regulating relationships instead of respecting customs and pressures from the community.⁴⁴ Finally, Khosrokhavar (1996) suggests that North Africans in France, particularly in the second generation, have come to understand that the Republican universalist ideology has meant their relinquishing any particularist claims or community identity without receiving in return the promised 'integration'.

Yet French civic culture is likely to shape the anti-racist rhetoric of our respondents through the particular forms of racist discourse to which it gives rise. French claims that North African immigrants are too 'different' to be integrated may spur on the latter's attempts to find equivalence and similarity across groups. And the French fear and stigmatization of an Islam that allegedly erases the boundary between church and state might encourage a defence claiming Muslim moral superiority, supported with reference to the apparent deterioration of family and communal bonds in secular society.

Overall, Islam appears to provide our respondents with the main cultural tools they use to think about the value of human beings, even if the majority of North Africans do not practise their religion regularly (Tribalat 1995). At the same time, it is likely that the worldview emanating from their religion circumscribes their evaluation. In particular, Muslim specialists have argued that the concept of equality between all human beings has traditionally not been a point of reference within their culture.⁴⁵ This might explain why interviewees often appear to be more concerned with establishing equivalence and similarity than equality.

Other factors pertaining to the structural positions of immigrants might help to account for our findings. If immigrants do not claim formal equal status, it is undoubtedly because many perceive their own status to be precarious despite their having legally resided in France for many years or having children who are French citizens. They have limited occupational mobility and a rate of unemployment higher than that of all other ethnic groups in France (Herzberg 1996), and they are more likely to hold temporary jobs, part-time jobs and jobs in the lowest socio-professional categories (Boeldieu and Borrel 2000); this situation is likely to dissuade them from taking strong dissenting positions and claiming rights. Moreover, their second-class status may in itself bolster the appeal of a life in which Islam is central: Etienne (1989, p. 75; see also p. 223) suggests that Islam serves several functions, among which is consolation, thus leading him to characterize one aspect of the religion as 'Islam-refuge'.⁴⁶

One extension of the scope of structural analysis of anti-racism might consider whether women, second-generation immigrants, and members of other immigrant groups (e.g. Turks, black Africans) share the anti-racist devices documented here. Future research should also examine whether the anti-racist strategies used by North Africans in the sixties, seventies, or today differ from those used by the relatively small group of respondents we interviewed in 1992–1993, and how stable such strategies are over time – particularly during unsettled (e.g. the Algerian crisis) and settled times (Swidler 1986). The economic environment should also be incorporated into such an investigation. Furthermore, we encourage social scientists to develop more fine-grained analyses of whether and how the anti-racism of North African immigrants can be

explained by their specific understandings of racism and by the rhetoric of anti-racist organizations that are growing in influence (for a description of such an explanatory model, see Lamont 1992).⁴⁷ These issues go well beyond the scope of this article yet open the way to a broader research agenda.

For the purpose of generalization, future research should compare the anti-racism of North African immigrants living in France with that of immigrant groups and racial minorities living in other countries. This would help us to assess whether moral universalism is used by victims of racism to rebut racism in other contexts, and whether their anti-racism differs from elite and popular anti-racism among members of the host society. As suggested by Scott (1985), morality provides individuals in dominated positions with suitable tools to confront and adapt to their situation. Perhaps moral universalism differs in this respect from other types of universalism, as morality is available to all, yet is defined to some extent in culturally-specific ways across societies (Lamont 1992). Given the paucity of knowledge concerning the anti-racism of immigrants in France, our contribution should be viewed as a first step towards a broader research programme that would centre on such differences.

Acknowledgements

Earlier drafts were presented at the 1997 meetings of the American Sociological Association (Toronto), the 1996–97 Social Science Seminar of the Institute for Advanced Study, and at the conference on ‘Universalizing from Particulars: Islamic Views of the Human and the UN Declaration of Human Rights in Comparative Perspective’ organized by the Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, Princeton University, May 1996. We benefited from comments from Paul DiMaggio, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Joe Feagin, Muge Gocek, Riva Kastoryano, and Mohammed Naciri, and from discussions with Akbar Ahmed, Jocelyne Cesari, Clifford Geertz, Abdellah Hammoudi, Gérard Noiriel, and Lawrence Rosen. Research was conducted with support from the National Science Foundation, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Notes

1. This gap is discussed in the French context in De Rudder (1995). Note that social scientists have analysed the opposition to French racism developed by influential black and North African intellectuals who were victims of racism, notably Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Léopold Senghor (Lambert 1993).

2. Drawing on Aptheker (1992), we define anti-racism as a rhetoric aimed at disproving racial inferiority. Along similar lines, Taguieff (1988, p. 164) defines ‘normal’ (i.e. typical) racism as a process of hetero-racialization whereby ‘we’ are made representative

of universality and 'they' are viewed as particular and inferior. Rebutting racism consists in demonstrating that these two propositions are false – although note Lloyd's (1998) contention that, in contrast to Taguieff's (1988) account, anti-racism is not simply the mirror image of racism, but rather responds to its own internal dynamic.

3. Similarly, a 1996 national survey showed that French respondents more readily attributed negative traits to Algerian immigrants than to immigrants originating from sub-Saharan Africa or Portugal: 129 respondents attributed such traits primarily to Algerians against 39 for Africans and 13 for Portuguese (Kastoryano 1996, p. 74).

4. Founded in 1972, the *Front National* experienced its first national electoral breakthrough in the European elections of 1984 when it received 11 per cent of the French vote, and throughout the 1980s, it consistently captured 10–15 per cent of the French vote. This party pits the French against the non-French: one of its main slogans is '*Les Français d'abord*' (the French first). In addition to identifying North Africans as primary sources of crime and unemployment in France, it contrasts them with the values of family, authority, work, nation and Catholic religion. Some of these themes are shared with France's right-wing parties, the *Rassemblement pour la République* [RPR] and the *Union pour la démocratie française* [UDF]. For instance, in the 1986 elections, these two parties called 'for stronger measures to encourage immigrants to return to their home countries and a reduction of payments of social benefits to resident immigrants' (Schain 1987, p. 242). Although the *Front National* continued to achieve some success in municipal elections in the 1990s, it was weakened by the departure of Bruno Mégret in January 1999, who formed the *Mouvement National Républicain* [MNR]. In 1995 the *Front National* presented candidates in 103 of 185 municipal elections of cities with greater than 30,000 inhabitants, while in 2001, the *Front National* was only on municipal election ballots in forty-one out of 205 cities (Chombeau 2001). Although the electoral presence of the *Front National* may be declining, a survey carried out by *Le Monde* found that the arguments used by Le Pen to build his party's influence are shared by many French. For example, 73 per cent of people surveyed by *Le Monde* do not think that French values are being defended well enough in France, and 59 per cent think that there are too many foreigners in France (Courtois 2000).

5. In a 1985 survey, 42 per cent of French respondents thought immigrants would not be able to integrate in French society because of their differences. By 1989 this group had risen to 51 per cent (Kastoryano 1996, p. 74).

6. According to Tribalat (1995), only 8 per cent of Algerians and 16 per cent of Moroccans in France have acquired French nationality.

7. According to Abdelmalek Sayad (1991, p. 66), this second-class status is conditioned upon the reproduction of a clear distinction between nationals and non-nationals that affects access to social benefits: 'The minimum is given to immigrants in all areas, and it is given to allow French society to continue to be in agreement with its moral principles of justice, equality, respect of rights and freedom of people' (our translation).

8. For example, an anti-discrimination telephone hotline established in May 2000 received 2,000 calls a day during its first few months of operation, presumably from a considerable number of immigrants, among others. Thirty-eight per cent of the callers complained about discrimination in employment, 15 per cent about discrimination in housing, and 11 per cent about police discrimination (Zappi 2000).

9. See Fysh and Wolfreys (1998) and Wihtol de Wenden (1999) for discussion of *Beur* associations.

10. Of the thirty men we interviewed, all but five said that they had been victims of racism. Many had been discriminated against when looking for an apartment and most had been given the most difficult and degrading tasks at work and were more closely supervised than their French co-workers. Some had been fired in favour of Southern European immigrants, while others had faced customers who refused to be served by an 'Arab'. One had a declared Le Pen supporter as a union representative and another recalled that his longtime employer did not know his name the day he fired him. These experiences are not

qualitatively different from those of victims of discrimination in other countries: they involve being systematically deprived of resources, overlooked, and underestimated.

11. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of discovering available means of persuasion in a given case (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, ch. 1). Accordingly, we use the word 'rhetoric' to describe *established rules* of how to vouch for certain claims or the *conventional and widely shared mental maps* that people mobilize to demonstrate an idea.

12. Todorov (1989) provides a detailed analysis of the universal values promoted by the Enlightenment philosophers whose work has left a powerful imprint on French Republicanism (including Diderot, Voltaire, Condorcet, and Montesquieu).

13. However, many observers contend that Republican universalism actually makes it harder to recognize, measure and combat discrimination, due to its refusal to recognize particularist identities and affiliations (Khosrokhavar 1996; Simon 2000).

14. The term 'universalism' is used differently across literatures. The functionalist literature in sociology compares cultural orientations cross-nationally along a number of dimensions of the 'universalistic/particularistic' pattern variable. A universalistic orientation consists in believing that 'all people shall be treated according to the same criteria (e.g., equality in before the law)' while a particularistic orientation is predicated upon the belief that 'individuals shall be treated differently according to their personal qualities or their particular membership in a class or group' (Lipset 1979, p. 209). In the French literature on racism, universalism is opposed not to particularism, but to differentialism. For instance, Taguieff (1988, p. 164) opposes a universalist racism (that posits that *we* are humanity) and a differentialist racism (that posits that *we* are the best). The anthropological literature opposes a universalism that posits an absolute and shared human essence – which includes the Enlightenment notions of freedom and equality – to a relativism that affirms the diversity of cultural identities. Finally, the philosophical literature juxtaposes a universalism defined through shared moral orientations or Platonic ideals (the good, the right, the just) and communitarianism, which stresses moral norms that emerge from the collective life of groups – see for instance Rasmussen (1990). In this article, we juxtapose universalism defined as the application of abstract general standards to all, to 1) particularism defined as the application of specific standards to specific groups; 2) differentialism defined as demonstrating the superiority of a specific group; and 3) relativism.

15. Balibar (1998, p. 85) explains that various and contradictory claims to universality may co-exist; thus he names them 'fictive universalities'. He notes that while the Western world has claimed sole possession of universal precepts, Islam also has its own *particular* representation of the universal (p. 84).

16. Similarly, in his typology of types of Islam in France, Khosrokhavar (1996) describes the traditional form attributable to the immigrants of the 1960s and 70s as an 'orthopraxy', that is, an apolitical set of routinized practices (1996, p. 135). A second apolitical form is concerned more with maintaining itself in a non-Muslim society, and thus withdraws from the larger society.

17. For instance, we privileged individuals with familiar Muslim names (Abdelkader, Abdellah, Ahmed, Majid, Mohamed, Omar, etc.) as well as individuals with last names that begin with 'Aït'.

18. Four hundred letters were sent at the onset of the project. Because few respondents remembered receiving them or said they had read them when they were called, we contacted a second group of two hundred individuals directly over the phone. Specific information concerning the number of individuals contacted who met our criteria of selection and refused to participate is not available. However, as is the case with most survey samples, we have reason to believe that some selection bias characterized the sampling process. Since some proportion of those contacted were illegal immigrants and thus fearful of contact with public institutions (including universities), it is possible that those who agreed to be interviewed, all legally resident in France, were disproportionately inclined to demonstrate their social conformity and were more socially conservative than the

average North African immigrant. Such likely limitations are unfortunately unavoidable if one wishes to tap the range of arguments used by immigrants unaffiliated with immigrant organizations. Indeed, only random sampling (as opposed to site-specific studies) can give us access to the full range of arguments they make.

19. We interviewed only men in order to compare our results with earlier research concerning upper-middle-class men (see Lamont 1992). This earlier gender restriction had been implemented in order to focus on actors wielding power in the workplace. We recognize the absence of women from the present research as a serious limitation, yet feel that given the absence of work on the anti-racist rhetoric of everyday victims of discrimination, this project is still valuable.

20. Michèle Lamont conducted all interviews.

21. Stora (1992, pp. 417–18) maintains that ‘une communauté maghrébine’ in France has been gradually constructed across regional and national differences since the 1970s, often understood as mirroring the larger *umma islamiya*, or ‘Islamic community’.

22. For example, when Tribalat (1995) asked an open-ended question about who are the primary victims of racism in France, most respondents said ‘Arabs’. While we recognize important cultural differences between different North African countries (Cesari 1994) and ethnic groups within them (such as Kabyles), we do not compare anti-racist statements between those groups. We are less concerned with the embedding of claims in context and networks than with the repertoire of claims made in the public context of an interview. For a complementary approach that focuses on context, see Tilly (1995, p. 16).

23. These *communes* were chosen after consultation with Nicole Tabard, a specialist of the socio-demographic profile of the Parisian suburbs at the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques.

24. Immigrants may produce several types of discourse on racism adapted to various audiences (close kin and friends, co-workers, outsiders, a white North-American female like the interviewer, and so forth). Each of these discourses can be tapped for what it tells us about the social representations that immigrants have of the other and of themselves. None of these discourses exhausts the reality of racism, yet each enriches our understanding of it. It should be noted, however, that being interviewed on racism by a French speaker – albeit one with a Canadian accent – as opposed to an Arab or Kabyle speaker may lead respondents to play down the more contentious forms of anti-racism. This bias may be tempered by the fact that the interviews were not framed *a priori* as being concerned with racism. The theme of racism emerged in the course of an exchange on broader issues related to the drawing of symbolic boundaries (e.g., having to do with who is similar to and different from the respondents).

25. The ultimate objective of the larger study of which this article is part (Lamont 2000a) is to compare the mental maps of North African workers with those of French and American workers. Note that the concept of mental maps is derived from Geertz (1973, p. 220), who understands culture as the ways people construct meaning to make their way through the experienced world.

26. In this respect they are representative of the immigrant population at large. Eighty per cent of foreigners have resided in France for more than ten years (Dubet 1989, p. 13).

27. Of thirty interviewees, twenty-two have brought their families to France. Seven have left their wives in their country of origin, ten own property there, and eleven intend to return. None have taken French citizenship and all are legal immigrants.

28. This method draws on the work of Bruno Latour (1983) who argues that scientists mobilize ‘human and non-human allies’, or pieces of evidence, to construct ‘facts’. It also draws on the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991) concerning people who construct ‘proofs’ in the context of disputes about claims in various spaces of justification. Discourse analysts also study the use of evidence in argumentation (Billig 1987).

29. Being questioned by a white Canadian and ostensibly Christian woman (at least in the eyes of the respondents) is likely to make race, nation, or religion particularly salient categories to respondents in the context of the interview. For example, one of the

interviewees told the interviewer that their conversation was the first he had ever had with a 'European' woman. We consider that these categories are important to interviewees, independently of the context of our exchange, because they are implicit frames of comparison. Because implicit, these frames can be less easily manipulated by interviewees than explicit answers.

30. Interview translations by Lamont.

31. Berque (1979, p. 23) observes that in the Koran nature is often presented as an '*épreuve*' demonstrating the true nature of reality.

32. The difference between 'equality' and 'equivalence, similarity and compatibility' raises broader issues related to the study of commensurability, or of how units that are constructed as different from one another are made comparable (Espeland and Stevens 1998). We are interested in contributing to this topic by focusing on how races and other social groupings such as class are made commensurable (see e.g., Lamont 2001).

33. For example, an air-conditioning specialist declares that supporters of Le Pen can do what they want because they are at home. A plumber concurs: in his view, he cannot oppose Le Pen because he is a guest in France. Similarly, a warehouse clerk states: 'If I am not happy, I just have to take my family and leave. I try to adapt the best I can and am not bother the French or anyone else, to respect French laws, to participate in the system'.

34. See Wieviorka (1996) and Khosrokhavar (1996) for calls to broaden the debate beyond Republican universalism to permit greater understanding of cultural difference. Silverman (1992) suggests reconsideration of the rigid dichotomization of universal vs. particular; similarly Etienne (1989, p. 171) argues that the French state both rejects and employs particularist considerations.

35. Balibar (1998) similarly describes the intertwined nature of French and Algerian colonial and post-colonial histories in his essay, 'Algérie, France: une ou deux nations?' Pointing out that the earliest North African immigrants arrived when their countries were still under French colonial domination, Cesari (1994, p. 257) finds post-colonial memory to exercise an important influence on *Maghrébin* identity.

36. See Lorcin (1995) for more on colonial-era discourse regarding cultural proximity of Kabyles and French.

37. All but two interviewees volunteered that they are not interested in politics as if they wished to offer evidence that they mind their own business.

38. However, Kepel (1987, p. 334) found reference to the same theme in the speech of several Muslim religious figures, for example: 'The French are right to have a bad image of Islam when they see us and we act badly'.

39. These qualities imply a notion that middle positions are preferable in a whole range of areas. Sociologists have written about the cardinal virtues of Islam. For instance, Akbar Ahmed (1992, p. 48) mentions the importance of *adl* and *ahsan* (balance and compassion) in Islam and indicates that this religion is often described as the middle way, the bridge between different systems. See also Ahmed (1987).

40. When describing differences with the French, a roofer, a hotel janitor, and a controller who works in the automobile industry mentioned that they are not familiar with French people because they would have to go to the *bistro* to know them, which they do not want to do. Here they stress a religious difference between the French and the Muslims by focusing on alcohol consumption, emphasizing an aspect of French identity that is not necessarily very salient to the French.

41. Six interviewees argue that their own nation is superior to that of other North Africans. This rhetorical device is not analysed here because it does not aim at rebutting French racism.

42. See Etienne (1989, pp. 72–73 and Annex IV) for description of the five pillars of Islam and basic Muslim tenets more generally.

43. During the interviews, a number of the men we talked to proudly mentioned that their children or younger brothers do not smoke in front of them, which they take to be indicative of their ability to impose respect and enforce Muslim norms of behaviour.

44. Kothari and Sethi (1989, pp. 8–9). Chatterjee (1994, p. 237) notes that often in history, the colonized have refused the rights that colonizers offered because they took their religious community (*umma*) and moral values to be the real unifying bond between them, beyond the nation state: ‘They create . . . a very different domain – a cultural domain – marked by the distinction of the material and the spiritual, the outer and the inner. The inner domain of culture is declared the sovereign territory of the nation, where the colonial state is not allowed entry, even as the outer domain remains surrendered to the colonial power. The rhetoric here (Ghandi is a particularly good example) is of love, kinship, austerity, sacrifice. The rhetoric is in fact antimodernist, anti-individualist, even anti-capitalist’. In 1870, the French offered Algerians French civil rights in exchange for their acceptance of regulations concerning French citizenship. While Jews agreed, Muslims did not because they understood the *umma* to constitute their real community. For more, see Ageron (1972, 1991).

45. Muslim theologians have argued that the *Shari’a* – the Islamic law based on the scriptures of the Koran and the *Sunnah* – is not egalitarian in that it does not recognize the formal equality of all citizens. Most importantly, it subordinates women to men through the marriage laws. It also attributes to non-Muslims a status of second-class guests within Muslim society as non-Muslims are excluded from a number of public offices and required to pay a special tax. According to An-Na’im (1987, p. 21), in the Koranic text and the *Sunnah*, dating from the period when he lived in Mecca, ‘the Prophet preached equality and individual responsibility between men and women without distinction on grounds of race, sex, and social origin’. He changed this message in response to socio-economic and political realities when he was forced to migrate to Medina following dissent and external attacks. The historical Islamic law known to Muslims today is based on texts from the second period, which are less universalistic than those of the first period. On this point, see also Bilgram (1995). Von Grunebaum (1962, p. 66) suggests that despite the non-egalitarianism of this latter period, Islam recognizes the fundamental equality of all believers *qua* believers.

46. Khosrokhavar (1996) ascribes other functions of Islam to the lives of second-generation North Africans.

47. To cite another example, it is possible that the argument often repeated by Jean-Marie Le Pen that European ‘cold’ countries are superior to Southern ‘warm’ countries might make salient among immigrants the view that they are superior because they are better able to withstand hardship.

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