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RETHINKING STATISTICS ON MIXED COUPLES IN FRANCE: HOW TO GO BEYOND THE GLOBAL INDICATOR OF FRENCH CITIZENSHIP?

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Summary

In France, the statistics on mixed marriages are officially registered (by the Registry Office) as marriages between French citizens and foreigners.

This categorization does not take into account the relation of the French population to immigration. Therefore, this data does not allow the study of the relation between mixed couples and migrant descendants. And yet, migrant descendants are more and more of them among the French population and they maintain ties with their parents' country of origin.

A survey on newly-arrived immigrants in France in 2006 (carried out by the Direction of research, studies, evaluation and statistics - DREES) allows us to explore mixed marriages beyond citizenship and belonging.

To that end, we have worked out a combined indicator based on citizenship and the country of birth of the migrant and of the partner.

We drafted the following typology: the migrant is married with

- 1. a French citizen born in France with two parents born in France
- 2. a French citizen born in France with only one parent born in France
- 3. a French citizen born in France with two parents born in a foreign country
- 4. a French citizen born in a foreign country with two parents born in France
- 5. a French citizen born in a foreign country with only one parent born in France
- 6. a French citizen born in a foreign country with two parents born in a foreign country

The analysis we propose in this paper will tackle gender distribution and the way ties with the countries of origin are maintained. Then, in another article, we will study whether the circumstances of encounter and marriage may differ between the different types. By doing so, we will contribute to a more differentiated understanding of mixed couples and migration in France.

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Demographers and sociologists study mixed marriages since almost the 50th, as well in France than in all over the world, because this subject relates population movement and family questions. The issue is also of a big interest because it shows openly the connexion between immigration, marital choice and juridical questions in concerns with entry permit to the territory and integration in French citizenship. As social reality is changing, the existing categories to understand mixed marriages may need to be revised. Today, it is more common to talk about mixed couples, because marriage is only concerning a part of the family situations, and it also might be better to open up the definition of conjugal mixedness¹. It is not only a question of two different national citizenships, but also of social and cultural diversity covered by citizenship.

¹ This word is not usual in English, but it means what the French call 'Mixité' and is related to combined identities or situations in a more general sense.

This presentation wants to remind first some ideas about re-thinking mixed couples statistics in general and then will propose a new categorisation of French-foreign couples going beyond the citizenship difference. We will illustrate the categorisation through some results drawn from a survey realised in 2006 with new-admitted migrants from countries outside the European Economical Area (EEA) coming to France ("Live Courses and profiles of migrants recently arrived or regularised in France - PPM" survey, cf. Box 1). Since the 90th the multicultural reality of French society is in a sense better accepted and officially recognized, there is not longer a taboo on studying the cultural belonging of the French population. For studies about mixed couples it is concretely possible to look in a more detailed way on the cultural background of the French partners the migrants declare live with. The links between migration and marital behaviour becomes more obvious. Migrants who went into French citizenship and also French born citizens with migration descendants may keep ties with their or with their parents' country of origin. Marital practice of course also reflects this reality. Presenting mixed couples using a typology which goes beyond French citizenship give us the chance to study the social reality behind French-foreign couples. While doing so, we may go out of the common representation on mixed couples, usually they are seen as a couple between a French partner, who is French for several generations, and a migrant arriving for the first time in France.

1. Some milestones to understand French-foreign mixedness

Demographers, while they are interest in the interactions between population movements and family live, have obviously studied mixed marriages, since the pioneer study on marital choice in France by Alain Girard (1964). Since many years they study its progress and they mention generally that the results depend on the used sources. The main exploitations are using the data of the Registry Office on marriages between French and foreign persons since the 80th (Munos-Pérez/Triballat, 1984) or census data considering couples between French and migrants since the 90th (Thave, 1998). More specific surveys make it possible to use more precise definitions on mixed couples (Tribalat/Munos-Pérez, 1991; Munoz-Pérez/Tribalat, 1996; Tribalat, 1996; Fihlon/Varro, 2005).

As far as sociologists have studied mixed couples, they have given priority to qualitative approaches considering cultural differences - mostly without looking on the specific effect of national differences. They study intercultural challenges in daily life, acceptance in the parental families and the religious or language transmission to the children (Varro, 1984 et 1995; Streiff-Fenart, 1989; Hammouche, 1990 et 1998).

Several successive migration waves came to France. Since Second World War Two it was more a labour force migration and after the 70th more and more a migration for family and humanitarian reasons. Settling process and integration policy, giving easily the opportunity to become French citizen, contribute to diversification in the French population. Thus, at the 1st January 2005, the National Institute for Statistics (INSEE) counts about 5 millions immigrants, 2 millions out of them are French citizens². Otherwise, the survey "Study on family history - EHF" estimates the number of migrants and migration descendants about 8.8 millions in 1999, which corresponds to 15 % of the whole French population at that time (Borrel/Simon, 2005).

At the end of the 80th it becomes obvious that the statistical tools could not any longer describe this post-migration reality and it reduces reality to think in terms of French and foreigners. The official way counting mixed marriages is still based on citizenship at the moment of marriage: is called 'mixed marriage' the alliance between a foreigner and a French citizenship without considering their respective origins. They were about 7 % out of all marriages concluded in France at the beginning of the 80th and their proportion comes up to 14.3 % in 2006 (e.g. 39,126 mixed marriages out of 274,084 marriages in all³). Sociologists have progressively expressed the idea that the citizenship criteria may not be precise enough to explain the phenomena 'mixed couple' more sociologically (Boulhabel-Villac, 1989; Neyrand/M'Sili, 1995). Citizenship does not allow capturing social and cultural

² See C. Régnard (2007).

³ Metropolitan France including overseas departments - INSEE

reality behind it, but it is also dependent on legal conditions giving access to citizenship.⁴. In more recent work on French citizens with migration descent, E. Santelli and B. Collet (2003 and 2008) proposed to consider their marital choice through three types of couples: the ones forming couples with migration descent as they are; the ones who's spouses are migrants coming from their parents home country; or the ones living with French partners who's parents had not immigrated. From type to type different behaviours have been observed.

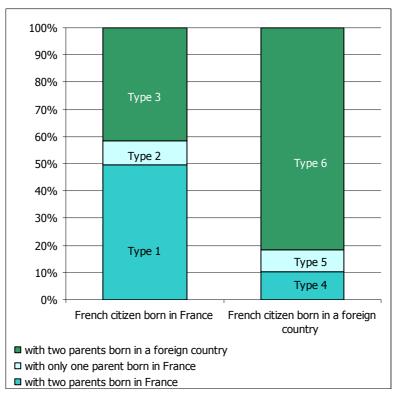
At the same time, taking example on other countries statistical practices (United States, United Kingdom, Canada), questions about, first the country of birth, and further about the parents' country of birth were introduced in the big national surveys. Today it is possible, parallel to the official statistics out of registration or census data, to carry out more precise analysis on social reality (e.g. the survey 'Geographical mobility and social integration' - MGIS in 1992). With the National census in 1999, was conducted the above cited "Study on family history - EHF" which allowed A. Fihon and G. Varro (2005) to consider the mixedness of the couples along three criteria: their country of birth, their citizenship and the fact if they are migrant or not. The number of mixed couples varies according the chosen categorisation: in 1999, 42.1% of the persons born in a foreign country live with French persons born in France; about 60% of naturalized French citizens live with French born citizens. Couples who reunite migrants and non-migrants represent 38.6 % of the couples. Such a survey, looking on the mixed reality while considering population stocks (in opposition to population flux) give us high percentages of mixed couples and this for all kinds of calculation.

Continuing these ways of analysing mixedness, we will look on the French-foreign couples in a survey on new-admitted migrants and we will distinguish the French partners according to his/her migration background. The French partners of these new migrants may be French with migration descent, born in or outside France; or French born in France with parents also born in France. We will use the survey data from "Live course and profiles of migrants recently arrived or regularised in France - PPM" realised by the DREES (see box 1). This survey gives us the opportunity to distinguish the French partners' relation to migration over two generations. For the French partner, who has been joint by a migrant, we propose a combined analysis taking in account his/her citizenship and his/her country of birth. The latter is used as an indicator for the country, where he/she may have lived or raised ⁵. Of course the citizenship makes sense regarding one's country of birth, which makes sense regarding the country of birth of his/her parents. This is the only way in that survey to determinate the French partner's relation to migration. The question is not to replace one criterion by another, but to take into account the two criteria.

To do so, a typology with six cases has been elaborated (cf. graphic 1). The French partners are divided in two main groups: the ones who were born in France (type 1, 2 and 3) and the other ones who were born in a foreign country (type 4, 5 and 6). Inside of these two groups, each type distinguishes the parents' country of birth. The first type of the French partners born in France are the ones who have two parents born in France (type 1), in the second type, they have only one parent born in France and the other parent in a foreign country (type 2) and in the third type they have the two parents born in a foreign country (type 3). For the French partners born in a foreign country, in the first type (type 4) they have two parents born in France, one not and, last but not least, in the third type (type 6) they have two parents born in a foreign country.

⁴ A comparative study on mixed marriages in France and Germany had shown that the numbers of mixed marriages of the two countries are not comparable because of different legal definitions on who is belonging to the national population. (Collet, 1996).

⁵ We should notice that in some cases, the country of birth is not the country where the person has been socialised.



Graphic 1: Typology elaborated for our analysis (%)

Source: "PPM survey, first weave (2006). Analysis: B. Collet et C. Régnard.

Thanks to the PPM survey we are able to produce another understanding of the social and migration background of mixed marriages in France. We are able to go beyond the usual analysis in terms of differences in citizenship.

2. Some technical precisions

The specificity of this study lies in the fact that it represents a radical change of point of view as regards the usual way of considering "mixed couples". Indeed, they are usually studied from the observation of migrants or descendants of immigrants already settled down in France (for example, how many French citizens chose a foreign partner). In our case, the angle of analysis is the migrants who were admitted for a permanent stay for the first time in France in 2006. They are in couple, married or not, and they are "mixed" as regards citizenship. The foreigner is the interviewee and his/her partner is a French citizen (by birth or by acquisition).

Let us note now that the results are established from an influx of migrants which actually represents only a part of the resident mixed couples in France and that the PPM survey investigated only nationals of non-EEA countries (foreigners who need a permit to stay in France). At last, the data used for this contribution is not weighted: our aim is to present some lines of enquiry, to describe mixed profiles but not to establish generalities.

Thus, we worked from a population of 2.939 foreigners who are in couple with a French citizen and of which 2.762 are married⁶. Most of them are men (52.1%, cf. table 1), especially among the unmarried couples (55.9%). They are rather young (average 31 years), half of the women are admitted for a permanent stay before the age of 28 while half of the men are admitted before the age of 31. Most of the interviewees are admitted in France as "family members" (97.1%). More than three out of five foreign partners (i.e. the interviewees) are from the following four countries: Algeria (34.4%), Morocco (15.9%), Tunisia (10.1%) and Turkey (3.7%).

Finally, the interviewed population presents some differences with the whole of the foreigners who were welcomed throughout the French public reception service in 2006^7 . More masculine and more often admitted for family migration (+15%), they are more frequently native to Maghreb (+18%, especially from Algeria; +13%). These distortions could be explained by two reasons. On the one hand, we work here with observed data. And yet, weighting allows to correct, for the whole population, in particular a sub-representation of the foreigners admitted for working migration (and an overrepresentation of family migrations) and an on-representation of Algerian citizens at the expense of Moroccan citizens. On the other hand, we have selected only foreigners who said they had a French partner, hence foreigners admitted as "family migrants" are overrepresented.

⁶ Let us note that 1) we exclude from this analysis, mixed couples for whom the country of birth of the French partner and/or her/his parents is unknown. 2) Through the misuse of language, in this contribution we will use "interviewed population" or "interviewee" to design foreigners who are in couple with a French citizen.

⁷ In 2003 the French government decided to establish a public reception service that enables foreigners to sign a "reception and integration contract" (contrat d'accueil et d'intégration, CAI) by which they make a commitment to respect the values of the Republic, in particular gender equality and the secular nature of the State. In return, the central government provides civic education and language training if necessary. The PPM survey has been sampled from this specific population (see box 1).

Table 1: features of interviewed population - Comparison with administrative data

	Observed data for this analyse	Percentage of the total of observed data	Percentage in the flow of foreigners welcomed by the French public reception service*
Gender			
Men	1,530	52.1	45.6
Women	1,409	47.9	54.4
Indicators on age			
Median	30 years	-	30 years
Mean	31.1 years	-	32.1 years
Standard-deviation	7.6 years	-	7.4 years
Principals citizenships			
Algerians	1.010	34.4	21.4
Moroccans	467	15.9	14.5
Tunisians	296	10.1	6.5
Turks	110	3.7	6.5
Others citizenships	1.056	35.9	51.1
Admission reasons			
Working migrations	4	0.1	3.1
Family migrations	2,906	98.9	84.0
Refugees	12	0.4	8.3
Others	17	0.6	4.6

Source: "PPM survey, first weave (2006). Analysis: B. Collet et C. Régnard.

Box 1: Presentation of the PPM survey

In 2006, the French centre for Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics made a survey, "Live courses and profiles of migrants recently arrived or regularised in France - PPM", to better know courses, trajectories (residential, professional, familial) of foreigners admitted for a permanent stay and how they have recourse to social services. Further, this survey could describe views and expectancies of these migrants when they arrive in France and what factors influence their trajectories. The expected results could allocate some information on the links between migratory project and integration process.

There were two waves in this face-to-face survey. The first one, on which this contribution is based on, was realised between September 2006 and January 2007, in 30 "Départements" that welcome more than 25 foreigners per month, and was translated in 13 languages. This wave interviewed a representative sample of 6.280 migrants who have been just admitted for a permanent stay in France. These foreigners represent 91.5% of all migrants who were welcomed in France by the French public reception service between June and December 2006. One year later, the second wave interviewed the same foreigners (between September and December 2007).

This interrogation in two waves could allow introducing the temporality in the analysis of the integration process and comprehending potential links between the evolution of the migratory project and the living conditions during the first years after receiving a permit of stay in France.

The PPM survey investigated only nationals of non-EEA countries (foreigners who need a permit to stay in France) welcomed in France by the French public reception service and who were given the possibility to sign a "reception and integration contract" (contrat d'accueil et d'intégration, CAI).

^{(*):} The PPM survey has been sampled from foreigners welcomed in France by the French public reception service in 2006 and who were given the possibility to sign a "reception and integration contract". Source: ANAEM.

3. Diversity over the migrant's generations

Now, we present the typology which allows the understanding of how mixed couples divide into each type and how gender and the origin of the parents or of the partner could have an impact on these unions.

Among each six types of mixed couples, three (types 1, 3 and 6) represent 87.7% (cf. table 1) of the interviewed population. These three types are represented in a pretty balanced way. However, for more than the two thirds of mixed couples, the French partners or the parents were born abroad. Throughout these alliances a double link over the migrant's generations could be established between France and the countries of origin.

Table 2: Typology by gender of foreign partner (number).

		W	omen	Total	
	Men (Number)	Number	% of women in each type	Number	% of total
1 - French citizen born in France with two parents born in France	460	486	51.4	946	32.2
2 - French citizen born in France with only one parent born in France3 - French citizen born in France with two parents born in a foreign country	102	69	40.4	171	5.8
	491	299	37.8	790	26.9
4 - French citizen born in a foreign country with two parents born in France	50	57	53.3	107	3.6
5 - French citizen born in a foreign country with only one parent born in France	43	41	48.8	84	2.9
6 - French citizen born in a foreign country with two parents born in a foreign country	384	457	54.3	841	28.6
Total	1.530	1.409	<i>47.9</i>	2.939	100.0

Source: "PPM survey, first weave (2006). Analysis: B. Collet et C. Régnard.

When the French partner was born in France of two parents born in France as well (type 1, 32.2% of all mixed couples, cf. table 2), there are almost as often foreign women who joined a French man born in France of two parents born in France, as the opposite (51.4% against 48.6%).

In 43.6% of the cases of type 1, foreigners are from one of the countries of Maghreb (168 from Algeria, 153 from Morocco and 91 from Tunisia, cf. table 3). A significant number of foreigners are from "other countries" like Cameroon (68), Senegal (39) or Ivory Coast (33).

Also, there are specificities by gender: Morocco distinguishes itself by a relative balance between men and women (89 men, 64 women) whereas there are essentially men from Algeria or Tunisia who have a French partner born in France of two parents born in France (129 men of 168 mixed couples for Algerian citizens, 80 men of 91 for Tunisians citizens). In addition, there are only women who join a partner born in France of two parents born in France among citizens of Russia (29) or some Asian citizens (for example, Thailand, China, respectively 16 and 20 women).

Table 3: Typology by citizenship of the foreign partner (number).

	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia	Turkey	Others citizenships	All of them
1 - French citizen born in France with two parents born in France	168	153	91	23	511	946
2 - French citizen born in France with only one parent born in France	72	24	19	4	52	171
3 - French citizen born in France with two parents born in a foreign country4 - French citizen born in a foreign country with two parents born in France	395	130	110	43	112	790
	32	9	11	1	54	107
5 - French citizen born in a foreign country with only one parent born in France	58	2	6	0	18	84
6 - French citizen born in a foreign country with two parents born in a foreign country	285	149	59	39	309	841
Total	1.010	467	296	110	1.056	2.939

Source: "PPM survey, first weave (2006). Analysis: B. Collet et C. Régnard.

The second type represents unions composed by a foreigner and a French partner born in France of only one parent born in France. Probably the parents of the French citizen have also been a mixed couple. For type 2, there are essentially foreign men who join a French partner (59.6% against 40.4%). For about half of these couples (79), the foreign partner has the same citizenship as the country of birth of the foreign parent of the French partner8. Most of them (69) are from Maghreb, especially from Algeria (55). In four cases out of five (66 partners), it is the same country as the country of birth of the father of the French partner, in one case out of five (13 partners), it is the same as of the mother

So, the most frequent case here is the one of a mixed couple comprised of an Algerian man and a French woman whose father was born in Algeria.

The following mixed couples (type 3, 26.9% of mixed couples) correspond to a foreigner in couple with a French partner born in France of two parents born abroad. Again, but in a larger proportion, they are foreign men who join a French partner (62.2 % against 37.8 %). For most of them (677 on 790), their citizenship corresponds to the country of birth of one of the French partner's parents (636 for the two parents, the others for one of the two parents). In this case of correspondence between the citizenship of the foreign partner and the country of birth of at least one of the two parents of the French citizen, these couples are composed with foreigners from one of the countries of Maghreb (377 from Algeria, 100 from Morocco and 94 from Tunisia) or from Turkey (43). In almost three cases out of five (61.2%), the migrants of these four countries are men.

So, the most frequent case in type 3 is the one of a mixed couple comprised of an Algerian and a French woman whose two parents were born in Algeria.

To sum up, throughout these first three configurations, the case of mixed couples of which the French partner was born in France of two parents themselves born in France (type 1) concerns as many men as women, the latter being often native to the Asian or East European continent. Besides, as regards natives to Maghreb, in a wide majority, there are foreigners who come to join French women (types 2 and 3).

Before to continue this analysis with the last three cases, we must note that we can not distinguish easily among these French partners. We do not know if they are immigrants naturalized during adulthood or if they arrived in France when they were children for family reunification and became French citizens subsequently. In the second case, by having followed all or a part of their schooling in

⁸ Data crossing the interviewee citizenship with the country of birth of the French partner's parents are no reproduced in this contribution.

France, they might be nearer to French citizens born in France of parents born in France than French naturalized citizens.

At the very first glance, couples with a foreigner and a French citizen born abroad of two parents born in France (type 4) might appear to be unusual cases. But, as we look at the countries of birth of these French partners, the latter are essentially born in one of the three countries of Maghreb (28 from Algeria out of 39 French partners) or in a French overseas department or territory (30 French partners). This fact is easy to explain: people born after the independence of Algeria were actually born abroad whereas their parents were born in France⁹. A few cases remain: probably expatriates' children. At last, when the French partner was born in Algeria, he/she is living in most of cases (25 out of 28) with an Algerian. And more generally, when the French partner was born in one of the three countries of Maghreb, his/her partner is a citizen from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia (38 cases out of 39). On the other hand, foreign partners of people born in a French overseas department or territory¹⁰ are native to diversified countries.

The fifth type represents unions composed by a foreigner and a French partner born abroad whose parents are also considered as a mixed couple (one of them was born in France, the other abroad). In most of the cases, the country of birth of the foreigner is the same as of the French partner (for 67 couples). Among these couples, there is also a correspondence with the country of birth of the French partner's father (in 55 cases) and with the French partner's mother (in 12 cases). They are essentially natives to Maghreb (59 cases out of 67, amongst whom 54 Algerians). In the same way as for type 2, origins of the French partner father seem to be the most determining in this type of mixed couple: when the French partner has a father of foreign origin, he/she may often choose a partner in the father's country of origin.

The last type of mixed couple (type 6), composed by a French partner born abroad of two parents born abroad, represent 28.6% of the interviewed population used for this analysis. In four cases out of five (678 couples), there is a correspondence between the countries of birth of the two parents, of the French partner and of the foreign partner: for 431 couples, the two partners are born in one of the three countries of Maghreb (264 in Algeria, 120 in Morocco). For 37 couples out of 678 couples, both of them are from Turkey and 19 from Senegal.

These first investigations show us how many different situations the official definition of mixed marriage contains and that the latter is not able to explain the complex migration realities of nowadays France. Two thirds of the migrants' mixed couples, according to the official French-foreign definition, are composed with French citizens who have foreign origins, they are either born in a foreigner country or their parents are. More specific profiles appear when we look on the foreign partner's gender or country of birth.

Migrants from North-Africa are numerous in all the types, but especially in the types 3 and 6. Their particularity, especially concerning the Algerians, must be considered with caution. The main point is, the historical and geographical proximity, it is not surprising that North-Africans are as highly represented. C. Borrel and P. Simon (2005) according to their results on EHF 1999 mentioned, that the North-Africans hold a more and more bigger position in the variety of origins in France (p. 441). We must also remember that the sample we used for this analysis only concerns migrants from outside EEA states. European citizens are excluded, this means, Spanish, Portuguese and Italians who

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⁹ We supposed in this case that parents were born in Algeria during the French colonization.

¹⁰ People born in a French overseas department or territory are probably underestimated: default modality of response was "France" without distinction between "metropolitan France" and "French overseas department or territorie". So it is only if the interviewee had precised this specificity that it was noticed.

were the main immigration groups in France in the 20th century, were excluded. Remember also that one of the biases of the sample, we mentioned it since the rather beginning of the article, is an over-representation of the Algerians in this sample of mixed couples, compared to the whole sample of foreigners going through the French public reception service in 2006.

An analysis of the French-foreign couples with the typology tool we proposed shows clearly that the ties with the countries of origin are maintained through marital alliances. The latter make it possible to keep alive these ties. They clearly show that marital choice, more than professional or political choice, throw people back to their cultural and religious family belongings.

This mixedness is constructed through several generations of migrants. The French partners, new French citizens or French citizen for one or two generations, need to be considered in relation to the French migration history. Only for the French partners, whose foreign origin is farer than two generations, it is not any longer possible to explain easily their mixedness in combining the foreign partner's and the French partner's country of birth.

Last not least, let us say that the study on mixed couples as we proposed it through out this survey only looks on the marital choice of the new-admitted and therefore only can explore their field of possibilities. Whereas, this study can not exploit all the marital mixed situations, which are occurring in the French population, as French-French couples with different origins¹¹ or Foreign-foreign couples living in France. If we want to have a global vision on all the different cases of mixed marital choice, we should wait to study them all together in a big survey. A new survey "Territory and Origins", elaborated together by the INED and the INSEE, currently in its test phase, realisation is scheduled for 2009, will give us the opportunity to go further with these kind of analysis.

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¹¹ Between French citizens who are born in France from parents also born in France and French citizens, born in France from parents born in a foreign country. This case which might occur rather often et only seldom perceived as a case of mixedness.

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