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Negotiating Gender Social Identity in a Context of Migration

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The present paper draws on the intersection of gender social identity and social representations theories to apprehend how identities are negotiated in a context of migration. The study specifically examines social gender identity transmission amongst a community of Sub-Saharan African migrants in France. Interviews with adult migrants (31 interviewees), a focus group with teenage children of migrants (7 participants) and ethnographic observations (1 year, twice-weekly) reveal how ethnic stigmatization resulting from a new context highlights their recourse to stable gender norms and religious practices. Lack of social recognition amongst parents orients them towards the future, embodied by their children who experience a contradictory double-bind to subscribe to both present and inherited gender identities. Social gender identity projects are at stake through the children's adoption or rejection of their parents proposed social practices that defend certain representations of gender. By gathering the perspective of migrant parents and children, social gender identity, as a function of representations of gender, appears at the heart of processes of identity negotiation.

Keywords: gender, identity, representations, migration, transmission

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Using migration as a point of departure, the following study examines how a context of substantial change modulates social gender identity transmission amongst Sub-Saharan African families having migrated to France. The dynamics by which individuals co-construct their identities in and through in-group and intergroup relationships emerge through discourse analysis and ethnographic observations. Therefore, given the prototypical context of family acculturation in which parents are raised in one country and their children in another (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2009), we ask whether the children will carry forward or modify the representations of gender proscribed by their parents. What are the boundaries of recognition and exclusion (Capdevila, 2011) from which certain representations of gender are transmitted between family members rather than others? The resulting transmission of social gender identity indicates the dynamic between imposed and negotiated identities situated within an asymmetrical context thereby highlighting how individuals engage, reject and construct agency in a modern cultural context (Howarth, 2010).

THE TRANSMISSION OF IDENTITY BETWEEN MIGRANT FAMILIES

To apprehend how gender is constructed, transmitted and negotiated amongst migrant families two theoretical positions are adopted: first that social gender identity is acquired in and through socialisation (Montero, 2007; Bhavnani & Haraway, 1994) and secondly that migrants interact with two different systems of representations of gender (Lloyd & Duveen, 1992).

In any given culture, children become competent social actors through appropriating available representations of gender (Duveen, 1994; Lloyd & Duveen, 1992). Social gender identity here refers to an individual's self-attribution to the category woman or man, girl or boy (Kessler, 1978). Gender social identity draws from Social Identity Theory as defined by Tajfel and Turner (1986) in reference to the representations of gender shared by the group in which the individual is a member (Ben-Asher, Wagner, & Orr, 2006). Identity acts as a set of normative features that renders a guideline for interactions and gender appropriate behaviour with actual or internalized others (Bhavnani & Haraway, *idem*; Zittoun, 2012). In other words, while identity can be elaborated internally, one's own thoughts are embedded in their relationships to other people. Here, identity is considered to be constructed externally through and by social relationship amongst real and symbolic individuals, groups and institutions. Gender norms,

prescriptions and proscriptions for behaviour, appear as archetypical symbolic operators (Lloyd & Duveen, *idem*; Duveen & Lloyd, 1990) because they organise representations from which social gender identity is constructed. Through processes of socialisation, each social actor adopts a position marked by different levels of conformity within the available continuum of representations of gender (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Duveen, 2001; Howarth, *idem*; Moloney & Walker, 2007). As social gender identities can be imposed as well as resisted, this highlights the dynamic between the individual's personal agency and the limits imposed by their social constraints. In other words, individuals are considered active participants in the construction of their own identity, yet are restricted and constrained by networks of representations that support previously existing hierarchies of knowledge. While one cannot opt out of processes of gendered socialisation, one can however, participate in their construction and defence, or even challenge certain representations (Howarth, *idem*).

If adopting a social gender identity is intrinsic to developmental processes, this suggests that historically constructed representations are transmitted through social relationships with adults who may seek to sustain an identity project in the future (Reicher, 2004; Duveen, 1994, Chryssochoou, 2003; Chryssochoou, 2009). How does variation in the social context, such as incurred by migration, impact the sense of stability of social gender identity? Our second theoretical assumption considers that the transition encountered by migration could stimulate a new definition of identity and activates processes of sense making for migrants (Zittoun, 2006). Furthermore, migration highlights the deconstruction and reconstruction of practices of affiliation between parents and children (Benslama, 2009). As a result, the migrant's social gender identities are *always* considered structured by the migration. The migrant may personally identify as a migrant, or is attributed to a migrant identity by others who perceive them as a foreigner, an immigrant, or an emigrant. Additionally, by taking the family as a unit of study we observe that migrant parents represent the end of their heritage lineage whilst they also instigate a new lineage through the rupture due to their geographical move. While all children can be considered the object of their parents' projections, when they are the first family members to originate from the new country they can present an increasingly important future orientated identity project for the parents (Fogel, 2007). Self-knowledge and sense-making draw upon this temporal articulation that interacts with the past to draw upon already existing practices and symbolic meanings while

the context of migration points to the changes at work in the meanings and norms that structure identity. In a context of migration in which identity is in transition, will gender identity change or remain stable between parents and their children? Will a continuum of contradictory gender representations appear from which parents and children will negotiate their adoption or rejection?

METHODOLOGY

The above theoretical framework and research questions were examined amongst a population of Sub-Saharan African families in France. We carried out thirty-one (31) individual interviews with adults originating primarily from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in addition to other neighbouring countries (Rwanda, Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo and Angola). We interviewed eighteen (18) adult women who were on average 41 years of age and all single parents, six (6) adult men who were on average 48 years of age, all of whom were fathers (but two (2) were not living with their children nor the mothers of their children). We also carried out one (1) focus group with seven (7) teenage participants, three (3) boys who were on average 19 years old and four (4) girls who were on average 18 years old. Only one of the teenagers was not born in France but in the Congo and had been in France for three years.

We additionally carried out one year of systematic bi-weekly ethnographic observations within an Evangelical church established by a Congolese pastor living in France since 1978. This church serves a primarily Congolese congregation in a large French city. The observations were centred on twice-weekly sermons and external activities organised for the church youth group. The focus group was carried out amongst participants in the church's youth group. Results were interpreted within the above theoretical framework. Individual interviews and the focus group were specifically analysed through thematic discourse analysis (Bardin, 1977; Blanchet, 1982; Blanchet, 1983; D'Unrug, 1974; Jodelet, 2003) and the systematic analysis of interactions (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Angrosino, 2008; Dallos, 2006; Millward, 2006).

As a non-member of the social group being studied (the researcher is an American woman in France to pursue her doctoral work), we interviewed subjects that we met through collaborating with local immigrant social organisations. We pursued the snow-ball method for one year until an interviewee suggested that we meet her church pastor "if we really wanted to

understand the community". After initial discussions with the pastor, we decided to undertake an ethnographic methodology in order to observe the family and community dynamics at play within this specific migrant group. Through our regular presence at the church, we were able to collaborate with the church youth group in order to interview teens and to conduct a focus group. Our presence and research objectives risked reifying stigmatising social categories or the suffering they endured as refugee migrants. As a white woman carrying out research in an African community, our difference in skin colour immediately marked our differences (Becker, 1985). It was therefore central to apprehend the social asymmetries that were immediately at play in field and that structured the collection and analysis of data (Howarth, 2002). First we adopted a position of double reflexivity to deconstruct both our own social distance and that attributed to us by the participants. It is not the distance itself that is useful to us, but the reflexive analysis operated on the social interactions mobilized by such distance (Bonnet, 2008; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Such analyses are a methodological key to understanding the internal logic of the participants in addition to the object of our study.

When participants labelled us as "a white French woman" and themselves as "those Africans", we understood that they has assimilated a discourse of the ethnic majority that non-white people such as themselves, were not perceived as French nationals. Through the label that they attributed to us, our presence in the field appeared to re-present the expected norms that construct the background of their discourse. Other social categories were mobilized through the social context of the field: despite clearly presenting the objectives of our presence at church, we were perceived by many as believers and therefore a member of their in-group, as belonging to their religious community. This shift in status attributed to both researcher and participant allowed us to alter the type of social distance in order to create dialogue throughout the ethnography (Haas & Masson, 2006).

Indeed, our ethnographic work highlighted how social distance is not a stable element, but is modified through the context of the social relationship. For example, participants' agreement to partake in the study was often followed by a spontaneous solicitation for an exchange in their favour. Families asked us to organise cultural exchanges for their children amongst our family in the United States, others requested that we bring them gifts from the United States, while others asked us to help them with their English. These requests mobilise and instrumentalise social

distance in order to reduce its effects, or to negotiate the power relationships in their favour (Bonnet, 2008). In return for their participation, they made requests that rendered us equal participants in an exchange through which social relationships are embedded by mutual commitment and action (Mauss, 2004; Pihel, 2008). Through our observation of how alterity can be represented and the relationship to the other constructed, we observe amongst both participant and researcher the psychosocial processes of recognition and social comparison that construct the content of the data collected. The research field is inscribed within the social logics through which is it framed, inhabited and restrained (Devereux, 1980; Jodelet, 2003; Dorlin, 2005).

FINDINGS

The data reveal that in the context of substantial flux the parents have unanimous recourse to the stability of gender representations found in their religious practices. They initially focus on the effects of their loss in social position and experience of ethnic stigmatisation. On the other hand, the children negotiate the identity projects their parents have outlined for them, which sometimes threatens the transmission of representations of gender from which social gender identity develops.

"What Are We Here?": Loss in Social Status Amongst Migrant Parents

At the heart of the parents' discourse is their significant loss in social position and new experience of discrimination as a result of ethnic stigmatisation. For the most part, they are Congolese adults who occupied powerful social positions in their country and are now subjected to the local social hierarchies in France that assign them to low social positions, exacerbated by their experience of discrimination. This change in social power is a direct consequence of their migration and results in a generalized perception of a lack of social recognition (Marková, 2000). For example, a Congolese man expresses his ambivalence about living in France:

> "We didn't have the intention to come permanently to Europe. And today, we suffer more here than we did there. We had good jobs and were well paid; we lived really really well. Our whole family was well off...in fact really well off. What are we here?"

> (Naweza[1], 58 year old man, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in France since 2005)

Despite his loss in social position and experience of racism, Naweza lives free from death threats that initiated his departure from the DRC, but as he articulates, he is paying the price for this safety.

Other participants describe their loss in social position through their identification with the majority social group evaluated in opposition to their social group of origin. Beatrice for example describes other Congolese people as "the Africans", a category presumably adapted once in France where the French majority ascribe this term to a generalised social group based on ethnic stigmatisation. She further criticises this group of "Africans" and distances herself from them:

> "I see how Africans, a lot of Africans, they don't like to integrate they just don't like to integrate…I really like France…and I really want that to change…One must integrate…"
> (Beatrice, 39 year old woman from the DRC, in France since 1994)

Although Beatrice specifies that she considers herself "of African origin", the asymmetry of unequal relationships between "the French" and "those Africans" could explain why she develops strategies of differentiation that distance them and adopts strategies of assimilation that associate her to the positively evaluated French (Weber, 2009). She additionally appears to consider assimilation as dependent on individual will, which could reflect an appropriation of stereotypes present in the profane discourse of popular culture, notably an ethos of individualism (Joffe and Staerklé, 2007).

While navigating their loss in social position and experience of negative ethnic stigmatisation certain participants speak more specifically about their hopes for their children's social ascension. Betty, for example, optimistically hopes that her son will access upward mobility through his career. When her son asks her why his skin colour is not the same as his classmates, Betty attributes his difference to a positively evaluated category:

> "I told him that we don't have the same origins [as the French], we have different origins…It's just how it is, like our President Sarkozy I would say that he is of

[1] All names were changed to protect anonymity.

> Hungarian origin yet of French nationality…I want my son to become President one day, President of the Republic".
> (Betty, 35-year-old woman from the DRC, in France since 2003)

Here she appears to identify with the French President who she assigns to both the category of "the French" and that of the foreign other. This process of identification is contextualised within local intergroup dynamics in which the boundaries of recognition, inclusion and exclusion are negotiated (Capdevila, 2011; Orr, Sagi & Bar-On, 2000). She negotiates who can obtain social positions of power by extending President Sarkozy's foreign origins to her aspirations for her son. Moreover, her reference to him as "our President" further associates her to the French and to a French identity.

The examples of discourse from these parents underline their loss in social status and the ensuing suffering they have endured due to the context of their migration, which produces ethnic categorisation. Their lack of social recognition appears to orient the participants towards the future, exemplified by their investment in a religious model of cultural and familial continuity structured by representations of gender.

"When You Go Into a Church You Feel Like You're at Home": Recourse to Stable Representations

The discourse of adult participants reveals their unanimous recourse to the same religious practices they upheld before their migration. However, within the context of migration they develop new uses of religion that appear to organise meaning in order to sustain a sense of stability that structures clear identity projects for their children (Chryssochoou, 2009). In other words, the pre-established, pre-existing religious codes appear to become transnational and stable symbolic resources (Zittoun, 2006; Zittoun, *in press*). The meanings that participants ascribe to their religious practices speak to the ways in these actions are also embedded within larger social dynamics of minority and majority relationships in France. Faced with cultural, geographic, and familial rupture, this recourse to a continuous meaning system creates a space in which they unite and build community as members of a stigmatized out-group category "the Africans" (Orr, *idem*). As the Congolese Pastor of an Evangelical church explains:

> "…We had the need for this African church…We went to French churches, white churches, but there was always something missing…"
> (Paul-Antoine, 56 year old man from the RDC, in France since 1978)

The missing element alluded to by the Pastor is specified by other participants as the harsh solitude from which they suffer due to the social structure of the nuclear family in France. They nostalgically refer to *"la grande famille"*, the extended family through which they had previously defined themselves. The Pastor emphasises how "the African church" is a space that upholds collectivist social cohesion in direct opposition with the "individualist" behaviour he associates to the French:

> "In the French churches they just leave you in your corner…whereas in our culture you have to go and support the person".

The "us" and "them" dichotomy is clearly intact and regardless of his thirty-four years of residency in France, the Pastor undoubtedly identifies as Congolese and speaks for the collective Congolese immigrant community. This description of the church as a social space that satisfies the pursuit of collective social system resonates with many participants. Milaure for example explicitly describes the church as a strategic resource to manage her arduous process of acculturation:

> "When I first arrived I was first under culture shock…I was disoriented because I left my country, I left my children so it was painful, it was difficult, difficult for me to adapt to living here. But with prayer, well since I was going to church all the time I made friends there and so then I got used to it…"
> (Milaure, 64 year old woman from the Republic of the Congo, in France since 1999)

Milaure uses her religious practice as a support system to survive the upheaval of her migration. Both the act of praying and the related social activities appear as direct elements of accompaniment. She continues:

> "There are no differences between churches, when you go into a church you feel like you're at home, it's the same prayers and everything..."

She highlights the transnational nature of her recourse to the church; it is an unchanging supportive base that provides a direct link with the feeling of familiarity and belonging.

For other participants, the church appeals to them as an extension of their parental authority in their negotiation for stable representations of gender for their children. Elena draws on the Bible to teach socially acceptable behaviour to her children and to help them distinguish between groups that would threaten her religious identity. She references a discussion with her son during which she teaches him to stay within his in-group:

> "I tell my children 'so Christian behaviour, what we call Christian means what is allowed and not allowed, everything that you shouldn't you shouldn't I mean you really shouldn't do even if you're in a group with other kids you shouldn't adopt their customs nor all the things the group does because back home the Bible tells us differently…'I tell him that he is a Christian child, that way he knows he's got a certain protection."
> (Elena, 38-year-old woman from Rwanda, in France since 2006)

Elena clearly draws upon the religious norms from "back home" in an attempt to maintain her child's behaviour in entirely different social conditions. This recourse to religion as a symbolic resource comprises a particularly strategic component when she describes how she educates her son about his sexuality:

> "I told him that it's not it's not a sin or abnormal to have a girlfriend but you have to know you have to know 'why do I have a girlfriend?'…The kids in France start having sexual relationships really young so I started by telling my kids that it was a sin and that it's not ok to take off a girls clothes without permission 'even if she asked you to do it you have to tell her no, it's sin and now you know about Satan'…When I was young I went to Sunday School, I mean we can't prevent everything that's going to happen but you really have to try to protect your children…"

While on the one hand Elena attempts to teach her children to establish a relationship that could be eligible for long-term commitment she also teaches them to draw upon the collective representation of sexuality as transgressive. Here, religion operates as a strategic resource from which she operates her parental authority across cultural contexts.

Other participants project a religious framework that encompasses a distinctive gendered lens. Maely for example ascribes future social gender identities to her daughters according to specific representations of gender:

> "…I learned a certain culture which means I am obliged to transmit this culture, my culture, to my daughters…Basically God created Woman so we can't, I mean we have a role to uphold, certain behaviours to carry on…As girls I need to teach

> them to cook well because it's an obligation for a girl to know how to cook…She has a role to uphold, both in the house and outside in society…"
> (Maely, 35-year-old woman born in France, parents from Somaliland)

Maely extends asymmetrical values on social roles in accordance with normative representations of gender and considers herself obliged to uphold the transmission of such representations to her children. Her adoption of this naturalist ideology (Kergoat, 2002) supports the stable reproduction of the representations of gender at the centre of her own social gender identity that she associates to her cultural origins despite her having been born in France.

As illustrated by these excerpts, parents negotiate the inequalities of the migration context by seeking out stability in their field of representations. A generalised lack of social recognition (Markovà, *idem*.) contextualises their fluctuation between in-group and out-group social identifications while emphasising the continuity of gendered representations and religious practices, particularly in terms of their children's future. However, we will now examine the discourses of the children of migrants who adopt, extend, reject and challenge the representations of gender at the heart of their parents' social gender identity projects.

"I Have My Name to Respect… But it's the Heart That Speaks First": A Contradictory Double-Bind for Children of Migrants

The young adult participants negotiate the adoption and rejection of their parents' gendered transmission most notably through their choice of marital partners and their degree of religious implication. For the most part, they do not want to transgress social norms, which would consequently categorize them as rebellious and potentially rupture the gendered transmission between the two generations. Rather, they adhere to the cultural norms expected of them by their parents and practiced in their parent's country of origin. The young women in particular described the risk of bringing shame onto their families if they behave outside the expected norm, thereby threatening their parent's reputations within their extended religious and ethnic communities. However, a few participants express their ambivalence towards the full adoption of their parents' identity projects. They negotiate their own gendered norms in secrecy from their parents and extended communities.

Such processes of negotiation are first identified in their relationship to religious practice, especially as they approach adulthood and seek autonomy. From the youths' perspectives, the church proves to be a space that promises the guarantee of in-group socialisation and the maintenance of representations of gender. They first describe their church activities as part of their daily or weekly rhythm, as mundane as going to school. However, after deeper discussion, participants unveil the power dynamics at play between their parents' desire for them to conform and the construction of their own agency. In this excerpt from a focus group, Christelle describes how she has attended church her entire life because her mother obliged her to:

> "Basically I came to church because she brought me here ever since I was a little baby, I was practically born here. I was raised here and little by little if we don't have a reason to come to church we don't come anymore and actually in the end when I started coming back to church it was because it was a place that provided reassurance…but there was a period of time when I wasn't coming…"
> (Christelle, 21 year old woman born in France, parents from Angola and the DRC)

Initially, Christelle did not choose to participate in church activities but eventually decided explicitly to become a member of the evangelical community, only after the church carries specific meaning for her. She switches between the individual and collective pronoun as though her own experience of negotiation is a common experience for other youth. While Christelle's appropriation of her role as an active church member presumably responds positively to her mother's expectations, her engagement is in fact dependent on the development of her own subjective point of view.

Christelle however has not adopted her parents' perspective on her social liberties; they limit her social life while her brother benefits from full autonomy:

> "My parents have held onto certain things like, because I'm a girl I have to spend my entire life at home…"

She associates her parents' practice of restriction to their African origins, a cultural context she describes as responsible for their asymmetrical perspectives on girls and boys. Despite efforts her parents have made to adapt to life in France, she considers that they uphold certain social practices that have gendered consequences, which she challenges. Christelle details the specific negotiations of this prototypical context of acculturation in that her parents are raising their children outside of their own country of origin:

> "There are certain things you can do back home that we wouldn't do here…like getting married; back home we have the dowry and my parents are for that sort of thing because it's an important life principle but they tell themselves 'once in France our daughter might not marry an African she might marry a white man in which case we wouldn't necessarily ask him for a dowry…"

Here Christelle uses a generalist discourse "we" that suggests both an identification to the norms practiced in France and an identification to her parents' social group of "Africans". While she depicts her mother as imposing her daughter's religious practice, she portrays her parents' perspectives of her choice of partner as more tolerant of change. Regardless of whether Christelle chooses to marry an in-group or out-group partner, her marital alliance appears as the social space that articulates the reproduction of specific social practices that construct and defend representations of gender (Howarth, 2010; Lloyd & Duveen, 1992).

For Palma, her parents are less open towards an alliance with an out-group member and have projected their desire for her to adhere to their own social group. She conveys her ambivalence in regards to dating boys because she wants to uphold her parents' expectations:

> "It's super hard because we have customs to respect and then if we rebel it's as though we don't care or we don't respect them that much so...I prefer to wait [to date boys] because I really don't have the audacity to face my mother…I know that I have my values, I have my name to respect."
> (Palma, 20 year old woman born in France, parents from the RDC)

Again, Palma shifts between using the "we" that associates her to her family and social group and then the "I" that conveys her individual appropriation of the values and practices upheld by her social group. Her adhesion to such alliance rituals appears to regulate multiple levels of social meaning and expectations of her family. Transgressing her mother's expectations would threaten the reputation of her entire family (both the family's history and their future reputation) and she responds by an appropriation of a wider, more general notion of "values".

Furthermore, Palma describes how her father has simultaneously given her the responsibility and freedom to choose her life partner while communicating the difficulties associated to marriages with an out-group member.

> "He tells me 'it's your life you're the one who can make it as you wish, you're the one leading your life but we can- the only advice I would give is to choose simple instead of complicated'. He always said that 'simple instead of complicated'…In

> other words, choose from my community instead of complicated which could be a Muslim, but ok it's the heart that speaks first, not your parents…"

Palma appears wedged within this dichotomy between using her personal romantic feelings as a guideline for marriage or the maintenance of the collective social identity. Between free choice and obligation, she alternates between identifying to the Congolese community "we" while she also describes the Congolese as outside and distant from her "they are imposing, the Congolese are very imposing…" It is as though a symbolic boundary is drawn and Palma is not sure on which side she belongs; do her parents discourse take precedence over her heart? Her choice of marriage partner will solidify her social inscription that could sustain or create rupture with her families expectations.

The young adult participants appear to ambivalently navigate between the adoption and rejection of their parents' projections. Those who subscribe to rituals of alliance carried out within their parents social group maintain religious and ethnic affiliations that imply specific representations of gender. However, romantic alliances call this transmission into question by solidifying the boundaries of recognition and exclusion (Capdevila, 2011) from which gendered norms are transmitted between family members.

Their individual social identities intersect with larger group and societal trajectories that uphold and promote systems of meaning. They are confronted with the possibility of defining their own identity through and by their relationships with others (Capdevila, *idem*; Ben Asher *et al,* 2006; Orr *et al*, *idem*). Their adoption or rejection of their parents proposed gender social identity projects reveal the stakes of sustaining or denying social practices that defend certain representations of gender.

For the children of migrants, the transmission of gendered identity projects appears to result in a contradictory double-bind (Guénif-Souilamas, 2003): between upward mobility and symbolic and social fidelity, they are asked to subscribe to both present and inherited social gender identities

THEORETICAL INTERSECTIONALITY TO APPREHEND GENDERED TRANSMISSION

If representations of gender are constitutive in identity and related processes, such as social identification and categorisation, they therefore exercise some constraint on a person's access to or use of a specific symbolic resource (Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson, & Psaltis, 2003). Representations of gender can thus be reinforced or challenged by such uses of symbolic resources. The parents' discourses confirm how representations of gender are reinforced by their recourse to religion as a transnational symbolic resource.

However, an intersection of theoretical frameworks is called for in order to apprehend the dynamics of negotiating identities amongst a population in a particularly complex social context. While we turned to both social identity and social representations theories to provide a lens for understanding gendered social identity, the notion of symbolic resources helps us to account for the social, personal and symbolic stakes of religious practice. Furthermore, our fieldwork and interviews illustrate how the parents engage in an intentional process of socialisation whilst the children negotiate, largely unconsciously, the transmission that occurs through enculturation (Kuczynski, Navara, Boiger, 2011). Gendered representations appear as the object through which the parents and children negotiation opposite movements: while the parents express their desire for their children to reproduce a collectivist social structure, the children vacillate between the larger family unit and their desire for independent autonomy. Indeed, French society presents autonomy, manifested through specific gender roles, as the model to which the younger generation should adhere (De Gaulejac, 2003). The parents, largely supported by the ideals promoted through the church, promote a social model by which social cohesion depends on the children's adherence to such gender norms. The parents' discourses highlight their plight to transmit gendered messages to their children and verify if they received them in the same manner in which they emitted (Tisseron, 2001). The ambivalence expressed by the children in regards to this contradiction appears to speak to the risks that their potential treason could engender. The children express a fear of transgressing their parents, which first materialises through the critical gaze of the other that determines their legitimacy. In other words, the capacity to experience shame by transgressing the norms presented by their parents and religious community carries the risk of being excluded from the social group (Tisseron, 2006). Whilst the French society

transmits other values and identity representations, the children are nonetheless pulled towards their desire to belong to their initial community. Shame appears as the thread by which the children negotiate how far they will stray from the parents' representations of gender.

Our research amongst families reveals how a gendered translation of social cohesion emerges through and because of migration. This speaks to the transformation and resistance of social gender identity at the interface of the individual and the social (Howarth, 2010). By gathering the perspective of migrant parents and children, this study highlights how social gender identity as a function of representations of gender relates to processes of active identity dynamics (Kadianaki, 2006). The theoretical intersectionality allows us to apprehend the complexity of identity construction and transmission of those individuals who constitute contemporary societies.

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