

## INDEXING INTEGRATION: HIERARCHIES OF BELONGING IN SECULAR PARIS

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### **Abstract**

In the wake of terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, stereotypes of Muslim migrants who pose a threat to the French nation loom large. This article considers how communicative practices associated with belonging in France shift with rising tensions surrounding Islam and immigration. By analyzing the language used in state discourses on the one hand, and in conversations in Senegalese households on the other, this article examines ‘integration’ in France, both as a legal category and as a powerful metapragmatic framework that mediates indexicality in everyday interactions. This article shows how immigrants take part in the continual redefinition of what is required to ‘sound’ integrated in attempts to illustrate their belonging in France. It contends that French republican ideologies create an axis of contrast between the ‘integrated’ foreign-born and potentially problematic ‘immigrants,’ revealing how immigrants appropriate state discourses in their efforts to demonstrate their own integration. In so doing, immigrants themselves produce nested hierarchies of belonging among France's immigrant minority populations, in which Senegalese Catholics perform integration through critiques of Muslims, while Senegalese Muslims denounce Islamic associations and others who are more pious in public than they.

### **I. Indexing integration: hierarchies of belonging in secular Paris**

In the wake of recent terrorist attacks in France, stereotypes of Muslim migrants who pose a threat to the French nation loom large. Faced with heightened tensions surrounding Islam and immigration, French-educated Senegalese provide a striking example of the ways in which transnational migrants reinforce hierarchies of education, class and religion among minorities in France as they struggle to present themselves as successfully integrated into French society. To demonstrate belonging, immigrants attempt to distance themselves from stereotypes of foreigners who menace the secular French nation.

This article examines ‘integration’ in France as both a legal category and a powerful metapragmatic framework that mediates indexicality in everyday interactions. It contends that France’s integration policy, predicated on an axis of contrast that divides ‘integrated’

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foreigners from potentially problematic ‘immigrants’, provides the foundation for racializing discourses in state policy and everyday discussions in immigrant households. It then shows how Senegalese in Paris discursively populate categories of ‘immigrant’ and ‘integrated’ with person types that are salient in Africa, laminating French hierarchies of belonging on to status hierarchies that are relevant in Senegal. Analysis of the language used in French state discourses on the one hand and in conversations in Senegalese households on the other reveals the ways in which educated migrants from Dakar adopt the language of the French state to demonstrate their own integration. In so doing, they take part in the continual redefinition of what is required to ‘sound’ integrated, reproducing nested hierarchies of belonging among Senegalese in France. Educational and geographical hierarchies, significant in Senegal pre-migration, are reinforced in France, whereas the significance of class and religion are transformed in the context of migration.

France’s official approach to immigration is based on a contractual approach to citizenship founded in the ‘republican’ tradition. French republican policies claim that anyone, regardless of skin colour, religion or ethnic origin, may ‘become French’ by demonstrating the willingness to integrate into French society (Lamont 2004: 148; Raissiguier 2010). In everyday language, Senegalese who prove sufficiently ‘integrated’ are not referred to as ‘immigrants,’ but rather as ‘French of Senegalese origins’. The legal distinction between naturalized citizens and immigrants becomes, in turn, a division based on class, religion and education that distinguishes ‘immigrants’ from ‘integrated’ foreign-born residents who have the means to manage their semiotic practices according to French expectations. In what follows, I examine how French republican discourses that advocate equality and inclusion paradoxically reproduce exclusion and stratification among racially marked minorities. Scholars have highlighted the exclusionary outcomes of France’s approach to integration, focusing primarily on the ways state institutions and the ‘unmarked’ (white) majority attribute racial otherness to maintain positions of power (Fassin 2005, P. Silverstein 2005, Hargreaves 2007, Ndiaye 2008, Raissiguier 2010). Analysis of how educated migrants from Dakar discursively position themselves relative to other Senegalese in France shows how immigrants draw on the language of French republicanism in their efforts to preserve their privileged position as ‘integrated’ foreigners.

Following Hilary Dick and Kristina Wirtz, I define racializing discourses as ‘the actual language use (spoken and written) that sorts some people, things, and practices into social categories marked as inherently dangerous and other’ (2011: E2). The present article traces

‘intertextuality’, which Shankar and Cavanaugh have summarized as ‘culturally constructed, maintained and interpreted connections among instances of language use (spoken or written)’, between French government communications and talk in Senegalese households (2012: 356). Like reported speech, which transports an utterance to a new time and place, transforming and reframing speakers’ words, ‘interdiscursivity’ is a process through which linguistic form and meaning are linked across contexts (Briggs and Bauman 1992, M. Silverstein and Urban 1996, Irvine 1996, 2005, M. Silverstein 2005). Examination of how educated Senegalese urbanites draw on French republican discourses reveals how immigrants reproduce and transform racializing discourses, mapping them on to hierarchies of education and geography that are salient in Senegal, while transforming the significance of class and religion in stratification among Senegalese in France.

The stigmatizing rhetoric of racializing discourses is often not explicit but couched in value-laden discussions of integration that draw multiple semiotic practices into relation with one another, mapping ways of speaking on to dress, eating, and religious and economic practices in ways that establish indexical chains between person types and diverse behaviours. This article examines ‘covert racializing discourses,’ which ‘racialize without being denotatively explicit about race,’ (Dick and Wirtz 2011: E2), focusing specifically on those that are located in moral stances regarding economic practice. Borrowing a term first proposed by Maurer (2009), I call these normative expectations, which animate resource redistribution at the state and family levels, ‘economic moralities’ a concept I locate at the intersection of scholarship on Maussian ‘gift’ exchange and linguistic anthropologists’ examinations of the ‘ordinary ethics’ (Lambek 2010) that individuals enact in everyday interaction.

In both French state discourses and Parisian Senegalese household discussions, social actors communicate moral stances regarding economic practices (economic moralities) that trace boundaries of inclusion in French society and Senegalese kinship networks, shaping the right to the resources that belonging affords. Speakers draw on economic moralities in interaction to position themselves relative to others, drawing and redrawing lines of inclusion and exclusion. Republican ideologies provide a legal foundation for discussions in which Senegalese recursively categorize minority groups, creating nested hierarchies of belonging in France.

By ‘nested hierarchies’, I mean asymmetrical relationships that recur in a repeating pattern as a single axis of contrast is applied at various scales. For instance, I will show how

Catholic Senegalese perform integration in France by criticizing Muslims, while Senegalese Muslims denounce members of Islamic associations and others who are more pious in public than themselves. These embedded structures are the result of a semiotic process that Irvine and Gal refer to as '(fractal) recursivity', namely, 'the projection of an opposition, salient at one level of relationship, onto some other level' (2000: 38). Analysis of the nested hierarchies that result from processes of recursivity draws attention to social work carried out at each iteration, or 'nesting', of a dichotomy. By strategically drawing attention to a given level of contrast, individuals manage social meanings in ways that have political and economic consequences (Cohen and Comaroff 1976, Comaroff and Roberts 1977, Murphy and Bledsoe 1987, Newell 2012). The 'nested hierarchies' I describe here among Senegalese result from individuals' efforts to claim belonging in France. The people, places, and practices that speakers frame as indexing integration (or failure to integrate) varies with context according to broader political-economic stakes.

## **II. Fieldwork and methods**

This article is based on eighteen months (January 2014–June 2015) of participant observation in the households of French-educated<sup>2</sup> Senegalese in Paris, accompanying families on summer trips to Senegal. It also draws on a total of fifteen non-consecutive months of fieldwork in Dakar, the capital of Senegal and the colonial capital of former French West Africa. Semi-structured interviews with members of transnational Senegalese families complement audio- and video-recordings of household interactions after school and work, at meals, at weekends and at Senegalese gatherings. Transcript analysis of families' everyday discussions sheds light on the ways speakers voice morally charged positions on integration and on religious and economic practices, thus allowing the examination of individuals' shifting moral stances across contexts.

My research focused on the households of French-educated Dakarais and their children born in France. Travelling between Dakar and Paris since 2005, I made contact with branches of transnational families in both countries. My research participants in Dakar's middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods put me in contact with their family members in Paris. These Dakarais arrived in France with the language skills and financial means necessary to attend

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<sup>2</sup> Individuals who received formal, francophone schooling at a secondary school or university in Senegal or France.

French universities and access skilled employment. Most parents had both French and Senegalese citizenship, whereas their children often were exclusively French nationals. Those adults who were not French citizens had residency permits and were working towards naturalization. These families were not concentrated in one neighbourhood in Paris but were scattered throughout the city and its nearby suburbs. Many explicitly described distancing themselves from Paris's African neighbourhoods and immigrant enclaves in France's impoverished *banlieues* (suburbs).

My ethnographic research also examined state discourses on citizenship and integration communicated by representatives of the French Office of Immigration and Integration (*Office français d'immigration et d'intégration*, or OFII). Like many of my research participants, as the foreign (non-EU) spouse of a French national, I engaged in the process of obtaining a residence permit through family connections. This permitted me to carry out participant observation at OFII-led sessions of 'citizenship education', termed 'civic training' on the OFII English website (OFII 2016c), which are now mandatory for foreigners who wish to obtain a long-term residence permit. During my fieldwork in Paris, I also documented the rise of political debates surrounding immigration and secularism in the French media, which have acquired new urgency since the terrorist attacks in 2015.

### **III. A Republican pact: state discourses of integration**

Immigrant 'integration' is the explicit goal of France's official immigration policy, as declared and carried out by the French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII). The OFII is the organization that grants long-stay visas and residence permits to foreigners from outside the European Union and manages the 'integration' of those who are eligible to settle in France permanently (OFII 2016a). The institution's website states that its aim is to carry out an immigration policy that promotes French republican values and is faithful to France's 'tradition of reception and integration' (OFII 2016b).

French republicanism is underpinned by Enlightenment ideals of universal inclusion, demanded by the revolutionaries of 1789 in the phrase 'liberty, equality, and fraternity'. The republican approach to immigration treats 'integration' as a civic duty on the part of foreign residents in the form of a social contract between French residents and the state. This republican logic implies that, because the state provides immigrants with the pedagogical tools to integrate (language classes, citizenship education sessions, employment counselling, etc.), the failure to integrate is the fault of those individual immigrants who choose to break

their pact with the state. Framing belonging as a question of *willingness* places the onus of integration on the individual and obscures the significance of class, race, and religion in shaping immigrants' capacity to integrate.

Foreigners formally employed in France or who are the spouse, parent or child of a French citizen or resident have the right to settle in France on a long-term basis. To obtain their first residence permit, since 2007 such foreigners have been required to take part in an OFII-led citizen integration program. At an initial half-day reception session, they receive information on immigration and life in France. At an individual meeting with an OFII representative, they are required to sign a 'Reception and Integration Contract' (*Contrat d'Accueil et d'Intégration*, see illustration below) and are subject to an evaluation of their French language skills. When deemed necessary, the OFII representative can organize language lessons or professional training sessions to facilitate integration. This initial session is followed by a full-day of citizenship education aimed at familiarizing immigrants with French law and their rights as residents.

The OFII draws directly on the language of French republicanism to describe the relationship between the state and individual immigrants. It obliges foreigners to enter, quite literally, into a social contract with the state. This 'Republican contract' purports to establish a relationship of 'reciprocal obligation' between a foreigner and the French state (OFII 2016a). The contract explicitly states, 'To choose to live in France is to have the will to integrate into French society and to accept the fundamental values of the Republic' (see illustration). At citizenship education sessions, OFII representatives and a pedagogic video titled 'Living together in France' explained that the French state welcomes foreigners by providing public education, health care and linguistic training and citizenship education (ANAEM 2004). They declared that immigrants must, in turn, respect the fundamental values of the French Republic, obey the law and strive to integrate into the secular French nation.

The OFII categorizes *laïcité* ('secularism') alongside 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' as a fourth fundamental French value by which all French residents must abide. At a citizenship education session I attended, an OFII representative specified that secularism was as important as the other three values, though it happened to have been 'annexed later'. The representative guided participants through an OFII PowerPoint on French history, which described secularism as a legal requirement in France since the 1905 law on the separation of church and state, asserting further that *laïcité* has been a French priority since King Henry IV signed the Edict of Nantes in 1598.



## Bienvenue en France

Vous avez été admis à résider sur le territoire de la République française, Etat membre de l'Union européenne.

Chaque année, plus de 100 000 étrangers s'installent en France venant de pays, de cultures différents. Comme vous, depuis plus de cent ans, d'autres y sont venus et y ont construit leur vie.

Ils ont participé à son développement et à sa modernisation. Certains, parfois au prix de leur liberté ou de leur vie, ont défendu son sol par les armes.

La France et les Français sont attachés à une histoire, à une culture et à certaines valeurs fondamentales. Pour vivre ensemble, il est nécessaire de les connaître et de les respecter. C'est pourquoi, dans le cadre d'un contrat d'accueil et d'intégration, nous vous demandons de suivre une journée de formation civique pour mieux comprendre le pays dans lequel vous allez vivre.

### La France, une démocratie

La France est une république indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale.

Le pouvoir repose sur la souveraineté du peuple, exprimée par le suffrage universel ouvert à tous les citoyens français âgés de plus de 18 ans.

Sur de nombreux bâtiments publics, vous verrez gravée l'inscription «Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité». Cette devise est celle de la République française.

### La France, un pays de droits et de devoirs

La Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen de 1789 proclame que tous les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits, quelles que soient leur origine, leur condition et leur fortune.

La France garantit le respect des droits fondamentaux, qui sont notamment :

- la liberté, qui s'exprime sous plusieurs formes : liberté d'opinion, liberté d'expression, liberté de réunion, liberté de circulation...
- la sûreté, qui garantit la protection par les pouvoirs publics des personnes et des biens,
- le droit personnel à la propriété.

Les étrangers en situation régulière ont les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs que les Français, sauf le droit de vote qui reste attaché à la

nationalité, et doivent respecter les lois et principes de la République française.

Qu'elle sanctionne ou qu'elle protège, la loi est la même pour tous, sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion.

### La France, un pays laïque

En France, la religion relève du domaine privé.

Chacun peut avoir les croyances religieuses de son choix ou ne pas en avoir. Tant qu'elles ne troublent pas l'ordre public, l'État respecte toutes les croyances et la liberté de culte.

L'État est indépendant des religions et veille à l'application des principes de tolérance et de liberté.

### La France, un pays d'égalité

L'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes est un principe fondamental de la société française. Les femmes ont les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs que les hommes. Les parents sont conjointement responsables de leurs enfants. Ce principe s'applique à tous, Français et étrangers. Les femmes ne sont soumises ni à l'autorité du mari, ni à celle du père ou du frère pour, par exemple, travailler, sortir ou ouvrir un compte bancaire. Les mariages forcés et la polygamie sont interdits, tandis que l'intégrité du corps est protégée par la loi.

### Connaitre le français, une nécessité

La langue française est un des fondements de l'unité nationale. La connaissance du français est donc indispensable à votre intégration et favorisera le contact avec l'ensemble de la population.

C'est pourquoi vous devez avoir un niveau de connaissance de la langue française qui vous permette, par exemple, d'entreprendre des démarches administratives, d'inscrire vos enfants à l'école, de trouver un travail et de participer à part entière à la vie de la cité. Si vous n'avez pas ce niveau à votre arrivée en France, vous devez l'acquérir en suivant une formation sanctionnée par un diplôme reconnu par l'État. L'inscription à cette formation gratuite est faite par l'Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration.

L'école est la base de la réussite professionnelle de vos enfants. En France, l'école publique est gratuite. La scolarité est obligatoire de 6 à 16 ans. Garçons et filles étudient ensemble dans toutes les classes.



*Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration*

LIBERTÉ - ÉGALITÉ - FRATERNITÉ

## Préambule

L'intégration de populations différentes exige une tolérance mutuelle et le respect par tous, Français comme étrangers, des règles, des lois et des usages.

Choisir de vivre en France, c'est avoir la volonté de s'intégrer à la société française et d'accepter les valeurs fondamentales de la République.

C'est pourquoi vous devez préparer votre intégration républicaine dans la société française en signant, à cette fin, le contrat d'accueil et d'intégration prévu par l'article L-311-9 du code de l'entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d'asile.

Le présent contrat est conclu entre l'Etat, représenté par le préfet du département

## Article 1 : Engagements de l'Etat

L'Etat assure l'ensemble des prestations suivantes :

- une visite médicale permettant la délivrance du titre de séjour ;
- un entretien individuel permettant notamment d'apprécier le niveau de connaissance en français du signataire du contrat ;
- en tant que de besoin :
  - un bilan linguistique ;
  - un entretien avec un travailleur social, donnant lieu, si nécessaire, à l'établissement d'un diagnostic social et à la mise en œuvre d'un appui social individualisé ;
- une journée de formation civique présentant les droits fondamentaux et les grands principes et valeurs de la République, ainsi que les institutions de la France ;
- si nécessaire, une formation linguistique dont la durée est fixée en fonction des besoins et capacités d'apprentissage de la personne. Cette formation est destinée à permettre d'atteindre un niveau de langue correspondant à celui exigé pour le diplôme initial de langue française (DILF) ;
- une session d'information sur la vie en France qui a pour objet de faciliter la compréhension de la société française et l'accès aux services publics ;
- un bilan de compétences professionnelles, sur une demi-journée, permettant de faire un point sur les compétences professionnelles et le projet professionnel des signataires et de les orienter en conséquence. Ce bilan vise à encourager les signataires du CAI à trouver un emploi.

## Article 2 : Engagements du signataire du contrat

- à participer à la journée de formation civique, à la session d'information sur la vie en France s'il a souhaité en bénéficier, et au bilan de compétences professionnelles ;
- à suivre avec assiduité, lorsqu'elle lui a été prescrite, la formation linguistique destinée à lui permettre d'atteindre un niveau satisfaisant en français, ainsi qu'à se présenter à l'examen organisé à l'issue de la formation pour l'obtention du diplôme initial de langue française (DILF) ;
- à se rendre aux entretiens fixés pour le suivi du contrat.

L'assiduité de l'étranger à chacune des formations prescrites est sanctionnée par une attestation nominative remise par l'OFII.

## Article 3 : Durée du contrat

Le présent contrat est conclu pour une durée d'un an. Il peut exceptionnellement être prolongé par le préfet dans la limite d'une année supplémentaire, pour engager ou terminer une formation prescrite. Dans ce cas, la clôture du contrat intervient à l'expiration de cette formation, dans des conditions précisées au signataire par l'OFII.

## Article 4 : Suivi du contrat

La réalisation du contrat fait l'objet d'un suivi administratif et d'une évaluation par l'OFII. Au terme du contrat, l'Office vérifie que les actions de formation ou d'information inscrites au contrat ont été effectivement suivies et délivre au signataire une attestation nominative récapitulative qui précise les modalités de leur validation. Cette attestation est transmise au préfet qui peut tenir compte, lors du premier renouvellement de la carte de séjour, du non respect des engagements pris dans le cadre du contrat.

## Article 5 : Respect du contrat

Le signataire est informé que le préfet :

- peut résilier le contrat en cas de non participation à une formation prescrite ou en cas d'abandon en cours de formation, sans motif légitime ;
- tient compte de la signature du contrat et de son respect pour l'appréciation de la condition d'intégration républicaine de l'étranger dans la société française prévue pour la délivrance de la carte de résident.

N° de contrat : .....

N° AGDREF : .....

Fait à .....

Le .....

Le préfet du département

Pour les mineurs, le représentant légal

Ministère de l'intérieur

La loi n°78-17 du 6 janvier 1978 relative à l'informatique, aux fichiers et aux libertés s'applique à ce contrat. Elle garantit un droit d'accès et de rectification pour les données vous concernant auprès de l'Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration.



The single sheet (printed front and back) Reception and Integration Contract includes a section titled in bold, ‘France, a secular nation’ (see illustration) located between segments that characterize France as a country of ‘rights and responsibilities’ and a country of ‘equality’. The section on secularism proceeds to explain, first, that in France religion belongs to the private domain. Citizens and residents, it then specifies, have the right to their own religious beliefs as long as they do not disturb the public order. Finally, the contract states that government is independent of religion while being committed to ensuring the principles of tolerance and freedom.

Throughout Europe, secularism has won increased attention in recent years (Asad 2003). In France, debates over the requirements of *laïcité* flare up anew after each political event that draws public attention back to questions of Islam and immigration. Following the success of the far-right National Front party in municipal elections in March 2014, for instance, party leader Marine Le Pen expressed support for mayors who removed the pork-less ‘substitution meal’ in school cafeterias. Le Pen declared that her party will ‘accept no religious demands on school menus’ (Laurent 2014). The French policy of *laïcité* has increasingly become the burden of individual citizens (Fernando 2014). The OFII’s educational citizenship video made explicit individuals’ responsibility to adhere to secularism, explaining that residents are asked to limit religious expression to the private sphere and that it is forbidden to wear ‘conspicuous religious symbols’ in French public schools and state institutions.

The terrorist attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 sparked new questions about how the state might safeguard secularism and minimize the risk of ‘homegrown terrorism’. During this time, the state’s commitment to ensuring the principles of tolerance and freedom entailed deploying ‘Vigipirate’ (the national security alert system) soldiers equipped with assault rifles to secure access to religious spaces. A few months following the January attacks, a Muslim girl was sent home from secondary school for wearing a black ankle-length skirt that her teachers deemed insufficiently secular (*Le Monde* 2015). This highly publicized event inspired debate over what constitutes a conspicuous sign of religion and what individual citizens (children included) are expected to do to demonstrate secularism. The following autumn, the French Ministry of Education introduced educational reforms that required teachers and parents to attend informational sessions on the expectations of secularism (Piquemal 2015).

As scrutiny of Muslims and migrants has intensified, the social expectations of secularism have swelled and been written into government policy, placing pressure on minorities in France to regulate their behaviour ever more carefully in order to communicate their integration constantly. ‘Secularism’, and thus ‘integration’ more generally, function as what Urciuoli (1996) calls ‘strategically deployable shifters’, summarized by Dick and Wirtz as ‘purposefully nebulous terms whose semantic ambiguity serves the pragmatic function of constructing particular social spaces and speaker alignments, rather than specifying a fixed referent’ (2011: E2). Regardless of their citizenship status, French residents from North and West Africa are racially marked as ‘foreign’ outsiders until they demonstrate integration. For these non-white French residents, ‘integration’ must be constantly achieved and demonstrated anew, according to the ever-shifting demands of French secularism.

When OFII representatives enumerate the behaviours expected of French residents, they laminate – likening or fusing together – diverse practices (and people) construed as problematic to or unaligned with French goals of integration. In outlining the requirements of secularism, OFII representatives communicate the expectation that, in the public sphere at least, minorities should detach themselves from their ethnic and religious backgrounds, avoiding speaking, dressing or eating in ways that are associated with Islam in order to be treated as integrated, secular citizens.

French state discourses also define integration in educational and economic terms. The OFII frames education as an index of integration, a transformative process that both makes integration possible and provides evidence of belonging. French-educated foreigners<sup>3</sup> are treated as distinct from the immigrant masses to whom citizenship education sessions are addressed, and are exempt from citizenship education sessions and from signing the Reception and Integration Contract. Uneducated immigrants, in contrast, must endure more extensive state intervention in their lives (e.g., professional and linguistic training) to demonstrate their willingness to integrate.

The OFII describes formal employment as part of immigrants’ pact with the state, highlighting residents’ legal obligation to pay taxes. They describe this responsibility as fundamental to France’s system of economic ‘solidarity’, according to which disadvantaged residents are entitled to welfare benefits and state subsidies. OFII representatives characterize

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<sup>3</sup> Individuals who have completed at least one year of higher education in France or three years of secondary schooling in a French establishment abroad may be exempted from citizenship education sessions.

employment as ‘an essential pillar’ of integration in France and offer information on obtaining training from *Pôle Emploi*, the state employment centre. French integration policy thus requires foreigners to align with the economic moralities of the French state, at a minimum by avoiding the black market, by refraining from excessive reliance on the welfare system, and ideally by active participation in the formal economy, which contributes to the public fund.

Republican ideologies that distinguish ‘integrated’ foreigners from problematic ‘immigrants’ simultaneously create indexical links among economic, educational and religious practices. Value-laden integration guidelines draw diverse practices into relation, grouping them together under what Asif Agha calls ‘a metasemiotic typification’. This typification – here the notion of ‘integration’ – ‘motivates a likeness among objects within its semiotic range’ (2007: 22). Bundling diverse practices as evidence of ‘integration’ (or its absence), this semiotic process makes possible a ‘slippage’ (Fernando 2014: 43) in state discourses of secularism, likening Muslims in France (even naturalized or French-born citizens) to foreigners and delinquents.

The following section examines interdiscursive links between state discourses and talk in Senegalese households to demonstrate how Senegalese in Paris reproduce republican axes of contrast in their efforts to demonstrate their own belonging in France. Fitting person ‘types’ salient in Senegal into French categories of ‘immigrant’ versus ‘integrated,’ they laminate hierarchies significant in Africa on to those relevant in France, taking part in discourses that racialize France’s foreign populations. Examination of the normative stances of Senegalese in Paris regarding other immigrants’ economic practices sheds light on the ways educated Dakarais manage slippage between their own ethnic and religious backgrounds and racialized stereotypes of African immigrants.

#### **IV. Nested hierarchies of belonging among Senegalese in Paris**

French-educated immigrants from Dakar arrive in France with a mastery of many skills necessary to demonstrate integration. The semiotic practices that index privilege in Senegal are often the same as those that are thought to point to ‘integration’ in France. Fluency in French is a skill that marks members of an educated elite in Senegal, for whom the language provides access to employment and facilitates migration abroad. Senegal is officially a francophone nation, and scholars estimate that 10 to 14 percent of Senegalese speak French (Cissé 2005). Wolof serves as a common language for the vast majority of Senegalese,

particularly in urban areas (Versluys 2010). Formal French schooling, like the language skills it teaches and necessitates, also indexes wealth. A francophone higher education indicates that one's family had the means to pay school fees and to live in an urban area with a school.

Senegalese in Paris speak about education as if it marked a particular type of African abroad. They use the word *intello*, an abbreviation of 'intellectual', to refer to educated individuals who initially immigrated on a student visa, as opposed to workers.

One young woman who had arrived in France from Dakar five years previously described to me how her family members from rural Senegal came to recognize her as an *intello*. When she first arrived, her cousins who had been living in Paris for many years used to tease her by calling her *bledard*. Derived from the Arabic word *bled*, meaning village or homeland, in France the slang term *bledard* is used to refer to immigrants from North and West Africa who display and perform elements of the culture and customs of their country of origin. Associated with 'tradition' and a lack of integration into French culture, the label has negative connotations similar to those associated with the term 'fresh off the boat' (FOB) as used by the Desi teens Shankar describes (2008a, 2008b).

When her cousins saw that she was serious about her studies, however, they began to call her *intello* instead, acknowledging that she was not the naïve *bledard* they had originally thought. In her story, education allowed her to transform herself in her cousins' eyes from a not-yet integrated *bledard* into an *intello*. These categories map on to republican dichotomies of 'immigrant' versus 'integrated' foreigners, illustrating how Senegalese in France take up French republican ideologies of integration to distinguish themselves from other (Senegalese) immigrants.

Geographical hierarchies in Senegal are also crucial to the processes of distinction through which Dakarais in France highlight their own integration. Like Parisian ideologies that frame France as divided into Paris and *la province*, a disparaging term lumping together all regions outside the capital, Dakarais speak of the Senegalese capital as distinct from (and superior to) the rest of the country, particularly the rural 'bush' (*la brousse*). In a sense, the distance between Dakar and the Senegalese bush is perhaps even more exaggerated than that which separates Paris from French *provinces*. In Parisian narratives, the French countryside may also be described as an escape from city life, a vacation site prized for regional food specialities, fresh air and a slower pace of life. Travel from Dakar to the countryside is time-consuming, difficult and sometimes dangerous. Urbanites' trips into the interior of the country are most often visits to their (or their parents') native village, which involves

substantial economic obligations. Villagers often expect significant gifts and monetary support from their presumably well-off family members visiting from the big city.

Socioeconomic relations between urbanites and villagers in Senegal (like elsewhere Africa; see Newell 2012) are predicated on presupposed inequalities of status and wealth. Economic moralities of rank-based redistribution, commonly glossed as patron-client relations, link these two groups through moral expectations of material rights and responsibilities. According to this moral framework, urbanites are expected to act as benefactors, providing rural beneficiaries with material support. Like education, geographical movements from ‘the bush’ to the city (or from Africa to Europe) are framed as transformative processes, perceived as directly linked to wealth and status. Senegalese depict migration according to a nested hierarchy similar to that described by Sasha Newell among urbanites in Côte d’Ivoire (2012), in which villagers are thought to move up in status when they come to the capital, and urbanites climb in this same hierarchy when they travel to Europe.

Three young women who had migrated from Dakar to continue their studies in Paris described to me one ethnic group whose behaviour in France they found particularly problematic: Soninké villagers from the Senegal River Valley. The Soninké were among the first Senegalese to migrate *en masse* in the 1960s and 1970s to work as labourers in France (Tall 2002: 551). The women’s frustration was palpable as they explained that these villagers, who appear to be among the least ‘integrated’, are actually full French citizens; they, meanwhile, were still obliged to wait in line at the *préfecture* each year to renew their residence permits. The women made it clear, that despite having legal citizenship, in their eyes the Soninké remained ‘immigrants’ in France: identifiable outsiders and thus problematic.

One of the women complained that Soninké were ‘embarrassing’ because they have been in France the longest but have ‘done nothing’ to adapt. ‘You’ve seen them’, she assured me; ‘They’re the ones in the metro with a stroller full of groceries and their baby on their back!’ This description – of a Soninké women who would *choose* to carry her baby on her back in the public space of the Parisian metro – frames these villagers as foreigners in France who have yet to detach themselves sufficiently from African cultural practices in order to integrate. Focusing on the example of a mother with a young child, she highlighted Soninké villagers’ reproductive, rather than economically productive, activities, alluding to French tropes of immigrant families with many children. These large families are often perceived as

placing an unfair burden on the welfare system by contributing little while receiving substantial state support. The three women from Dakar voiced a critical portrayal of other Africans in France, aligning themselves with French state discourses that emphasize the importance of ‘professional integration’ by obtaining formal employment and taking part in the French system of national economic ‘solidarity’, and by paying taxes to support French schools, hospitals, and other state institutions.

The problem with Soninké villagers in France, the three women explained, was that they had come directly ‘from the bush to the *banlieue*’, impoverished French suburbs often perceived to be ethnic enclaves. In the *banlieue*, they suggested, these Senegalese villagers were neither obligated nor motivated to integrate into majority French society. The three women framed their criticisms in terms that closely resembled French objections to *communautarisme*, ‘the practice of enclosing oneself in one’s community and privileging ethnic, racial, or religious affiliations over national ones’ (Fernando 2014: 36). *Communautarisme* is widely perceived to be directly opposed to ‘integration’ and is often associated with *banlieues* notorious for illegal activities such as drug trafficking, the riots in 2005 and increasingly terrorism (Iteanu 2013).

One of the women argued that forms of behaviour associated with immigrants in the *banlieues* would be unacceptable in Senegal as well, saying, ‘They are “*ni ni*”’, that is, neither Senegalese nor French.<sup>4</sup> Her criticism suggested that one might achieve a ‘both and’ status by adapting one’s behaviour to fit social expectations in each country. ‘Both and’ here could refer not only to both Senegalese and French but, moreover, to both middle or upper class and ‘integrated’. Indeed, in Dakar, francophone Senegalese learn to ‘code switch’ from a young age, alternating between the French and Wolof languages, as well as adopting social practices associated with Europe and Africa. While French is required in public schools and international businesses in Dakar, Wolof demonstrates belonging in one’s neighbourhood and family, as well as when haggling over prices at the market. Educated elites learn to eat with cutlery on plates at European-style restaurants in Dakar, but many also eat regularly with their hands around a communal platter at family meals. Mastery of these diverse skill sets, and demonstrating an awareness of the contexts in which each is appropriate, are critical to achieving the social position of an educated Senegalese urbanite. The capacity to adapt one’s

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<sup>4</sup> See Fernando (2014: 59) for a discussion of the term *ni ni* as used among individuals of North African descent in France.

semiotic practices distinguishes elite Dakarais from rural Soninké, in Senegal and France alike.

As Senegalese geographical hierarchies are carried into the French context, the material inequalities that are so salient in Dakarais' relations with their rural kin are erased. Instead, Senegalese urbanites frame these distinctions as questions of one's willingness to integrate into France. Echoing republican discourses, the women highlighted their own belonging in France by criticizing other Senegalese who, in their eyes, fail to demonstrate the will to integrate. In the context of migration, the educational and geographical hierarchies that distinguish groups of people in Senegal are reinforced. Class, meanwhile, is erased, whereas religion – or rather secularism – becomes a key axis of contrast according to which Senegalese position themselves relative to others.

## **V. Recursive religious racialization**

In Senegal, a country that is 94% Muslim, piety is valued and construed as a mark of high status (Bugenhagen 2011, 2012; Irvine 1974). In France, however, public piety is suspect, treated as evidence of immigrants' rejection of secularism and of the separation between the public sphere of politics and the private sphere of religion upon which it is premised (Scott 2007; Iteanu 2013). In Paris, religious expression takes on new meaning for Senegalese, aware of the marked status of religion, especially Islam. To demonstrate their own belonging, educated Senegalese in Paris distance themselves from immigrants who are more visibly religious or Muslim than they are. Educated Dakarais often expressed a preference for 'discreetly' practising their religion. Certain families drew my attention to the fact that veiling is uncommon in Senegal.<sup>5</sup> Others described religiousness as a sign of 'traditional' African immigrants. Religion was often implicated in normative discussions about economic practices. By voicing criticisms of others' practices in the form of economic moralities, educated Senegalese positioned themselves relative to other immigrants in religious terms without explicitly criticizing piety.

Marie Sene, a Catholic mother of two, voiced economic moralities that distanced her from the practices of Muslim Senegalese through implicit criticisms of Muslim women's ever-escalating gift exchanges. When I asked Marie about the ritual gifts Senegalese women

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<sup>5</sup> Salafi women in Senegal are a notable exception.

offer their in-laws, she quickly gave up attempts to explain how kinship ties organize these exchanges and told me she would call a Muslim friend of hers for clarification. Marie commented that her friend ‘always fulfils her duties (*devoirs*)’ as she dialled the call.

While their mother repeated aloud her Muslim friend’s explanations of which members of her husband’s female kin a woman is expected to offer food and gifts to at which event, Marie’s daughters Emilie and Rosalie rolled their eyes at the complex relations. ‘Couldn’t they have just made it simple?’ Emilie teased. After hanging up, Marie described how obligations toward one’s in-laws at baby naming ceremonies and weddings escalate over time. ‘For them’, she specified, ‘when you return the gift, you have to bring double the amount you received. That’s just how it is’. Marie further stated that, ‘for Catholics it’s not like that. I give when I want to give’. Unlike Muslims, who are morally expected to manage escalating economic obligations to maintain far-flung kinship networks, Marie reported having the freedom to choose when and what she gives.

As Marie described Muslim women’s compounding obligations, her daughters reacted incredulously. ‘That’s how you end up with nothing at the end!’ Emilie scoffed. Her sister joked, ‘You could always sell your gifts’. Their mother confirmed that, after fulfilling these economic obligations, participants are often left with little. In distancing herself from the obligations of Muslim women, Marie presented herself as successfully integrated into the modern, secular French nation. Unlike Muslims with obligations to their extended family through rigid tradition, Marie framed herself as autonomous in economic terms. She ratified her daughters’ dismissal of these practices, treating knowledge of these ritual gifts, already inconsequential for her as a Catholic, as completely irrelevant for the girls.

Muslim Senegalese also draw on religion as an axis of contrast to distinguish themselves from other Muslims in France who are more publicly religious than they. Aboulaye Diop, a Senegalese father of four who came to France in 1979 to study accounting, complained to me about Muslims who ‘talk about [their] religion all the time’. He highlighted one group he found particularly obtrusive: members of Murid Islamic brotherhood. In France, Abdoulaye explained, Murids’ bombastic pronouncements of faith were paired with illegal economic activities aimed at generating funds for their *marabouts* and the ongoing construction of the Murid mosque in Tuba, Senegal. Since the 1980s, Murids have developed extensive transnational networks centred on selling souvenirs and counterfeit goods on the informal market (Ebin 1993, Diouf 2000, Riccio 2001).



Abdoulaye criticized the informal systems of international money transfer the brotherhood is said to use, complaining that Murids who had not studied international banking were unfairly encroaching on the businesses of those who had. In emphasizing the importance that those who practice a trade possess the proper degree, Malik aligned himself with the French educational and bureaucratic systems, distancing himself from migrants who flout these legal requirements. He traced out an axis of contrast between himself and members of the Islamic brotherhood based on their divergent religious and economic practices. Framing Murids in opposition to French law and values, Abdoulaye tacitly communicated his own alignment with French priorities of immigrant integration, positioning Murids as marked ‘immigrants’ within a republican framework that demands that residents limit their religious expression to the private domain in order to avoid disturbing public order.

By voicing economic moralities, both Marie and Abdoulaye drew on religion as an axis of contrast to perform, without explicitly naming, their own belonging in French society. These examples illustrate the constant shifts in republican categories of ‘immigrant’ and ‘integrated’. The sorts of people, places and practices that are described as indexing integration vary with one’s interactional aims, as speakers strategically draw on this axis of contrast to demonstrate their own integration and to distance themselves from other ‘types’ of immigrants in France.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Not everyone who immigrates is treated as an immigrant. This article has outlined some of the ‘types’ of people and practices that circulate in discussions of integration in French state discourses and talk in Senegalese households. State discourses and Senegalese narratives both presuppose and reify an axis of contrast between marked ‘immigrants’ and ‘integrated’ foreigners. Interdiscursive links between republican discourses and Senegalese discussions show how these value-laden categories are reproduced and transformed, semiotically laminated on to types of people, practices and places that are relevant in Senegal.

In Senegal, education and urban origins are construed as evidence of middle- or upper-class status, while in the French context these same signs are treated as indexical of one’s integration. Educational and geographical hierarchies that are salient in Senegal are reinforced in Paris through discourses that frame formal schooling and migration as transformative processes, whereas hierarchies of class and religion are transformed

substantially. On the one hand, economic inequalities that motivate Dakarais to support relatives in rural Senegal are downplayed in France. In the context of migration, one's willingness to integrate is highlighted as key, obfuscating the uneven ways in which class differences shape one's capacity to index integration. Religion, on the other hand, takes on heightened significance in France. In narratives that are critical of others' exchange practices, Senegalese indirectly index their own secularism relative to others who are more publicly pious than they are. By carefully choosing how they take up republican axes of contrast that distinguish integrated foreigners from the immigrant masses, Senegalese in France strategically manage the 'slippage' between their own practices and those associated with potentially problematic 'immigrants'.

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