

# **Race and Gender Inequalities Faced by Immigrants' Descendants when Entering the French Labor Market**

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*Extended abstract prepared for the Population Association of America 2013 Annual Meeting*

## **Introduction**

This research analyzes the labor market integration of immigrants' descendants in France by focusing on the intersection of race and gender. The descendants of immigrants, also called the “second generation”, are defined as people who were born in France and have at least one immigrant parent. Their number is estimated to 6.5 million which corresponds to 11% of the population residing in France (Borrel and Lhommeau 2010). For some decades, the descendants of immigrants have been reaching the age of leaving school and entering the labor market. More recently, descendants of non-European immigrants<sup>1</sup> are reaching this crucial step of the transition to adulthood and have to face a French labor market that is characterized by a high youth unemployment rate (22.9% in 2010 for people aged 15-24). Previous researches have shown that descendants of immigrants encounter more difficulties than other young adults in the French labor market and, that these inequalities vary according to their parents' countries of birth (Simon 2003, Meurs et al. 2006, Silberman et al. 2007, Aeberhardt et al. 2010). These disparities are partly explained by human capital differences but beyond this reason, descendants of non-European immigrants appear to face higher penalties on the labor market than both their Europeans counterparts and youths without immigrant parents. This is particularly reflected by higher unemployment rates, more precarious jobs and limited upward mobility between generations. These unequal treatments point to the existence of racial discrimination taking place in the French labor market against people having non-European immigrant backgrounds.

While researchers agree on the existence of racial discrimination that disadvantage the professional trajectories of second generation migrants, few of them take into account the influence of gender, and even less the combined influence of race and gender. However, one hypothesis that has been put forward in the French literature is that a “double discrimination” affects the daughters of immigrants (Frickey and Primon 2004, Ait Ben Lmadani et al. 2008, Meurs and Pailhé 2010). In this perspective, it is assumed that they are confronted to both racial and gender discrimination, and that the combination of the two result in a double disadvantage regarding their labor market outcomes. The intersectional theory questions this hypothesis of an articulation of gender and race having a double negative consequence. Intersectional perspective

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<sup>1</sup> In France, the largest groups of non-European second generation have immigrant parents born in North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and Turkey. In practice, most quantitative researches are based on descendants of North African immigrants who represent the most numerous group of non-European second generation, and therefore the only group that can be statistically analyzed in most national surveys.

highlights the necessity of taking into account the fact that social identities – and by extension social inequalities based on gender, race, class... – are interdependent, because they are mutually constituted (Collins 2000, Browne and Misra 2003). Oppressions based on these identities are therefore simultaneous and cannot be ranked. In an empirical perspective, intersectionality scholars claim that these oppressions cannot be considered as additive but rather as interlinked. Consequently in this research, we state that daughters of immigrants do not face an addition of gender and racial discriminations, but are discriminated based on the fact of being female descendants of immigrants. Moreover, this combination of gender and race does not imply that they are systematically more disadvantaged in the labor market than are the sons of immigrants or the daughters of French natives.

### **Research framework**

This research focuses on the influence of gender and race on the labor market integration of youths who just left the educational system. The existence of disadvantages according to race and according to gender in the French labor market is no longer in doubt. In the light of these facts we aim to determine whether the daughters of immigrants are concerned or not by a double disadvantage when integrating the labor market. In fact we wonder if the combination of disadvantages based both on gender and race leads systematically to the most unfavorable labor market outcomes. For this purpose we compare descendants of immigrants to descendants of French natives but also men to women in each of these groups.

We use a French longitudinal survey, *Génération 2004*, performed by the French Research Centre on Qualifications (Céreq). This survey is based on a cohort of youths who left the educational system in 2004 for the first time at any level of qualification. Interviews took place in 2007 and 2009 on a sample of 34,000 individuals. *Génération 2004* contains a detailed job calendar where labor market statuses are monitored month by month. Hence labor market integration can be analyzed over the first five years of working life. The sample contains 28,090 descendants of natives and 4,043 descendants of immigrants. Because of the samples' sizes, only two racial groups can be distinguished among the second generation: the descendants of South European immigrants whose parents were born in Italy, Spain or Portugal, and the descendants of North African immigrants whose parents were born in Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia.

In a first part, we focus on the three main situations that structure the labor market: employment, unemployment and inactivity. Taking advantage of the longitudinal nature of the data, we analyze the time spent in each of these situations by school leavers and we resume their labor market paths by using a typology of labor market integration trajectories. We distinguish, for instance, trajectories characterized by a fast and lasting access to employment from those marked by a delayed access to employment or by an experience of persistent unemployment (see results table). Using logistic regressions, the second part concentrates on the evolution of the unemployment risk over the five years. We first look at the effect of gender for each race group, then at the effect of race for men and women separately, and finally at the combined effect of gender and race.

## Results

Regarding race inequality, results confirm that descendants of North African immigrants are disadvantaged when integrating the labor market: they spent less time employed and they follow more often paths characterized by unemployment and inactivity as compared to the other groups (see Table). Their lower educational level and their disadvantaged socio-economic background explain a part of this less favorable labor market integration but gaps remain when taking into account these differences. This result bears out the existence of racial discrimination which hinders labor market integration of North African immigrants' descendants. The pattern is totally different for descendants of South European immigrants whose trajectories of entry into the labor market are similar to those of youths without immigrant parents.

**Table - Typology of professional paths over the first three years after the end of education, by race and gender**

Typology	French native descendants		South European descendants		North African descendants	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Fast and lasting access to employment	63.3	57.8	62.3	55.3	43.0	39.0
Delayed access to employment after unemployment	11.9	11.5	11.8	13.1	14.0	9.7
Delayed access to employment after inactivity or training	3.4	3.7	5.3	3.5	3.6	4.8
Persistent or recurrent unemployment	6.7	7.1	5.8	7.3	18.7	14.8
Drop out of employment	7.5	8.2	8.2	8.9	11.4	13.3
Permanent inactivity	1.7	3.0	1.2	2.7	2.3	6.3
Professional training or return to study	5.5	8.7	5.4	9.3	6.9	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>14,292</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>13,798</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>775</b>

Source : Céreq, Génération 2004 Survey.

Among each racial group, important gender differences arise. Daughters of French natives follow paths that more often wander away from lasting employment. They indeed spent less time employed than their male counterparts and have higher risks of experiencing unemployment and inactivity. The same pattern is observed when comparing men and women of the South European second generation. Apart from a gender effect which explains that a higher proportion of women drop out of the labor market when getting married and/or having a child, the issue of gender based discrimination arises, especially regarding the higher risks of being unemployed for women of these two groups as compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, female of the South European second generation do not face a double discrimination as they do not encounter race based disadvantage. As daughters of French natives, their labor market integration appears to be “only” hindered by a gender penalty.

Regarding the North African second generation, labor market integration paths following by men and women appear to be quite unfavorable when comparing them to sons and daughter of French natives. Their probability of being unemployed increases as they move away from the time they left the educational

system. Women's trajectories are besides more often characterized by permanent inactivity as compared to both their male counterparts and the daughters of French natives. Here again, a gender effect explain a part of the gap as dropping out of the labor market is a deliberate decision taken by several women. But their higher levels of inactivity, as compared to women without immigrant parents, can also be interpreted as the consequence of the racial based difficulties they encounter while integrating the labor market, especially to obtain stable jobs. In terms of employment and inactivity, the risks of the women of the North African second generation are significantly different from those of their male counterparts but also from those of women without immigrant parents. These results suggest that they may face a disadvantage related to both their gender and their race. However it does not result in an addition of disadvantages. On the other hand, men and women of the North African second generation have similar unemployment risks. Therefore, regarding unemployment risks, women do not face a double disadvantage. To conclude about the double discrimination hypothesis put forward by previous researches to explain labor market outcomes of daughters of immigrants, the results presented here qualify its systematic nature.

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