PARITÉ AND THE MULTICULTURALISM DEBATES IN FRANCE:

Considering French Caribbean Perspectives.

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Pour ma mère et ma grand-mère, qui m'ont toujours impressionnée par leur fierté, leur désir d'indépendance, leur courage, et surtout leur force de caractère. Ces qualités qu'elles partagent, elles les ont vécues avec toute la force de leur individualité. Elles sont pour moi deux sources d'inspiration. Je me retrouve un peu dans chacune, dans leurs similarités et dans leurs différences.

Contents:

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Chapter 1:

Approaching the Study of Gender, 'Race' and *Parité* in Contemporary France:

Introduction, Methodology & Conceptual Framework

1) Introduction: What is this thesis about?

Alain Touraine (2000) has asked the question 'Can We Live Together?' His book is just one recent example of a wide debate on how political community can be built and reconciled with differences among its members, what Buber called mutuality, what Linklater has discussed as 'community', or what is sometimes understood as 'social solidarity' in European Union debates (Buber, 1961; Linklater, 1998). Touraine, unlike some others in this debate, emphasises the importance of building community on the basis of a broad recognition of difference amongst its members rather than through the assertion of single claims of universal validity enforced (whether through one form of social power or another) across differences, eclipsing or oppressing them. The recognition of difference, or, more specifically, the realisation of the ideal of a community which is capable at the same time of constituting an effective collectivity while recognising rather than submerging or oppressing difference, is key to Touraine's work. So it is too in that of many other writers and activists in the post-communist, post-liberal, arguably fragmented and allegedly 'postmodern' world in which we have found ourselves since 1989.

Feminist theory and feminist practice have their own distinctive ways of approaching these questions. This thesis is concerned to develop a critique of particular arguments

in French feminism which revolve around these problems. But the arguments which the thesis takes up have a significance not merely for a set of internal debates within feminist scholarship, important though those may be in themselves, but also in the context of a wider set of conversations about the nature of political community. They relate directly to political action, to resistance and community building, as well as to theoretical argument. What all the writers in this broad field have in common, including feminist scholars, is the view that such a community can only be formed by what Hannah Arendt (1973, 1993) identified as self-aware, active citizens who take their differences seriously and who act as well as think democratically. But the specifically feminist arguments, from the relatively liberal Pateman (1989, 1994) to the radical feminism of Irigaray (1994, 2000), see this debate as flawed unless it can recognise both the specific disadvantages experienced and the specific contributions offered by women.

Pateman (1989, 1994) is particularly relevant here in the sense that her image of mutuality expressed through a form of social exchange strikes a direct contrast to the more authoritarian traditions which French political thought has inherited from Rousseau, although her work has had little direct resonance in the relatively distinct context of French feminisms. It may also be common ground that community cannot be realised without genuine democratisation; but how democratisation should work and what it entails ontologically, in thought, in language, and social practice, is all highly contentious. It touches on questions of equality, fraternity and sisterhood (as specifically gendered conceptions), and on the necessity for, or viability of, positive discrimination. And it opens the underlying question of what counts as social justice. All these questions in turn invite more specific solutions in the form of particular

political mechanisms. In French political debate, these proposed mechanisms have included the idea of *parité*,[1] a critique of which forms the core focus of this study.

The central claim underlying the detailed argument of the thesis is that feminist writing offers essential elements to any satisfactory answer to the question of how we can live together. But in thinking through the feminist arguments, we learn to recognise, and, more than 'recognising', to respect, honour and learn from, difference. But at the same time, the specific discourses and debates which have arisen in feminist writing have often obscured or obstructed the realisation of this potential, because of the contradictory character of the debate. The thesis explores these contradictions, setting them in their practical and intellectual contexts, and in particular turning a critical eye on the claims made for *parité*. The thesis argues that feminist attempts to establish *parité* as a basis for an improvement in the capacity of women to participate actively in the French political conversation fail in their objective, and were perhaps bound to fail, because of the ways in which dominant and counter-hegemonic discourses have been constructed. That failure can be understood by counterposing the experience of black women of Caribbean origin living in France to the work of the (mainly white) feminist writers whose metropolitan orientation ignores their black sisters (both in Metropolitan France and in the French Antilles), and thereby fails the test of inclusivity, which feminist discourse establishes (or, as perhaps one might say, pretends to establish), as the key criterion by which it would wish to be judged.

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[1] Whenever possible I prefer to use the French expression *parité*, translated in Anglo-American literature as parity or gender parity. *Parité* refers to the numerical equality between men and women in elected bodies in France. Chapter two gives a brief overview of the origin of the campaign and then examines the debate, often referred to in Anglo-American literature as the 'parity debate'.

When one addresses the issues of mutuality and social cohesion which these debates engage, the question of how to proceed immediately arises. Since the eighteenth century, in writing from Kant (1969) and Mill through to Rawls (1972) and Kymlicka (1995, 1999), liberal writers have proposed universal logics which provide one attempt to handle these questions. These find particular contemporary versions in debates on multiculturalism (discussed in Chapter Three below). Postmodern writers, following Foucault and Derrida,[2] have sought to demolish what they saw as the universalist pretensions of this liberal tradition. They question its foundationalism, its eurocentricism, its potential for rebuilding or reinforcing exclusion, and its attempt to force into a straitjacket of monopolising truths a world of plural epistemologies and plural values. They point to the importance of difference as something which cannot be broken down, dismissed or swept away by universal claims. The thesis draws on the debates between these positions in constructing its argument. But for reasons which will be set out in some detail later, it argues that we can borrow from the postmodern critique and yet still respect certain universal values or principles. The idea that the universal can be brought back into these debates without going back to re-adopt the whole baggage of Kantian epistemology and ethics owes much to the recent work of scholars such as Laclau (1985, 2000) and Mouffe (1985, 1992a, 1992b), who straddle the continental European/Anglo Saxon divide. For example, in their contributions to the edited collection by Butler, Laclau and Zizek's, Contingency, Hegemony and Universality (2000), or in Anne-Marie Smith's study of their work, Laclau and Mouffe. The Radical Democratic Imaginary (1998), the view

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[2]Foucault, M. (1966) Les mots et les choses:une archéologie des sciences humaines -Paris: Gallimard; (1976) Histoire de la sexualité: Vol. 1: La volonté de savoir -Paris: Gallimard; (1989) The archeology of knowledge -London: Routledge; Derrida, J. (1973) Speech and Phenomena -Evanston, IL: North Western University Press; (1976) Of Grammatology -Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press; (1979): Spurs: Nietzsche's style -Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

that some residual universal principles continue to stand against the assaults of more nihilistic or particularist work is upheld. We only need to contrast this position with that taken in work such as Rorty's <u>Contingency, Irony, Solidarity</u> (1989), to trace the outline of an debate which frames any discussion of inter-ethnic or inter-community relations, and which forms a starting point for the more specific analysis of this thesis.

There is also a parallel with more radical writing in the classical political theory tradition, for example by Agnes Heller.[3] The author, who herself is a French student of British social and feminist theory, also sees value in bringing French and Anglo-American feminisms into conversation. French feminist theory, it is suggested, works within constraints which it is hard for its proponents to recognise from 'inside'. French feminism can be interrogated by drawing on ideas from the Anglo-American world, creating a fruitful dialogue, but one in which the specific preferences of French feminist writing comes to be seen as at once more exclusive and more incoherent than seems possible if we only look at it from French intellectual space (and especially if we see it only from a Parisian viewpoint). The thesis argues that, from a different perspective, it becomes much easier to see something that would be apparent in any case to a French-based observer given certain premises, namely that the aspirations of French feminists to seek a more equal and just society are vitiated by their failure to incorporate an effective account of racial difference and to recognise the distinctive experiences, language, exploitations and humiliations of black women in France. Through a reflexive account of the position of black Caribbean women in France, it is argued that French feminist thinking (qualified –significant parts of that diverse body of argumentation) is racist. There is no account of how 'race' and gender interact to

shape identity, the possibility of community and the basis of social action in France, as there is (at least in theory) in Anglo-American feminisms (Lloyd, 1998; Allwood, 1998). Fragmented ideas of 'blackness', *Négritude* and *Créolité* in the debates on 'race' in France do not substitute for an integrated account of class, gender and 'race' in identity formation and community building. One cannot deny that there is a fragmented experience of French society, especially for women who experience complex pressures and subjectivities in the face of complex layers of disadvantage. But these concepts have been important elements defining the boundaries and distinctiveness of debates over the past generation (see Chapter Five). The thesis analyses this failure and explores its consequences. It is beyond its scope to attempt to say what such an integrated account would look like, although by the end of the thesis some idea can be glimpsed. But it is in the central critique of *parité* that the thesis stakes its main argument.

This chapter sets out the basis of the thesis. It has four parts. Firstly, this more general introduction sets out the core research problem and sets it in its intellectual and practical context. Secondly, there is an extended discussion of the epistemology, methodology and methods of the thesis, grounded in the research problem and the explicitly articulated values of the author. Finally, there is a discussion of the underlying concepts of the discourses at play in the thesis as a whole, especially of the French political ideas which make sense of conceptions of *parité* in the context of the republican tradition summarised in the phrase (a constitutive assertion of rights and much more than a mere slogan), 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. This serves only as

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[3]Heller, A. (1987) 'An imaginary Preface to the 1984 Edition of Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism' in Fehér, F. and Heller, A. (eds.) <u>Eastern Left, Western Left: Totalitarianism, Freedom and Democracy</u> -Cambridge: Polity; pp. 243-259.

an introduction to contested concepts, which are explored in a much more complex and sophisticated way later in this thesis.

This chapter therefore sets out the intellectual grounding of the research, explaining the epistemological foundations and the values of the study. This is a piece of explicitly normative writing, and the author's own position is explained and related to the existing literatures in Anglo-American and French feminisms. The methodology and methods used are explained and their coherence with the research problem, general approach and values are made clear. The key concepts and history of the debates underlying the project which underpins the specific thesis are explained. The section also looks briefly at gender theory and at ethnicity, 'race'. Subsequently, in Chapter Two, the study looks more closely at debates about *parité* and equality in France. It aims to explain the particular shape which these debates have taken, what they have sought to include, but also how they have come to be structured so as to exclude particular groups and ideas through their history and social practice. Chapter Three explores the debates on citizenship, 'race' and ethnicity in France, relating them to conceptions of multiculturalism. It compares conceptions of multiculturalism in France and in the Anglo-American contexts. And, like Chapter Two, it links the specific pattern of growth of a set of discourses to their context so as to explain certain outcomes and certain kinds of exclusion. This chapter undertakes to explain why 'multiculturalism' has proved to be so difficult a concept for French liberals and radicals alike even though historically it has seemed to make sense immediately to liberals and radicals in Britain, Canada or the US. Chapter Four uses the ideas derived from the deconstruction of the discourses of *parité* and multiculturalism, and the history of these arguments, to make sense of the experience of French Caribbean

women, both in the French Antilles and in Metropolitan France. Chapter Five then draws the threads together in an extended analysis of the contemporary dilemmas and discourses involved in 'race' and ethnicity in the contemporary French Republic taking the analysis of the experience of French Caribbean women as a test not just of public policy or attitudes but also of the debates and analysis of French feminist writers. The reader might note that there is no separate 'literature review' chapter. The main arguments are integrated into the discussion of the context of the relevant literatures in the course of the first three chapters, including what follows in this one. The thesis' conclusions are incorporated into a final concluding Chapter Six.

2) The claim to originality

The thesis claims to be original on three main grounds, of which the first two are much the most important. I shall summarise the five main points here, and return to consider them much more fully in the final chapter and elsewhere.

The thesis is original in its claim to explore how an analysis of the situation of French Caribbean women in France challenges existing understandings of 'race', ethnicity, gender and identity in contemporary France. There is no comparable study of the situation of French Caribbean women: even if the conclusion reached was that their situation, life experience and response to forms of domination were pretty much the same as those of, say, women of Magrebi origin, it would be original. Indeed, we can say that the position of this group cries out urgently for such a study, both because of its intrinsic interest and because its hitherto being absent tells us something important

about the context of such work in France. However the thesis suggests that their experience and situation is in important respects distinctive and not to be treated as 'the same' as that of others. I have tried to explore this question in the context of the debate over *parité* in particular, and how it has affected (or failed to affect) those women and what other forms of *parité* might mean for them.

Secondly, and of equal importance, the thesis claims that French feminist thought has failed to take account of the actual diversity amongst women in France, and has been seduced by republican mythologies and assumptions even when it has appeared to criticise them. In this dimension of the thesis, the use of the case study of women living in France who have come from the French Caribbean is an illuminating and important case even if the numbers of these women are relatively small compared to other migrant groups, since the exclusion of a particular group of women who are supposed to enjoy full citizenship is not only a failure of the Republic, but, perhaps even more important, it is a failure of a key test for French feminisms.

Thus the debate on *parité* is central to both of the key claims of the thesis, and the analysis of the practical, social, and legal dimensions of the *parité* debate form the most substantial (and most original) parts of the thesis. Hence the central role of a critical examination of the concept of *parité*, which, as I have already noted, forms the main focus of the second chapter.

Thirdly, the thesis draws on a series of in-depth interviews undertaken by the author to support the research and conclusions. [4] These interviews provide a resource of

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[4] A list of these interviews can be found in Appendix A.

evidence. But they also allow French Caribbean women's voices to be heard directly and to set out their own account of their situation in a language which they have chosen. The limited number of these interviews may mean that only cautious conclusions should be drawn from them, but there is no claim to 'scientific' accuracy here, and no suggestion that they are in a formal sense 'representative'. They offer representations of the conditions of life, identities and self-images, and experience of these women.

The thesis is grounded in a methodology which this chapter explains and which is developed in the following two chapters which explain and contextualised the core concepts of *parité* and multiculturalism. In elaborating a critique of these ideas in the contexts of French feminism and French experience, the thesis relates its work to a large body of literature and the debates contained therein. However the thesis does not claim to be original in its methodological stance or epistemological conclusions. The author has developed a synthesis of established approaches, and that synthesis is her own. But it is not elaborated sufficiently to claim originality as 'theory' in itself, although no doubt it stands up and fulfils its essential purpose of grounding the more original parts of the thesis adequately. But methodological or theoretical originality are not major claims of this study. One reason for this is that its author has always primarily been interested in the actual condition of particular women in France, and the motivation for the choices which the thesis embodies have set my agenda.

3) Methodology and history of the research project

This section explains the personal background of the research project which has produced the thesis. That personal history is also a part of the grounding of the project and the starting point in identifying its methodology. In a positivist or objectivist piece of research, it may not be appropriate to explain how one comes to do a particular project in terms of one's own history and experience. But this is not such a project. It is empirical, but not empiricist. And in such a piece of work, which is grounded in a feminist standpoint in which my own values and experience play an important role (which is explained below and elsewhere in the thesis as a whole), it becomes not simply relevant but a significant part of the foundations of the thesis to explain my own orientation towards the work. This I do here. The further significance of this is also developed in the section on 'reflexivity' later in this chapter.

I came to consider *parité* and the question of equality versus difference through studying 'race' and ethnicity. As an undergraduate geography student in an English institution, I became more sensitive to the racialisation of social interactions. I started to note how certain subjects were more readily studied in English universities than in French ones and that ethnic categorisations were widely used in England and America as a means to evaluate the extent of racial discriminations in those countries. The different positions on ethnic categorisations seem to reflect two distinct sets of assumptions. On the one hand, as in England and in the US, inequality and racial discriminations are seen as accepted facts, realities which need to be recognised and confronted, whilst in France the official message is one that promotes equality among

its citizens. Attention to 'race' and/or ethnicity in France is seen as racist for it emphasises cultural differences rather than promotes equality despite them. In England and in the US (or in 'English speaking countries' in general) a more racialised vision of society is seen as the way towards greater integration of marginalised groups. Such difference in official discourse was striking and is one that has never ceased to interest me. It is in this context that I became interested in the debate on *parité*.

The refusal to consider 'communities' or distinct social (and/or socio-cultural) groups by the French state was directly challenged by advocates of *parité*. Whilst these did not constitute a homogeneous group (Chapter Two shows in greater details that *parité* was supported by different political fragments and groups for different reasons), the 'parity debate' became more focused and 'officialised', increasingly co-opted to become part and parcel of the French republican discourse. Although *parité* offered a great opportunity to reconsider questions of equality and difference, political representation and accountability, the debate remained centred around gender equality and difference. Arguments against *parité* included references to other cultural or social differences, but more often than not, such parallels and references were ignored, seen as irrelevant. It can be argued that what might be called the 'officialisation' of *parité*, its incorporation into official politics and legislative frameworks, has profoundly limited the challenge thrown up by advocates of *parité* to the Republic.

My position regarding *parité* changed over time. From a reasonably sympathetic position at the beginning (for the reasons outlined above) I became more and more

aware that the greater officialisation of *parité* caused the debate to become so focused as to become exclusive. I have in fact argued that *parité* was racist in two of my conference papers and in an article published in the journal <u>Modern and Contemporary France</u>.[5] The hope that *parité* would open up a debate around the question of difference in the widest possible sense (and thus most inclusive sense) was crushed. It seems that the 'officialisation' of *parité* (or the official position of *parité*) blossomed at the expense of an emerging racialisation of the official discourse (see Chapter Three). The issue is not that the consideration of 'race' in official discourses is more important than gender. The main concern of the thesis is to question why the two cannot be considered on an equal footing.

Other factors contributed to a greater focus of the project. As mentioned above, my interests had primarily been with the question of 'race' in France. Being a teenager in the 1980s in Lille made me particularly sensitive to racial issues, and *SOS-Racisme* demonstrations and *"touche pas à mon pote"* badges became the expression of my political stand at the time. The 'problematisation' of the Maghrebi populations living in France, whether French or not was particularly frustrating. I had thought of considering women of North-African origins as well as French Caribbean women in my critique of *parité*. However whilst the idea is still valid and would have probably been very interesting, it became more and more apparent that the discrimination problems vis-à-vis the French Caribbean communities were largely ignored in France. I believe that my approach to thinking about the French Caribbean communities and the French Caribbean islands reflected my tertiary education in England. Whilst in

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[5]Parity is about 'Race': A reading of French citizenship through the case of the French Caribbean' in <u>Modern & Contemporary France</u>, Special Issue, February 2002.

England there are modules, research centres dedicated to the study of Caribbean communities in England, Caribbean literature and even academics who describe themselves as Caribbeanists, in France, the Caribbean was largely ignored either in everyday life or in academia. Furthermore, the realisation that issues of racism and integration were linked more often than not with North African communities and Islam was confirmed by a review of the literature and the French press. By comparison, the lack of literature on the same topics but from a French Caribbean perspective determined the decision to concentrate on French Caribbean populations, rather than other immigrants. The case study, which focuses on French Caribbean women (Chapters Four and Five), intends to redress the invisibility of this group in debates around equality, citizenship and rights, and works therefore as an illustration of the critique of *parité* begun in Chapter Two. In the context of its critique of *parité*, the case study also addresses the absence of literature which deals with the implications of constitutional citizenship and equality for this social group in France. Semi-structured interviews were intended to compensate for the lack of existing material concerning this social group and have been used to develop issues already identified as well as to provide material about the ways in which these issues affect the lives of French Caribbean women (see Chapter Four).

As I have already pointed out, the thesis relies to a degree on a body of interview evidence. The interviews are used as important sources for the thesis, although they are not the most important source, as I explain below. In feminist research, and more broadly in qualitative social science in all fields, the use of interviews has come to be recognised as a very important basis for research (Fonou and Cook, 1991; Roberts, 1981; Wolf, 1996). It is accepted –and valued- on certain conditions about how they

are done and how they are grounded. The most important point initially, however, is to stress how interviews enable the researcher to draw on the ideas, the language and the experience of interviewees (Fonou and Cook, 1991). One should not pretend that this is an unmediated process, that the interviewee speaks for herself and says what she most 'deeply' believes: the researcher clearly plays a most important part in shaping the interview, since the interview situation itself is always an arena of power (Chambers, 1997). In that arena, it is usually the interviewer who dominates, and it is a context in which the interviewer has the capacity to frame the interview situation socially and linguistically, as well as shaping how the questions themselves are organised, presented and analysed. It is therefore important for the interviewer/researcher to recognise her limitations and biases, and to make those explicit as part of the methodology of reflexivity (see especially Wolf, 1996, for an exploration of this question; see also the section on reflexivity below).

The past two or three decades have witnessed a steady increase in the sophistication with which interviews have been used in social science research. Interview techniques were once dominated by concerns which came from the positivist agenda and which reflected concerns with the researcher's 'mastery' of the subject (cf Gordon, 1975). Their ability to 'extract' information from the research subject was seen as a kind of struggle to gain truth against the wishes, and perhaps even the interests, of interviewees. Such 'masculine' concerns have been critiqued both by feminist researchers (Roberts, 1981; Gillham, 2000), who have led the move towards more sophisticated and human-centred research styles, and by researchers from other contexts but with comparable concerns (Mischler, 1991, Atkinson, 1998). Writers such as Sandra Harding (1991) have set the stage within which feminist research

develops its own epistemology, which puts an emphasis on women's concerns, women's positionality and their distinctive experiences and standpoints (and note that these are plural –there is no suggestion of lumping women together in an essentialised group here). To do this in research practice, one has to have access to those experiences and ideas, and qualitative interviewing of different kinds is the main way in which one can achieve this (Mischler, 1991; Wengraf, 2001, Fonou and Cook, 1991).

The mainstream literature on interviews suggests that there are a number of different kinds of interview (Gillham 2000; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Quantitative interview research uses a (relatively) larger number of interviews in order to generate research data which is statistically significant, and this methodology entails an analysis of how conclusions can be analysed in so far as the data is representative and in so far as it is statistically well grounded (Gordon, 1975; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). If the sample is carefully chosen and the limitations carefully explored, it is possible to do this kind of interviewing with a smaller sample, but the principle of statistical testability remains the core criterion of a quantitative analysis. Focus group interviews shift the emphasis more towards a qualitative approach looking at the views of a group of people who are encouraged to speak openly. For political or advertising purposes, this can be important where statistically grounded quantitative interviews fail to reveal an interpretation of peoples' motivations for decisions to buy a product or vote in a particular way. In-depth interviews in general look at the details of peoples' experience, and they aim to capture not just what they did or said but how they felt about it, and how they understood their actions and the context in which those actions made sense. Action research proper is where the

observer/researcher conducts her work while employed or active amongst the group she is researching (as teacher, voluntary worker, nurse, executive, cleaner etc), and although all interview based research is 'active' in some sense (rather than passive), the idea of 'action research' is reserved for a particular kind of participant observation which is not relevant to this particular study (Gubrium and Holstein, 157-161). Life story interviews aim to uncover in detail how people see their lives and how particular aspects of their lives which are the subject of research fit into a life story. Widely used in women's history, but also in other kinds of research (for example amongst nurses in research into heath care practice, or in research on victims of abuse), life story interviews provide a framework for some of the most sensitive and creative interviewing techniques (Atkinson, 1998).

The interviews which are recorded later in this thesis could perhaps be described as quasi-life story interviews, although I prefer another description (see the next paragraph). They generate a narrative, and they touch on important aspects of the life story of those who speak (following Wengraf, 2001 as well as Fonou and Cook 1991). They were, in several cases, long enough to allow the respondents to talk at some length about their experiences. But they needed to be much longer and consistently more guided by the respondents' agenda to count strictly speaking as a life story methodology. They create a narrative which I have tried to treat with the utmost respect; but I have to acknowledge that the agenda remains my agenda, which is concerned with *parité* and with a set of socio-political questions which are formally probably too 'academic' to relate directly to the women I interviewed straightforwardly. Thus the use of the interview evidence throughout the thesis involves some interpretation, and I must recognise that I hold a power position in

doing this work, so that my research is in danger of confirming what I hoped to find rather than opening new question unless I specifically adopt strategies to avoid that, which I have sought consistently to do (Chambers, 1997: 93-94).

The interviews here are therefore better described as long, semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews are driven by the researcher's agenda and use as nearly as possible an identical agenda in order to generate comparable data, for example for marketing purposes. These are closer to the positivist based interviews of the quantitative research noted above, and may even be subject to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Semi-structured interviews open a conversation from which ideas and arguments can flow which more freely recognise the contribution of the respondent. Her voice, her agenda and her own narrative can be infused into the interview exchange, although the basic focus of the research is not changed. And her language, and her concepts, provide a basis for the conversation so that the conversation is a less unequal and more open exchange. This may seem to amount almost to a recognition of research as listening to gossip. But in response to this point, one might say that gossip is a part of the construction of social life, and in certain circumstances provides important evidence for researchers. However, although I would stand by the idea of using gossip (which is itself a political and gender laded expression) as a basis for research in general, that is not the main target of this particular piece of work. But the overhearing of gossip or private argument can form a part of qualitative research, and in at least one case was an important part of ethnographic research (which contributed to the history of development of the techniques of interviewing). So-called 'snoopers' were used by the organisation Mass Observation, which applied ethnographic methods to market research in the 1930s,

and which was then taken over in 1940 by British government. During the Second World War, the 'snoopers' were asked to keep a diary of comments overheard on buses or in queues or restaurants and pubs, which then formed a basis for a rich but controversial source of social comment, initially used by the government to analyse public 'morale' but then used as a resource by sociologists (Harrisson 1976).

In her study of women PhD candidates, Kerlin explored how far the stresses on women struggling to complete PhDs could be explained using a feminist analysis (Kerlin, 1997). She used in-depth interviews to generate the data from which she analysed the life experience of a small group of women as they worked their way through a doctoral programme. Her research shows key strengths in a feminist research methodology which uses interviews in the ways that are adapted for this thesis. She brings out differences between different women's experience, and the differences in how they interpret and make sense of these experiences. In an interview situation, there is therefore a double sense making process going on. The respondent is making sense of her life, or some aspect of it, sometimes possibly for the first time (or for the first time in that particular articulated, way). The researcher is observing her (the respondent's) struggle to make sense of whatever the subject is, while at the same time adding her own layer of sense making and her own agenda to what is at issue. There is therefore a dialectical process, especially where the questions are open ended or semi-structured, in the interview process, a dynamic exchange, so that the respondent has opportunities to add her own insights and her own interpretations to the basic research project. Thus in the case of this particular work, I found that while I did the interviewing recorded and discussed mainly in chapter five, my own attitude towards the research evolved and changed, and the

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questions I asked both changed and became more sophisticated. It is only fair to note that the thesis would be different (and less developed) in intellectual analysis as well as in content if it had not been for those encounters. Although there were not many interviews, they often lasted some time, and they play a qualitatively very significant role in the research which I undertook.

In a different context, Beauman (1999) describes how women's lives are shaped by patterns of similar yet different beliefs and life expectations, in looking at a small devout community of evangelical Christian women whom she interviewed in depth over a period of months. These interviews show how qualitative techniques are able to identify the relationships between peoples' self-definitions and their behaviour. But it also, and this was a less intentional aspect of the research, opens questions of how, through the very process of self definition, people enter a realm of resistance where they assert a subjectivity and set out on courses of their own. In the case of the interviews which I did, I was able to record what were often quite small, but nonetheless significant, acts of resistance amongst the women I spoke to, while at the same time opening a context where they could articulate more formal or explicit political views about their situations.

Both Kerlin (1997) and Beauman (1999) illustrate in actual research practice how it is possible to find a sympathy with interview subjects, how it is possible to research with that engagement, and yet through reflexive analysis and careful organisation of the research find valid and coherent results from a qualitative methodology based in large part on a small number of carefully conceived but open ended interviews.

This thesis thus uses a mixture of qualitative interview techniques. It does so in the context of a reflexive understanding of the research process and in recognition of the need to protect the dignity as well as the words and contexts proper to each interview. I now turn to consider how I actually used the interviews in particular cases, how I identified interview subjects, and what my engagement with the women I interviewed was. I should also note that as well as talking to French Caribbean women, I also conducted a small number of interviews with academic specialists in the field, which enabled me to check on the value and distinctiveness of the argument that I was developing as I worked on the research for the dissertation.

4) The use of semi-structured interviews

As mentioned above, the decision to concentrate on French Caribbean communities made a profound impact on the direction of the research. One major change was the consideration of semi-structured interviews with French Caribbean women in Paris. Establishing contact with these communities proved relatively difficult as the research trips tended to be during the holiday season. Nonetheless, thanks to Pierre Lacroix, a very active (white) French Caribbean priest, I was able to meet a few (black) French Caribbean women from his parish. The interviews that I conducted were not many, and they have a number of weaknesses, which I observe in the discussion of them.

These interviews thus had a profound impact on the direction of the project, giving it more focus. Chapters Four and Five reflect this. The choice of the interview method was also crucial. Had I not let them speak to allow a relatively 'normal flow' of

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conversation, I may never have had the chance to appreciate their real concerns. It is indeed through my meetings with these women (and one family) that I realised just how peripheral their concerns for greater 'fairness' in political representation between men and women were. For these women, their experience of racial discriminations was much more significant. Still, a couple of women saw *parité* as a means to a very different aim. These women were middle-class and professionals. They saw *parité* as the seed for the establishment of a French position on positive discrimination. One woman, an active member of a feminist grassroots organisation endorsing *parité*, told me that she could not overtly admit to supporting *parité* on the ground that it may give rise to similar demands from ethnic communities, for she would otherwise give 'ammunition' to the enemies (that is the anti-paritists). The responses I got from these women thus led me to investigate further the idea that as French citizens French Caribbean people were discriminated against and more often than not were seen as immigrants or 'blacks' (see Chapter Five). The overall disregard for *parité* was not a great surprise, but the consideration of *parité* as a serious strategy for greater positive discrimination policies in France was. However, further considering black and French Caribbean identities (see Chapter Five) I became more receptive to what can be defined as an emerging French black movement. The contexts of *parité* and the emerging multicultural political discourse could be seen as responsible for this. One major argument of this thesis is that French feminism does not depart from the official discourse and continues to promote whiteness as the French norm. *Parité* does not challenge this directly and all debates it might have generated were shut down, especially as *parité* became 'officialised', that is part of the official discourse. Nonetheless an emerging black movement may suggest that the official message

became distorted: grassroots can see in *parité* an open door to further positive discrimination policies and notably the consideration of quotas.

These interviews also contributed to a greater awareness of my positioning and brought issues of 'whiteness' and 'blackness' in the French context to my attention. Before meeting these women I would never have described/defined myself by my skin colour.

Setting up the interviews was organised by telephone calls through the priest mentioned above. After contacting him, he spoke to a few women in his parish on my behalf and then gave me the telephone numbers of the women interested in meeting me. As the whole set-up was organised by phone, these women had no idea whether I was white, black, English or French. Having told the priest that I was studying in England was understood to mean that I was English myself. The telephone conversations I had with these women in order to arrange a meeting were as interesting as those we had over coffee for the meeting themselves.

'Whiteness' is not something white people are going to think about much in France: it is not an issue, it is taken for granted (Collins, 1991). However the promotion of colour blindness is done according to white rules. I realised at that time that I was no better than anyone else in that I had come in with very white assumptions, what is more carrying with me a republican discourse that does not recognise colour and ethnicity.

Until white people can really accept that being white offers distinct advantages that are not often seen as such, since we (white people) generally merely consider them 'normal', existing race relations would not be successfully challenged (Weedon, 1999). This question is taken up again at the end of this chapter and in Chapter Five.

In the section entitled 'Reflexivity in Social and Feminist Research' further issues arising from using French Caribbean women as a case study are explored, notably the extent to which I can present their case and the extent to which I cannot possibly represent them. But simply the word 'using' in this context implies a problematic relationship, which needs to be explored with care.

Participating in a number of conferences also enabled me to further focus the research and provided good feed-back in formal sessions as well as enabling me to check my ideas and conclusions with others in the field more informally. At a Caribbean conference in London,[6] I was able to present the ideas of visibility/invisibility and the emergence of a Black French movement, ideas explored in Chapter Five. The importance given to the concept of invisibility grew from that conference. After that conference I was able to articulate better the idea of invisibility versus discriminations based on 'visible' differences. In Chicago, I presented a paper on *parité* and 'race' to try out the legitimacy of one of my core argument.[7] In Quebec, the paper was focused on the absence of French Caribbean women's writings from French feminist research.

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[6]'French citizenship and the invisibility of the French Caribbean communities', *Comparing 'Colonialisms' in the Caribbean in the 21st Century*, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, April 6, 2000.

[7]'Parité, 'Race' and Representation in French Politics', *Politics, Rights & Representation*, The University of Chicago, Centre for Gender Studies, October 14-17, 1999.

Each time I walked away from these conferences with my arguments clearer and a feeling I was going in the right direction.[8]

5) The research problem and epistemology of the thesis

If we return to Touraine's question, 'How can we live together?' there is already a tradition of argument in response. Liberal writers, working originally in the context of a reaction against monarchy, authoritarian absolutism and the insistence on orthodox belief in the period before the enlightenment, formulated an answer in terms of rights. These rights could be understood as operating in two contexts, firstly a political constitution, but secondly a vision and a discourse of human nature. This enlightenment answer is coded in terms of ideas of reason originally claimed to be universally applicable.[9] For Kant (1969), as for all subsequent liberals, the test of reason replaced the test of authority. It therefore became essential to interrogate conceptions of reason and the categories of rational judgement. These ideas and arguments have continued to shape debate on political and social relations, whether in writers such as Habermas, who draws extensively on Kant's work, or on those who appear to be reacting against them[10] but who nonetheless see Kant as a key reference point in the development of political argument. The liberal debate of the eighteenth century creates the republican discourse which is explored below and in which key ideas of rights and mutuality have context and meaning, discussed especially in

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[8]'Political Representation in France: Gendered and Racialised Perspectives', Citizenship and Identity in France (panel), *Joint Conference, Canadian Political Science Association and Société québecoise de science politique,* Conference Centre, Quebec, July 29 - August 1, 2000.

[9]Kant, I. (1969) <u>Critique of Judgement</u> -Cambridge: CUP.

Chapters Two and Three. Although Kant came to be seen as a rather conservative figure in the late twentieth century, this is not necessarily so: as Arendt (1993) continues to maintain, Kant's vision of reason and freedom can still strike at the heart of tyranny of different kinds, even though we might not see them as sufficient in themselves. Certainly, for Habermas (1984), Kant has remained a major presence. His influence remains so powerful in critical or more radical thinking, partly, as a result of the way in which Habermas formulates his arguments. This is a theme which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The main conceptions of the Enlightenment have their place in founding and shaping French political discourse in particular, because of the enduring impact of the French revolution. This impact is explained in terms of ideas of Republic and citizenship later in this chapter. Contemporary inheritors of the Enlightenment tradition include Habermas (1984), who develops the idea that reason is expressed through dialogue, and that dialogic forms of knowledge help to provide checks on the claims that we might make. A long tradition of liberal and critical theory literature argues that knowledge is provisional and subject to change. But dialogue which allows each participant in a conversation to speak and to listen provides a rein on the free play of interests which might otherwise dominate knowledge claims. This creates the possibility of dialogic understanding, which is to say a form of critical interpretive knowledge. Here, the tradition in which Habermas talks about dialogue and the search for freedom through dialogue ("perfect speech situations") echoes also the work of critics such as Bakhtin (1981), who suggest that it is through actual conversations or exchanges which take the form of conversation (as for example the

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[10]Foucault, M. 'What is Enlightenment?', Rabinow, P. (1991) The Foulcault Reader -London: Penguin.

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relationship between reader and text in a novel) that we strike dialogues through which meanings and practices are created or reproduced. Bakhtin's work is equally important because it has shaped a literary tradition and because it has in turn passed into the work of social theorists like Derrida and Ricoeur, from whom it has passed on into recent political discourse analysis, as the work of Van Dijk (1998, 2000, 2001), discussed below, shows.

Meanings here are also not fixed; they are in question, made and remade by authors, text and readers at least to some extent independently of each other. Feminist forms of knowledge rest within a comparable tradition, where knowledge claims are advanced cautiously and tested in dialogue with others in the certainty that even if a claim seems to stand up for a time it will eventually be shown either to be mistaken altogether or at least to need revising in the light of a changed context or changed sense of values (Butler, 1992; 1993). If meanings and interpretations are in question, we do not therefore have to abandon any attempt at interpretation. Instead, we need to understand the dialogues and speech situations in which analysis takes place and through which it acquires its meanings. Reflexivity and critical dialogue, as explored in the next section, are thus key aspects of this research.

6) Reflexivity

The core of the idea of reflexivity is that research should be grounded in a self-critical sense which provides a certain kind of test of the value of knowledge claims which is intrinsically absent if the researcher does not seek to examine her/his own motives

and relationship to the research project as a whole as well as to the specific knowledge claims they make. Positivism claims that the empirical world can be understood, perhaps not easily, but without the difficulties of examining one's own relationship to it since the real world is external to any observer and independent of her/him. Reflexivity matters most where, as in this thesis, a writer aims to be empirical but rejects empiricism. For reflexivity is, as Giddens (1993) in particular argues, the logical consequence of the rejection of positivist research programmes. Reflexivity provides a check, alongside and as part of a critical orientation to the subject studied, which enables truth claims to be justified (providing they are made in the spirit of caution or modesty implied above). It is therefore important to explain the commitment to reflexivity in this study alongside and in parallel to three other related claims. Firstly, the claim to deal with a real world which matters and in which pain and exploitation exist alongside a real possibility of opposite qualities. Secondly the claim that an empirical study can get to and understand the conditions under which inequality and exploitation take place. Thirdly, and implicit already in the first two claims, a claim that critical knowledge is practical and possible without being limited to game-playing, that critical knowledge can also make a difference. Fourthly, that to be critical and effective, we must also recognise that knowledge is provisional, that it rests on a reflexive self-understanding on the part of those who make the knowledge claims, and that knowledge claims need to be dialogic, to be couched in a sense that they will be lodged in a dialogue with earlier work which they critique and will in turn be criticised. The test here is not, *pace* Popper, that knowledge is subject to refutation, but that it is subject to critique (Popper, 1972). In the same way, we do not test a bicycle to destruction before we get on it; we hope the manufacturers have already tested many bikes (some perhaps to destruction) to ensure the safety of the

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one we bought. But we do test the tyres and check the seat position and the brakes. And if we are not sure, we don't bin the bike: we ask the expert woman in the bike shop. In this sense critical knowledge is pragmatic as well as practical.

All this sounds a very great deal to argue. But it is not, at least in so far as what it amounts to is working within a perfectly recognisable convention. And in grounding a reflexive study of French feminism in this approach, the thesis is working within a recognisable convention of critical theory. One way to ground the work is therefore simply to refer to these conventions, perhaps in a footnote. But a thesis needs to be more explicit and deliberate than this.

A rejection of positivism and empiricism rests on a well established argument that we cannot rely on our unmediated sense experience. But the basis of this thesis is that established by Martin Hollis (1994), and draws directly on a neat version of the critique of positivism which Hollis argued. This is not to say that all knowledge claims are thus necessarily impossible or that we cannot gain effective knowledge of a real world. But it does assert that the claims of positivism are (a) over-ambitious (b) mistaken (c) unnecessary in order to address the world in which we live (d) grounded in a mistaken sense of the superiority of certain procedures (i.e. observation and experiment) which are given the privilege of a sacred rite and not in fact interrogated as the claim of reason to which positivism pretends might suggest. However it is not necessary to maintain this critique in order to establish the grounds for this thesis. It is only necessary to argue that, *either instead of positivism or alongside it*, and equally validly, one can pursue meanings and understandings through the examination of discursive formations. The approach taken here, which amounts to an alternative to

positivist methodology, is justified and interesting in itself and, in so far as positivism might be in question, offers a viable alternative, for the project to stand as it is.

The idea that all valid knowledge is critical is rooted originally in Kant's metaphysics of judgement, notably in the Critique of Judgement (1969) and the Critique of Pure Reason (1933). This notion has passed into critical theory in the twentieth century drawing from Marx. The concept of critical theory (Geuss, 1981) was developed through the writing of the Frankfurt School, especially through the influence of Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment (1979). It influenced both continental and Anglo-American feminist writing through an engagement with Marx, and from writers like Arendt (1973, 1993) and Marcuse (1969). French feminism has particularly close relations with Marxism of various kinds, more so than American feminist writing, and this link to the conventions, values and assumptions of critical theory is important both to the writers studied in this thesis and in the thesis' argument. Critical knowledge since Kant has focused on the assumption that the goal of knowledge is a form of emancipatory enlightenment. This emancipation is immanent in all critical theory, but its nature is not always spelled out. In what we might now see as 'classical' radical feminism (i.e. the literature of the 1960s and 1970s), there is an assumption that emancipation takes a specific form, liberation from patriarchy.[11] More recent feminists have worried about the ways in which liberation from patriarchy might interact with liberation in other respects, which has been the basis of some of their criticisms, while standpoint feminism, with which this thesis might identify itself more closely, has followed Sandra Harding (1987, 1991) in

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[11]Greer, G. (1971) The Female Eunuch -London: Paladin; Millett (1977) Sexual Politics (second edition) -London: Visage.

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identifying emancipation in broader (but also more ill-defined) terms. What is always at issue in different forms of critical theory is the idea that knowledge can in itself form a basis for human emancipation, that it is possible to transcend the limitations of 'mere' knowledge into action, but also that knowledge changes our consciousness and so our relationship to the world even if it does not lead to 'action' of a very sharply defined character.

Thus the argument reaches the point of being able to claim that feminist thought with which it identifies is critical knowledge, and that 'critical knowledge is dialogic, provisional, above all reflexive. The three ideas are so closely related they cannot in practice be separated. To say that knowledge is dialogic is to say that we can check the validity of our claims in dialogue with others; neither we nor they claim superior authority. Indeed, the 'authority' of the author, or rather the claimed or pretended authority of the author, is put in abeyance in an equal dialogue from which we might hope a less uncertain but never wholly certain sense of 'truth' might emerge. But all this assumes that there is no 'absolute' truth, and that judgements and claimed facts make sense in the context of a provisional understanding. The weight of critical theory since the nineteenth century, not only in Marxian traditions but also in the work of anarchist inspired writers like Feyerabend (1978), in argument derived from Wittgenstein's theory of language and certainty,[12] or in postmodern or liberal argument in writers such as Hayden White (1978) or Richard Rorty (1989, 1995, 1998), all suggests that knowledge is always not merely contingent and open to challenge, but ontologically provisional. We cannot be as sure about what we know as theories of knowledge once claimed. One consequence of this, and this is a point

on which Habermas, Foucault and many others agree, is that we should not spend time trying to establish spurious grounds for *certain knowledge*, but that we should proceed with knowledge building endeavours on the understanding that whatever we claim to be knowledge will nonetheless count as 'knowledge' even though (and also *because*) its provisional character is always acknowledged. Knowledge is, the claim goes, conventional; therefore if one wants to check the validity of a knowledge claim one must first know and check the conventional form which it uses.

Critical knowledge is capable of being practical knowledge. This is an important principle of much second and third generation critical theory, even though Habermas appeared to rule it out in his distinction between practical, hegemony-serving knowledge and critical counter-hegemonic knowledge (Habermas, 1984). The reasons why Habermas is mistaken are also explored in Richard Wyn Jones (ed.), 2000, Critical Theory and International Relations. As Farrands (2002) and others have argued,[13] the distinction between critical and practical knowledge which Horkheimer and Adorno (1979) developed and which flowers especially in work influenced by Habermas is a false and weakening distinction: the point, as Marx and Gramsci suggested a long time ago, is to find epistemologies for both. And as Petersen (1996) in particular maintains, this distinction is generally already demolished in feminist theory and practice. One key moving force of feminist social theory is the claim that practical emancipatory action is not limited to the classroom or the editor's desk, and

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[12]Kuhn, T.S. (1970) The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (enlarged edition) -Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

[13]Farrands, C. (2002) 'Being critical about 'being critical' in global political economy', in Abbott, J. and Worth, O. (eds), Critical Theory and International Political Economy, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002, forthcoming.

this attitude is adopted in the concerns and well as the methods which shape this thesis.

In conclusion to this section, we can say that the implication of all this for the methodology and methods of this study are now clear and precise. Knowledge claims deal with a 'real' world, but the certainty with which we make those claims has to be modest, circumspect, non-hegemonic; they have to recognise the provisional nature of both evidence and conclusions. Yet they can be set up as worthwhile claims, part of a dialogue which can (one may hope) yield truthful argument and just critique. But it follows from this discussion that the methodology must necessarily be critical; critique is not merely a choice or an add-on. And there is an assumed (explicit or implicit) dialogue, a conversation into which the research enters, which has its own conventions and criteria by which the research is to be judged. The researcher has her own place in this. That is not unproblematic, but it is possible providing she recognises her place, her relationship to her subject (and her role/position in interviews in particular) and the impact of her voice in the dialogue. So there is no claim to empiricist truth or positivist objectivity here. The knowledge claims which the thesis might hope to generate are firmly grounded in a normative approach which recognises, and exploits, the author's values and relationship to the subject of study. In this sense, the research is grounded in a reflexivity which links the conclusions of Giddens's (1993) <u>New Rules</u> with other critical theory and with specific feminist debates and methods, especially in standpoint theory as illustrated by Petersen, Harding and many others.

7) Core concepts

Concepts used in the reading of texts and the interpretation of what people say make sense therefore in a context, whether we think that the relevant context is more their use value or the context of social action and social theatre or dialogue within which they can be situated. Furthermore, most words that matter in political debate have uncertain or changing meanings. Meanings change over time, and take on different sense in different debates. But key concepts in political discourse are often, one might even say normally, what Gallie (1956) and Connolly (1993) have called 'essentially contested' concepts. That is to say that the dispute over their meaning is an essential part of the ways in which they are to be understood. As one result of this state of affairs, there is no fixed meaning to be ascribed to them. What matters is their use at particular times and in the context of given social relations, history and discursive practice. It follows that the researcher who wants to resort to this vocabulary has to recognise their conventional use-meanings and to map out her understanding of them under these heading. It is therefore important to trace how they have been used, what discourses they contribute to and perhaps constitute, and what significance they have been given. In this way, we can also understand how they relate together, and so set the conceptual stage for the later discussion in the thesis.

In tracing the understanding of basic ideas used throughout the thesis, the following discussion in this chapter seeks to delimit the broad boundaries of meanings of words, setting them in their social and historical context. It does so at a modest level, and there is no claim of 'originality' here. This chapter lays groundwork; later chapters develop the claim to originality. But it is nonetheless an important task to provide the

intellectual and linguistic setting for the principal ideas, such as *parité* and multiculturalism, which the thesis takes up in a more significant way. This is done here by looking at the following key concepts: Republic and republicanism; citizenship; identity, gender; ethnicity and 'race', and invisibility.

Each of the core ideas examined below is socially constructed and subject to continuing debate (Connolly, 1993). This is probably obvious in the case of the first two, since they are constituted out of a set of modern political arguments and specifically located (historically and geographically) contexts. Both the idea of the Republic and of republican citizenship have roots in classical political theory (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and so on) but each has been re-thought for the modern industrial world in the context of the formation of the modern state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the sections below and the literature to which they refer point out. The classical tradition is relevant here also because many of the writers used throughout the thesis (such as Pateman, Connolly and Arendt) use the classical literature as a contemporary touchstone of debate. But equally, notions of gender, 'race' and ethnicity are constructed in particular contemporary contexts. They both reflect and constitute power discourses, and the discussion in this chapter and in the thesis as a whole is designed to explore how those power discourses operate and how they might be opened up and subverted. Here too, there is a history of the core ideas. But here the context is the post-colonial, post-industrial state in which class relations have been understood to be in decline, or at the very least in question, and other forms of allegiance and mutuality have come to seem of increasing importance. As Nira Yuval-Davies points out (1997; 1998), these conceptions do not operate in isolation: class, ethnicity, nation, gender, sexuality and religious and regional affiliation need to

be understood in interaction together. In particular, gender and ethnicity interact, and one central argument of the whole thesis is that to see relationships as gendered without taking account of the dimension of ethnicity as equally important is as inadequate as earlier twentieth century debates which tended to concentrate exclusively on class.

The point is that while liberal authors accept that communities and individuals have 'multiple identities' and multiple allegiances, they raise two problems in their account. Firstly, by comparison with the authors used here, and this thesis itself, they tend to see identities as stable and fixed. But identities are, as many of the authors cited above maintain, more negotiated, more uncertain and more subject to revision. Butler in particular shows how identities may be more subject to revision as a result of the agency of those who hold them (Butler, 1997), although it may reasonably be objected that her attempt to refound an idea of agency is achieved at the cost of a tendency to neglect enduring structural power relations. Secondly many of the authors who suggest that people hold multiple identities see that as a kind of 'answer'. But the next question that must immediately follow is: how do these identities relate together? Yuval Davies' major intellectual achievement is to open and explore that question; but she only does so in a British context, and no-one except, in a qualified way, Wieviorka (1997, 1998) and Touraine (2000) have taken the same line of inquiry in the French case. The thesis (as its very title points out) suggests that we need to read arguments about equality, and about different versions of *parité* in social and legal relations in the context of ongoing understandings and dialogues of multiculturalism, however that idea can be translated into a French context. Chapter Three seeks to explain why the absence of 'race' from French feminism is significant

and how it has occurred. The thesis as a whole is an attempt to redress this significant lacuna in the literature.

The concept of the Republic

The thesis argues –or perhaps better accepts the view that- context is critical in an understanding of the meaning of behaviour and speech acts. And the key critical context of contemporary French political behaviour and discourse is always that of the modern republican tradition. As Hargreaves, among many others, points out, the republican tradition provides a 'prevailing tradition' within which nationalism and citizenship, as well as attitudes towards 'foreigners' and migration are located (Hargreaves, 1995: 160). For that reason alone, the discussion of concepts starts with the Republic. In this section, I shall explore first of all the 'macro-context', the idea of the Republic as such, and then look at the French context. I shall do so only briefly since the idea is much more fully developed in the discussions in Chapters Two and Three. It is important to note that even though there are important very distinctive qualities about French conceptions of the Republic, nonetheless its contemporary commentators work within a classical and western tradition to which even the most recent or postmodern authors continually refer; it is therefore important to trace its origins and main themes, however briefly. The idea of the 'Republic' is marked from the start by contradictions, at least when we consider the concept in detail. The word itself has Roman origins, and suggests a shared 'thing', <u>res publica,</u> or a set of activities which a group of citizens pursue in common, usually taken to be grounded in law. But the original Greek concept, to which the Latinate phrase has come to refer,

connotes more the group of citizens engaged in that common endeavour than its results (Sabine, 1963). This tension between theory and practice in the definition of the Republic and of republicanism persists right up to the present. For centuries, the image of the Republic was shaped on the one hand by Plato's writing, and on the other by the 'lost' Roman Republic, which disappeared when Augustus ended the Civil Wars through the foundation of the Roman Empire. In The Discourses, Machiavelli (1974) expressed this widely held view of nostalgia for the lost Roman Republic as a model of uncorrupted, citizen-led government with regular institutions and a relatively small body of citizens. This image is also sustained in literature, including More's Utopia, Shakespeare's Coriolanus and Julius Caesar and the work of Montaigne, Erasmus and Racine, as well as in historical and political writing, and remained powerful throughout the western Renaissance, whether or not it would now be seen as an accurate account of the First Century BC Republic or whether it merely represents a powerful but unhistorical myth (Sabine, 1963: 88). To writers following Machiavelli, the Republic was a viable alternative both to the mob rule of democracy and the unaccountable authoritarianism of tyranny, identified with the rule of kings of whatever personal qualities. The essential qualities of a Republic, captured by Montesquieu as well as many other writers, including the authors of the U.S. Constitution and the Federalist Papers, echoes directly into recent French political discourse (see Chapter Three). In the eighteenth century, it already emphasises the rule of law, the careful following of a constitution, a concern with equal access to justice, and a rejection of arbitrary government (Sabine, 1963: 542ff). These concerns were to obtain among all citizens. In classical authors, these would not include barbarians, originally a Greek word for all non-Greek outsiders, slaves, children or women. It should therefore be stressed that in this sense the modern Republic has

always had a clear exclusionary ethos. As Connolly has also argued, modern liberal republicanism tends towards the eradication of difference in ways which, for quite different reasons, have a comparable effect in subsuming differences to all-pervading goals and ontologies (Connolly, 1991: 92).

This image of classical republicanism was sharpened and refined in the eighteenth century, when a further element was added which became an essential element of later republican thought. Following the divisions and social chaos of the wars of religion, and the repression of the 'absolutism' which brought those wars to an end across most of Europe, the post Treaty of Westphalia (1648-9) settlement linked unquestionable bonds to a given religion with the authority of monarchy. Republicans, anxious to replace monarchy, came to adopt increasingly sceptical positions on religion, and anti-clericalism became linked to republican politics (Sabine, 1963: 551-7, 570-582).

These debates found a theoretical focus in the writings of Montesquieu and Rousseau, usually seen as the intellectual step-parents of the French Revolution (Sabine, 1963). But republicanism had many prophets, most of whom traced the sources of their ideas in the classical thought which provided a common background of language and assumptions for all educated people in Europe. They found a practical force in the debates which surrounded the American Revolution, and which undoubtedly had profound reverberations in France from 1789 onwards. The American Revolution embodied a struggle against the British, which lasted until the end of hostilities in 1783. But the military conflict partially concealed a debate which continued until 1789, when the Bill of Rights was agreed, and in some senses has continued in the US, often through constitutional dissent, ever since. The American debate on the

character of the Republic continued to shape European argument up to, and after, the introduction of the civil rights legislation awarding equal rights for black communities, for women and for the disabled in the 1960s and 1970s, which also drew on US experience. All this is to say that there was no firm consensus on the precise nature of the Republic in the US. But at least three ideas from the US debate matter in terms of later discussion in France, and, without pretending to sum up the whole of US constitutional experience, it is worth noting these three elements here. They include firstly an emphasis on the active role of the citizen as participant in democracy, as voter, but also as potential candidate and as someone engaged in a continual conversation about the rights and duties of the polity. Secondly, the rise of populism gave to the rhetoric of 'citizenship' a sense of a dynamic mass politics, something which is reflected later in Europe in the rise of industrial social movements and urban political activity. This is especially emphasised in the more popular strands of US democracy that found their voice in the 1830s in Jacksonian democracy and was subsequently an important part of radical democracy, of 'free soil' and 'free silver', but also of popular racism and anti-communism. In France, it has found a focus in radicalisms of different kinds, some of which continue to try to combine radicalism with nationalism and republicanism, as Leruth (1998) has persuasively argued. Thirdly, these active citizens had a direct involvement in government which, in electing officials from presidents and sheriffs to dog-catchers and bailiffs, came much closer to direct democracy. Active citizenship, populism and active involvement in the construction of the Republic remains a potent US image which most European democracies treat cautiously (discussed in the next section of this chapter), but European political writers acquired the idea from visits or residence in the US, not least in the case of Hannah Arendt and Herbert Marcuse. The 'open

Republic' of participating citizens might sometimes seem to tend to fascism in its populism, but it is (relatively) ignorant of the social hierarchies and social obstacles which held back the development of democracy in Europe. When liberal, socialist and catholic democrats reconstructed western European republicanism after the war they turned to this American model (perhaps sometimes also with a shudder), and the model of a more open Republic recurs in France in at least some respects after 1945, when the Republic was certainly much less closed or socially or regionally exclusive than it had been before 1936. Among other things, this 'new' vision of republicanism seemed to be more open to women. But Diamond (2000) suggests how limited the acceptance of women as active participants in political and social life beyond their mere appearance at the ballot box was after 1946. The Liberation, she shows, did not transform the position of women in the Republic, and the Republic retained its male-centred power and elite structures in practice as well as its highly masculinised form in theory.

It matters here to recognise that the Republic has not traditionally been identified with democracy. It is not an historical accident that the names of the two opposing US political parties stress respectively their democratic and republican roots, although in practice both parties are both democratic and republican in major respects. In Habermas' recent writing on the nature of the republican ideal, constitutionalism and representativeness are seen as two contrasting faces of democracy. To follow the rule of law is to give oneself into the hands of law-makers and bureaucrats, to extol the weberian state. But this negates the principle of representativeness. Habermas (1994) has pointed out the instability of the balance struck between constitutionalism and democracy in his more recent writings, and as such called into question the capacity

of the modern Republic. He actually seems to have in mind primarily federal systems such as Germany and the US, but the argument remains pertinent to all would-be democratic polities.

The Republic in this image has a written constitution which is periodically agreed by, or revised by, the citizen body. This process of constitutional revision aims to strike the balance between constitutionalism, effective government, representativeness and accountability. For Habermas, it is the transparency of the rule-making procedure as much as its rationality which assures the continuing republican nature of the form of government (Habermas, 1984: 44-48). This argument about how the Republic constitutes itself (or contradicts itself and in so doing undermines its own rational foundations) will come to be important as setting a criterion of judgement when the thesis turns to the evaluation of the legal process of reform in the recent French laws on *parité*.

In France, the character of the Republic has been continuously reworked. It has reflected a contrast with the United States, and with liberal theory. Through juridical practice, it inherited the idea of sovereign power, and from Rousseau (1962) it also inherited a tendency to submerge difference and diversity (Wieviorka, 1997a: 38-9). The French image of the Republic has always therefore had a strong sense of the importance of the imposition of national unity and national order. Threats to that order from external influences and migration have been met in the past with the assertion of assimilationist policies designed to protect the unity of the Republic above all else (Hargreaves, 1995: 160-164). Distinctive geography also identifies the French Republic as the community bounded and defined by 'The Hexagon' - the

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Republic occupies a particular space, and identifies itself against perceived strong threats of invasion which have often been realised (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 86)). One can trace common threads from the debates of the Assembly in 1791 and 1792 through to the recent past, but the stability of the Republic (that is, of the image of the Republic) cannot be taken for granted. The very fact that the Republic has been identified in terms of its major charismatic leaders – De Gaulle above all, but also Clemenceau, Mitterrand and others- begs the question of how far a developed democracy has really been combined with the institutional embeddedness which one might expect of a Republic. But, more than this, the definition of the Republic is the stuff of what is contended in French politics, as Cathy Lloyd has noted (1999: 37). And many of the key institutions of the Republic are inherited from the dominant non-democratic and anti-republican figure in modern French politics, Napoleon. It is perhaps unsurprising that French republicanism has been identified by theorists with particular theories, including Montesquieu, Rousseau and the speechmakers of the Revolution, whereas political scientists have often identified its roots more in the actual practice of republican government under stress. The revisions of the constitution in the 1960s and subsequently ensured that France remained a democratic Republic in a highly constrained sense, given the roles of both individual presidents, of ruling elites and of party and regional groupings. Certainly, it was more a Republic than a democracy, something which posed especial problems for those who wanted to see an extension of democracy as a means of achieving greater social recognition of the position of women (Allwood, 1998: 30-33, 117; Kofman, 1998). French history perhaps encourages the average person to judge the Republic more by comparison with the alternatives offered between 1802-1814, 1851-1871 and 1940-1944 than in comparison with a more ideal republican model. Certainly, it is very difficult to

characterise the modern French Republic accurately. It approximates the more ideal model in some respects, yet falls short of it very substantially in others. We might add that the substance of political and social debate often appears to assume that the Republic is in question without making the nature of the question explicit. One can say this while at the same time understanding that the language of republicanism is the constitutive language of French politics (Hayward, 1984), with consequences, among other things, for debates on exclusion and on gender issues which are analysed in some detail in this study. This is further explored in Chapter Two. As Fraisse (1997) has explained, the exclusion of women from the Republic through the construction of the Republic as one and indivisible has been powerful in its effects for women in excluding them from citizenship. Thus since both the Republic and the conception of citizenship (discussed shortly) are gendered, they fail to provide the inclusivity which they might sometimes claim. And as I have shown elsewhere (Ducoulombier 2002: 79-80), republican ideology also contributes towards a universalism which is racialised as well as gendered. The plurality of French society was reduced to a single, white masculine 'neutral' which has remained the basis of republican democracy (Ducoulombier, 2002: 80).

In the 1990s, a resurgence in republicanism on the Left can be attrributed to the convergence of a number of forces. They include a national reaction against globalisation, a sense of the need to defend French culture against US influence, a sense of the importance of the local or regional, and the growth of a new style of media driven political activity, as well as a set of agendas promoted by individual political activitists and commentators. Many of these are men, but they are not all men –feminists such as Elizabeth Badinter joined some of these moves. The project

involved in this activity, in which Regis Debray and Jean-Pierre Chevènement figure prominently, links nationalism and republican core values; or rather, it re-asserts the importance of these links. As Leruth points out (1999: 47-8), this resurgence of the republican left has divided the left, especially in the 'headscarf affair'. It has also recognised the continuing symbolic and discursive power of the image of the Republic, without producing a greater consensus on exactly how the Republic might evolve (Leruth, 1999: 49). These debates on the character of the Republic are of importance for the discussion in this thesis, being developed especially in Chapter Three, where it relates to the discussion of debates which set conceptions of integration against arguments for forms of multiculturalism from the mid 1980s onwards (Favell, 1998).

Citizenship

In modern political parlance, the concept of citizenship is difficult to separate from the idea of the Republic. As Ruth Lister has observed, citizenship has been so much a central concept in modern politics that it is hard to separate from modern democratic politics as such (1997: 14-16). But citizenship in the French republican tradition has a famous key definition. Citizens were, and are, alleged to be gifted with 'liberty, equality, fraternity'. This is far more than a slogan. It is a demand, but also a claim of rights, as well as an action programme; and in the very act of claiming the right to liberty, equality and fraternity, the revolutionaries created those rights. Indeed, it could be seen as a revolutionary slogan which at the same time reconstitutes politics and redefines the subjectivity of each person in French society. It is part of what is

usually defined as a 'liberal' discourse, but this is itself problematic since liberal argument varies across a wide spectrum from the more conservative to the very radical (Kymlicka, 1995, esp. Chapter Five). Furthermore, as Marx noted, liberalism can be radical at some moments (as when it challenged and undermined feudal institutions) yet increasingly becomes an established order of its own which becomes deeply entrenched: this makes the evaluation of liberal based rights claims less than straightforward: one may need to have an understanding of what point one has reached in the development of a rights discourse before being able to check how innovative or retrospective a particular claim might be (Kymlicka, 1995: 69-70). This is not only the case in general, but it may well also apply to specific claims about rights in more liberal-oriented feminist debate, and the question of how genuinely radical or conservative claims for particular rights such as *parité* may be will be taken up in due course in some detail in this thesis.

The citizen was central to the political practice of the French revolution. In more extreme Jacobin forms, this involved the re-naming of the person. Individuals in more fiercely republican districts named their children after the murderers of Julius Caesar or after Horatio and his brothers, while David's painting of the three brothers taking the oath to defend the Republic at all costs was one of the most potent icons of a distinctively French neo-classical sense of what the Republic was for: its portrayal of honour, discipline and sacrifice could thus, after June 18, 1940, mean something central to Gaullists and Petainists alike without contradiction. Everyone assumed the title of citizen or citizeness. As Hargreaves notes, legal precision in the definition of nationality only slightly conceals a body of national cultural and social debate in which there is a continuing attempt to deploy a discourse which eradicates difference

and substitutes a formal and political certainty (1995:150). Even the doomed king became 'Citizen Capet' before his death in 1793.

The title of citizen conveys four things: equality, both in political rights and under the law; participation in a nation, and hence the right and duty to bear arms on its behalf as well as to take part in its polity; the responsibility to accept the rules of the community of citizens as a whole; and the recognition that sovereignty having been transferred from the king to the people, in certain circumstances the people can claim absolute power, as they did between 1791 and 1794, and at various points in French history since (Kymlicka, passim but esp. pp. 131-2 and 173-184). Following the outline of Rousseau's theory of the 'General Will', sovereignty lies with the people as a whole and not with the individual. The theory of citizenship embodied in the French Republic has thus always been in tension with the idea of the liberal citizen as free individual, and on the whole French republicanism and its associated theory of citizenship (although not psychoanalytic based theories: Kristeva, 1988: 21-37); Laplanche (1999: 84-107) treats with deep suspicion -or rejects outright- the idea of the atomised citizen individual which Scottish enlightenment, Anglo-American utilitarian and Austrian liberal thought all enshrined as the highest political actor or rights holder. This latter idea has its most developed and extreme form in the work of Robert Nozick (1975), and we do not need to dwell long on Nozick's work to see the contrast with French practice, which for the most part sees the individual as a member of a whole, a participant in a community (Kymlicka, 1995: 220). But in largely rejecting what are mainstream Anglophone ideas and images of individuality, the French tradition of republican citizenship has powerfully steamrollered over the question of the recognition of difference. Even though the colonial ideal of

assimilation has now passed, its legacy in the emphasis on universal belonging and universal community over-riding difference remains powerful. And it also remains an influence within French feminist debates (Allwood, 1998; Lloyd, 1994: 224;Wieviorka, 1997a: 29).

In more recent republican experience, citizenship has many faces, including the role of the citizen army in the later stages of the 1870-71 war and again in 1914-18. Under Vichy, the Republic was not simply put on the 'back burner'; it was calculatingly rejected. The citizen, who had learned to be a part of a society of equality, liberty and fraternity spent the years between 1940 and 1944 subject to duty, family and work as well as to German occupation. The longer term effects of this, as Jack Hayward commented (1984: 19), was to make the basic republican principles which had been so contested in the century before 1940 almost incontestable. Indeed, in practical politics, they were uncontested until challenged in quite a new way during and after 1968. It is in this new contestation of citizenship and republican principle that French feminist thought takes on its contemporary form, although it does so in the context of its own agenda characterised by a series of debates on masculinity and patriarchy (Allwood, 1998: 7-11).

Citizenship has come to mean more than political rights. For it also embodies a claim to economic and social rights. This is important in feminist arguments which have extended the claim on rights to economic, cultural and reproductive rights as well as the right to control one's own sexuality (Allwood, 1998: 89-91,132-3; Weedon, 1999: 51-55), This has longer and deeper roots than might at first appear. The post-1945 settlement was seen in the 1950s as a weak solution, unstable and dangerous, in

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Gaullist mythology almost a kind of Weimar. But since then it has become more usual to see the Fourth Republic as laying essential foundations for the Fifth in terms of economic development but also in the establishment of much of the basis for a modernised, mixed economy based, welfare state. The French acquisition of a welfare state took place over the whole of the first part of the twentieth century, transforming the citizen into a person with the right to take part and the right to a voice. The contemporary French citizen has a set of assumed social and economic entitlements as well as political rights, and the shift in debate from political to economic rights left the core fabric of constitutional citizenship rights unchallenged until after 1968. But the character of the Republic has again been in question from 1968 onwards, not only in terms of the economic rights which were the subject of immediate dispute in the *événements* of that year, but also in terms of constitutional rights for those seen as excluded or ignored, including gay rights and ethnic and religious minority rights (Hargreaves, 1995: 85ff; Silverman, 1996). It is against this renewed background of the putting in question of citizenship rights that the questions of gender and ethnicity which run through his study should be seen.

The citizen is usually ungendered. That is to say citizenship is so represented, as feminist critics from whichever of a range of diverse positions have commented (Allwood and Wadia, 2000: 23ff). It is a person called 'he/she' who completes government forms and pays taxes. Sometimes one is asked to strike out the inappropriate phrase; often it is left. But citizens are no more androgynous than they are asexual, and they have gendered roles and assumptions. It is in this sense that a discussion of citizenship leads naturally into the question of gender, and leads to a closer examination of why the assertion of differences of gender and sexuality conflict

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so distinctly with some aspects of the 'received wisdom' on French republicanism and citizenship.

French feminists, notably Fraisse (1997), Perrot (1995; 1998) and Varikas (1995), have demonstrated that citizenship has been gendered, and has been contructed as gendered since the Revolution. As these authors point out, the republican tradition of citizenship has followed the misogynist thinking of Rousseau (1962). It is because women have been effectively excluded from citizenship, and from active involvement in the enjoyment of citizenship rights, that the drive for *parité* became so strong in the 1990s, an issue I shall explore further in the following chapter. Women became full citizens after 1945 in the sense that they won the right to vote; but they were excluded from the enjoyment of those rights, not least by the fact of the very small number of women involved in political life, which helped to exclude the involvement of others. It is also worth noting that because these discussions of citizenship and gender are relatively very recent in France, they tend to draw extensively on Anglophone authors, among whom Pateman is particularly widely used (Marques-Pereira, 2000: 17). As Kofman *et al* have noted (2000: 84), it is partly because gender divisions came to be seen as "the key political inequality to be overcome" in the 1980s and 1990s that the *parité* debate came to assume such significance in political debate in France.

It is worth noting, before moving on, that the French tradition of discourse on citizenship makes a distinction which is different from that in Anglophone literature, because the latter is so often dominated by the social thinking of Marshall (eg. Allwood, 1998). French literature tends to focus more on the political to the

exclusion of the social (and the social-psychological) whereas Anglophone writing on citizenship is more often (whether marxian, liberal, feminist or postmodern) more inclined to draw intellectual boundaries in different ways (Lister, 1997). The point is a complex one, and the generalisation is perhaps risky; but it is worth pointing out that in this respect the French and Anglophone literatures on citizenship which use apparently comparable languages of rights, are not necessarily as directly comparable as they may appear. This point becomes important in Chapter Two, where the conception of *parité* is explored, and it will be seen that that idea is framed within an image of constitutional politics outwith a sense of the social. The distinction between a 'political' citizenship and a 'social' citizenship, which would not make much sense in a lot of Anglophone writing, is central to the understanding of what and how *parité* is constituted in France (Allwood and Wadia, 2000: 215ff).

Identity: Contested and Constructed

Following a range of authors (such as Anderson, 1983; Laclau, 2000; Kristeva, 1993 and Connolly, 1991) who have understood all forms of identity as constructed by human beings in a social context rather than as something 'natural', the thesis take identity to indicate a political and intellectual space which is at once constructed and contested, a space in which power relations are made as well as reflected (Connolly, 1991: 45ff). The origin of this idea of identity lies in Marx's view of class and consciousness. Marx held that human nature was not fixed, as both liberal and conservative or Christian writers of his day generally held, but that it altered depending on the structural or material conditions. In different social contexts,

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consciousness itself varied. Marx accepted the Hegelian telos that the course of human history is one of the realisation of the potential for human freedom, but argued that this was realised through class struggle and conflict arising from the contradictions of material conditions rather than through the progress of ideas or the steady emergence of self-understanding in human society (Sabine, 1963: 760-765). Social institutions, including the idea of class, institutions and movements (such as nationalism) were therefore to be understood as conditioned by material forces. The psychology and the self-images that accompanied each phase of economic development, including capitalism, were therefore peculiar to that stage of development.

Thus there is, for Marx, nothing 'natural' about human being's consciousness either of the world or of themselves. This idea is widely used in the more recent literature on identity, including the vast literatures on class, nationalism and gender (i.e. Yuval Davis, 1997: 74ff, 129). But its contemporary version has been advanced especially by Anderson, in his account of 'imagined communities'. Anderson, writing in the post-Cold War context where Marxian writers themselves tried to adapt to a world in which deterministic forces had apparently failed to re-shape the political world, and in which liberalism appeared triumphant, tries to maintain the Marxian conception that material forces shape fundamental social relationships, but that they do so through a more complex interaction with ideas and culture in the process whereby people collectively imagine their identity, constructing a history for themselves as well as a present (Anderson, 1983). This conception has been borrowed in a number of areas, including gender, even though Anderson himself originally reserved it for discussions of forms of nationalism and ethnicity. Although there are writers who do see identity

as 'natural' in this sense (for the most part social biologists), it is a truism to say that much social science agrees with the basic proposition that identity is constructed. It is necessary to add immediately that many disagreements hinge more often on how, in what ways, and with what effects that construction takes place. This debate involves more or less liberal writers as well as scholars whose work is rooted in feminist, Marxian and psychoanalytic traditions.

It is not the main purpose of the thesis to review all of the vast literature on identity. Rather, it is my intention to locate identity theory only very briefly and in so far as it is relevant to the particular purpose here, before turning to the two main forms of identity which are used in the analysis here and then to spend more time in a more careful consideration of the ways in which those concepts have evolved and how they are relevant to the discussion in the next five chapters. The thesis does take seriously the idea that identity is not simply constructed, which could imply that it is constructed through a structurally determined process, but constructed through action and choice, through agency, as well as through powerful structures. It also reflects the argument that identities are usually better seen in the plural, and that contention over how an identity is constructed may unfold at a very micro level: the different interviewees whose stories are told later do not (I must emphasise this) have a common identity, although there are many things in their identities which are shared or overlapping. It is action (and social interaction) that helps to define what we are, how we see ourselves and how others see us, and it is through processes of interaction that we find the (structured) limits to the possibilities which shape our identity.

Identities express the background and the history which each person has, but they also express the boundaries of each person's subjectivity. As Vivienne Jabri (1998) has argued,[14] identity and subjectivity are closely linked because our ability to assert or find our subjectivity is directly linked to an ability to relate to an uncertain and unfixed but necessary search for identity. While identity and subjectivity are clearly not the same, they are closely related, and it is necessary to understand each in part in terms of the other. In Chapter Five, the thesis explores the sense of this idea, taking its initial cue from Jabri's article, in examining how social practices, identity and the possibility of finding subjectivity in the face of complex and oppressive pressures 'works' for the women who are the main 'subject' of the thesis.

Gender and Femininity

The image of women as conventionally constructed in advanced societies in the 1950s and earlier came to be criticised by feminist writers from the 1960s in new ways (for an exploration of the French feminist context see Oliver, 2000, Allwood, 1998, Hirata *et al.* 2000 and Allwood and Wadia, 2000). The emergence of modern feminist thought owes a lot to the availability of new conceptual tools, derived first of all mainly from Marxian and anarchist thinking (and from their critique of liberalism) and later from deconstructionist and psycho-analytic sources. Feminist writing in the 1970s in Britain and the US, but also Scandinavia and Germany, started (logically, if not always historically) with a critique of male self-understanding and of 'maleness'.

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[14] Jabri, V. (1998) 'Restyling the subject of responsibility in international relations', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 27, 3, pp. 591-611.

This included male violence, which, as Allwood (1998: 99ff) emphasises, also contributed to the definition (and concerns of) feminism in France. How this critique evolved depended to some extent on which male self-images were the actual starting point. A critique of liberal writing argued that the rights based discourses of liberal thought failed to recognise the distinctive circumstances of women. It was argued that there was a need for particular womens' rights which went beyond the right, established by liberal activists between 1850 and 1950, to vote or to own property. These rights included a woman's rights over her own body and in work as well as against male violence. A class based approach criticised women's position at work more closely, for example by concentrating on women's right to organise separately from men and to establish their own agenda, or to work free from sweat-shop conditions. Class based approaches to women's situations also emphasised more the role of women in the international division of labour, the more 'menial' work they often did and the specific forms of exploitation they faced, and the oppression of women in developing countries or in the face of global corporations (Allwood and Wadia, 2000: 82-92). Psycho-analytic approaches looked more at the problems of self-image, lack of assertiveness and social approval available to women who failed to conform to rigid, largely male-dictated roles (Kristeva, 2000). They also identified ways in which women were oppressed, perhaps without being aware of it, through advertising and personal relations. These three approaches came into dialogue, never without continuing conflicts, in the major work of 'second wave' feminists (allowing the first wave to include suffragettes and individual exceptions such as Mary Wolstonecraft or Simone de Beauvoir). The second wave authors included authors such as Germaine Greer (1971) and Andrea Dworkin (1988) at the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s. Despite their contemporary concerns, they were also concerned to

recognise the potential value of that earlier tradition going back into the eighteenth century from which they drew strength as well as examples. The core concept which they derived was that power was both visible and invisible through the workings of patriarchal institutional and patriarchal social practices and values which could be exposed and deconstructed in order to be replaced. Patriarchy was thus the key target of this group of feminists, although they also had important differences in their accounts.

As both Catherine Rodgers (1999: 53-4) and Gill Allwood (1998: 25ff) have noted, this wave of feminist thinking emerged later and rather weaker in France than elsewhere. The *Dictionnaire Critique du Féminisme* emphasises the idea that the conception of feminism is itself a field of political, social and sexual contention in which there is no single stable 'default position' (Hirata *et al*, 2000). French theory has evolved competing dialogues which look primarily at male-female relations, at the nature of female sexuality (men/women and women/women) and at a series of abstract constructions of the female or feminine which point in a wide range of directions. It might be true to say that most of the kinds of feminist argument available to women in Britain Germany or the US have been found in France. The difference is not so much the presence of particular debates as their political and social strength, and the relative lack of cohesion of some of the groups advocating them. One key exception is the sense of how 'race', gender and ethnicity interact (and interact with class and sexualities) which has marked much of the Anglo-American debate. But French arguments about feminist issues are distinctive, not least because they have their own language and a history of struggle not always very closely linked to the communications networks of Anglophone communities. Thus French debates

on feminism also related –and continues to relate- closely to the specific context of republican values, secularism and the relationship of political discourse to Marxian thinking which is characteristic of post-1968 France, all issues which are analysed much more closely in the detailed discussion in Chapter Two below.

Allwood argues quite rightly that the diversity of French feminism on this question cannot be constructed in a single spectrum (1998: 65-66), for while more orthodox or liberal inclined authors in France have worked around an opposition between theories which emphasised difference as against equality (between men and women), poststructuralist writers have paid much more attention to the diverse range of positions which it is possible to defend, arguing for the irreducibility of differences. This issue of the diversity of women's experience and of women's theorising in response to that experience is also emphasised by Weedon (1999). She suggests that the conception of difference which French feminist theory (and poststructural thought more generally) has evolved gives the feminist debate a particular character which cannot be rendered in any universalising theory or generalised description. But Weedon's emphasis on difference is important for one part of this study as it evolves, for she brings together arguments about 'race' and gender in her analysis of 'whiteness', and of a variety of racist arguments which either emphasise white superiority or exoticise the Otherness of the non-white so as to distance and dominate it (1999: 154-159). Discourses which perform these functions, marginalizing or stereotyping (or both) the distinctive differences of French Caribbean women will play an important part in the analysis in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Equally, I shall draw on Weedon's helpful analysis of how we can understand the resistance of black women to particular forms of (attempted) domination in the analysis of

interview responses in Chapter Five. Weedon's analysis is primarily North American (US and Canada), and there are therefore some qualifications one should bear in mind about carrying her work directly into a French context. But this particular conceptual device is helpful, not least because (as Chapter Five shows) it can resonate directly with what my interviewees said and the words they themselves used.

The role feminist writers came to adopt was not limited to a critique of patriarchy, women's enforced economic subservience or male violence. They also advanced both immediate remedies or plans for struggle and a longer term vision of what the potential of women might be. Here, not surprisingly, there were many differences. In practice, although many of the more radical writers attacked liberals in particular, rights discourses always remained important for feminism, and a woman's rights over her body and at work were never unimportant. Among the issues of conflict were questions of the obligations women might or might not owe their children, questions of sexuality, and the question of femininity (whether a genuinely activist feminist could also retain the 'womanly' qualities and values usually defined as femininity). For radical feminists, questions of sexuality and the radical character of lesbianism became central to their vision of what women might become (Wittig, 2000: 128ff). For ecofeminists, radical environmental analysis was carried back into questions of women's identity (Weedon, 1999: 91-128). There were also deep divisions on the question of 'what to do (or perhaps not do) with men?' –a question which is not simply sexual, although it is also sexual, but of whether men had a role in radical struggles of any kind or not (cf Weedon, 1999: 176; Millett, 1974: 210-12).

All of these debates left feminism increasingly fragmented in the 1980s and 1990s (Rodgers, 2000: 69-70), although at least two other factors helped to divide the women's movement further. Firstly, the impact of rapid growth, de-industrialisation and the growth of the 'new economy' (in which women might arguably have a greater role as managers and as technologists and not only as low status workers), but which was also accompanied by greater job insecurity and fluctuating unemployment (Allwood and Wadia, 2000: 86ff; Rodgers, 1999: 61). Secondly, globalisation, which also seemed to offer greater diversity of cultural experience as well as of employment, but at the same time led to a huge proliferation of sexual exploitation on a global scale (the movement of sex workers) and to the increasing crisis of migration and the difficulty of claiming rights against large corporations and supine globalisation-loving governments. Thirdly, there is the specific question of how 'race', ethnicity and gender interact, which has been raised earlier, and to which I now return as a central theme of the thesis.

Ethnicity and 'Race'

As noted earlier, we can trace patterns of identity based on racial and ethnic difference back to the earliest records, although in Europe the conventional way to read these distinctions is to read them back to classic Greek writing. Kristeva, in *Étrangers à nous même* (Kristeva, 1988) maps the development of exclusions formed over time, where identity is necessarily grounded in the identification and exclusion of an Other, a practice initially identified with the distinction between Greek and barbarian, but subsequently sanctioned in law (citizens and non citizens in city states

and later in Rome) and religion (believers and infidels). Kristeva's work helps us to understand how deeply rooted historically, linguistically and in social practice are the discourses of exclusion which modern societies inherit. It also argues that there is a consistent pattern at work here. This is because she holds that, although there is no 'natural' or biological 'essence' of exclusion, human beings need to exclude Others in order to create identity for oneself. But Kristeva also argues that there is no stability to the conception of identity or what counts as Otherness: her historical journey is designed to demonstrate the instability of Otherness and the continuing power of difference to disrupt and undermine claimed stable identities (1988: 287-290).

These ideas have a context in which they make sense. Much of the literature on identity has evolved over the past ten years or more in an attempt to counter what has been seen as the hegemony of ideas about nationalism in particular and the idea of a 'fixed' hierarchy of identities more generally. Instead, many authors have followed Kristeva in preferring a sense that identities are not fixed, and difficult, if not impossible, to pin down with certainty. This is partly because this suggests that people have the opportunity to remake their identities in many respects –as in much of the literature on sexual identities. But when we consider racial or ethnic identities, this appears much more difficult. After all, people have an obvious dimension of identity, their physical appearance, which they cannot (usually) change easily at will. They live their life in real time and in actual material conditions, which at the least shape what they can achieve. And however people identify themselves, they are likely to be seen by others in terms of their appearance, their skin colour, and their apparent cultural connections. So, for example, Palestinian people are often identified by others outside Palestine as Muslim although a significant proportion of them are

Christian. In France, Arab people are identified differently from Afro-Caribbean people, although both are subject to discrimination and disadvantage. Equally, people of 'mixed race' in countries like the US and UK are likely to be seen as 'black' by members of the white majority while in Brazil people of 'mixed race' are often treated as members of an elite by people who see themselves either as black or as relatively 'dark'. In other words, racial identities are often, perhaps usually, grounded in physical perceptions; but they are also not "objective". They depend just as much as other forms of identity on conventions, history and social practices which, while always divisive, vary from one social context to another (Beriss, 2000). And these inscriptions change over time and with circumstances. It follows that when we want to understand social constructions of 'race', we need to recognise first of all that racial identities _are_ constructed, and secondly that they are constructed in particular contexts which vary not just in general but in very particular social practices which they invoke. So it cannot be assumed, for example, that the experience and senses of identity associated with black French Caribbean people in France are the same as those of other migrant communities, or that the experience of French Caribbean men and women are the same. Beriss argues that in the construction of 'race' and identity in France and the US, there are differences which are not merely linguistic. French conceptions touching on 'race' are seen as more cultural, or as having primarily cultural connotations, separate from 'the political', whereas in the US discussions of 'race' are usually seen as engaging the political (Beriss, 2000: 31-35). The nature of this argument is explored further in the discussion in the thesis, especially in Chapter Three and Five, where this argument becomes more specific. For it is my intention to note the diversity of these debates and the range of possibilities which they establish without a direct commitment to a single view. But I shall then return to the question

of how these identities are found together, how far they can be said to 'integrate' or whether they grate on each other, and to what extent the result of this process can be seen to form a synthesised or hybrid outcome (which, to offer the reader a signpost for the future of the argument, the conclusion and Chapter Five argue is not in fact the case).

The very word 'race' here is problematic. To speak of 'race' might seem to imply that racial difference is real, whether or not it is understood to be 'constructed'. Thus any account which uses the word 'race' can seem to relate to a racist view of the world. Yuval Davis makes the point simply that "women's oppression is endemic to social relations", and uses the word 'race' (and racial and racism) to refer to attributes of a system of oppression. There is no suggestion that 'race' is 'natural' or any more a fixed kind of identity than ethnicity or class as a result of my use of the concept in this way.

The key author on ethnicity, gender and identity is Yuval Davis (1997, 1998) and I shall draw extensively on insights from her work. One of the goals of the thesis is to bring her thinking to bear on the French context in what I believe can be a fruitful marriage. Yuval Davis begins with the view that it is not simply important to understand gender and nation together, but that we cannot properly understand nation and nationalism if we leave gender out (1998: 25-6). There are a combination of sexual, material, economic and cultural forces which mean that the issue of how the nation is constructed and how national identities change critically depend on gendered differences. But if that was all, although it is an important observation, it would not matter so much for the argument of this thesis. However Yuval Davis also succeeds

in setting out a case that gender and gendered differences are equally constructed out of ethnic and racial divisions (1997: 73-77). The core of her argument is in part a historical one. Ethnic, gender and what have come to be called racial divisions have been created out of particular contexts and in particular settings. Ethnic divisions matter in this particular way in north London because there were particular patterns of migration, because ethnic difference has been characteristic of north London communities for a particularly long time, and because their conflicts and solidarities have taken a particular form, which differ from those in (say) Cardiff or Athens.

In the same sense, French ethnic and gender differences interact in distinctive ways which depend on place, history, what issues have arisen and the history of particular individual struggles. Yuval Davis mentions specific French cases (1997: 83, 96), but very much in passing. This is understandable, given her own purpose in her book. Others, including Kofman (1996, 1998, 2000), Lloyd (1998a, 1998b, 1999) and Allwood (1998, 2000), have also started to open the question of the relationship of gender, sexuality, specific histories and ethnicity in France more fully. Colette Guillaumin (1995, 2000: 77ff) is the first to have started to explore some questions of ethnicity, gender and difference (Juteau-Lee, 1995: 1-2). In her study, however, the focus returns to a theoretical one on difference, and although her comments reveal the potential of a radical feminist take on the subject, she avoids a specific engagement with the experience of the different women's interests she identifies. But this all points to the value of a more detailed study, one which takes the particular experience of individual women as a base but which takes up the specific theoretical debate as well. This is one of the main intentions of this study.

Invisibility & Whiteness

The concept of invisibility is more fully discussed in Chapter Five, but needs some attention as part of this introductory chapter. By 'invisibility', I refer to something ambiguous, on the one hand an absence and on the other hand an actual exclusion as a consequence of skin colour (which is, of course, visible). It is indeed important to relate it to the ideas of the French Republic. Chapter Three explores the contradictions that exist at the heart of the French state: embracing colour-blind policies and refusing references to 'race' and ethnicity, whilst promoting antiracist legislation. How can a state discuss racism and anti-racist strategies if there is no recognition of 'race'? Furthermore, as discussed in some details in chapters Three and Five, whilst the idea of colour-blindness might be honourable, in practice, Chapter Five explains, it only serves to encourage further racial discrimination.

The idea of 'blending in', or being 'invisible' can often appeal to immigrants who feel stigmatised by their difference (cultural, phenomenological, linguistic). In principle, the idea of not drawing attention to cultural difference might thus appear a good thing. However, if colour-blindness and invisibility are assumed to be 'neutrally white', then colour-blindness is racialised (Frankenberg, 1993). The thesis as a whole points out powerfully the need to re-think the assumptions behind the ideals of colour-blindness through a greater understanding of 'whiteness'. 'White' is as much a racialised category as 'black', and just as the implications of being black are studied (although not so much in France, as Chapter Five explains), so should the implications of being white (Frankenberg, 1993, Weedon, 1999).

'Whiteness' as a field of research is quite controversial in so far as it has attracted the attention of racist groups, seeing in 'whiteness' an opportunity to defend the view that white people constitute the superior 'race' (Ignatiev, 1997). However, as mentioned above, 'whiteness' also refers to a commitment to acknowledge that 'being white' is as much a racialised category as being 'black' (Weedon, 1999: 154), and for some (such as Ignatiev, editor of Race Traitor) it is about studying 'whiteness' in order to abolish it. The 'abolitionists' believe that 'whiteness' is to be understood in order to dismantle the mechanisms sustaining its very existence. Ignatiev (1997: 4) describes the 'white race' as "a club. Certain people are enrolled in it at birth, without their consent, and brought up according to its rules. For the most part they go through life accepting the privileges of membership, without reflecting on the costs". Despite their often extreme views, the 'abolitionists' do have a point: racism cannot be eradicated without the co-operation of the hegemonic group. 'Abolitionists' seek to make 'visible' the 'taken for granted privileges' of white people, strongly challenging concepts of normality, invisibility and colour-blindness bound up with 'whiteness'. White abolitionists thus conceive themselves as 'race traitors', in so far as they refuse to accept any sort of privileges which their skin colour gives them. In the French context a similar stand could prove helpful in fighting discrimination in employment. It is indeed common practice to include a passport picture on one's CV, a norm which draws attention to racial identity if only implicitly. Although not to comply with the accepted norm might arouse suspicion and thus miss out on a potential interview, some white French people will behave in a 'race traitor' way. They will refuse to take advantage of their white privilege by refusing to include a passport picture with their CV. Chapters Four and Five explore discrimination at work for French Caribbean communities and black French people in general. Those chapters also consider the

relative absence of black people in the media and more particularly in the French film industry. The visibility of black French people make it easy to keep them out of specific, favoured places such as films, high powered jobs and certain neighbourhoods. These places therefore remain 'white', and 'black' is invisible in so far as it is absent. Chapter Five explores the idea that French Caribbean people are rendered invisible because of their visibility (in skin colour).

This thesis explores the links between 'colour blindness', 'whiteness' and 'invisibility' in the context of the French Republic and shows that colour blindness has been associated with 'white'. As such Chapter Five argues that cultural differences and skin colour differences remain important markers of discrimination. Inclusivity assumes 'whiteness':

> In racist societies, where whiteness is hegemonic, skin colour and phenotype are inescapable markers of difference. However much an individual might want to escape racial categorisation and be seen merely as an individual, s/he finds her/himself confined by white societies' implicit and explicit definitions of whiteness and racial otherness. These definitions are not merely the property of prejudiced individuals, they are structural, inhering in the discourses and institutional practices of the societies concerned. (Weedon, 1999: 152)

As explained earlier on in this chapter, French republicanism assumes colour blindness and neutrality, theoretically rendering socio-cultural differences invisible. However, the pervasive discrimination against black French people, the relative lack of concern with black French writers, and race relations by French academics can be seen to be suggestive of a racialised understanding of neutrality. Chapter Four and especially Chapter Five argue that French republicanism has not succeeded in the eradication of difference by promoting colour blindness. Colour blindness assumes

that being 'white' is normative. It excludes 'non-whites', irrespective of French citizenship status, and thus makes 'white' a marker of inclusion and 'black' a marker of exclusion. These conceptions form the basis of later discussions, and the argument about *parité* in Chapter Two and multiculturalism in Chapter Three also need to be read in the light of their implications.

8) Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research problem which the thesis as a whole addresses. It has explained why that problem is important, setting it in the context of intellectual argument and practical politics. It demonstrates how a research methodology can be elaborated which is both consistent with the broad epistemological foundation of the research problem and capable of yielding a specific method of enquiry which is capable of suggesting an understanding of the research problem.

The methods used here are interpretive rather than explanatory, but the distinction between explanation and understanding should not be seen as rigid. In arguing for this definition of the research problem and for this method and methodology, this chapter demonstrates how the thesis can be solidly grounded in a feminist standpoint approach, which is well established in recent literature. The overall claim to originality in the thesis, as has already been explained, lies in the substance of the analysis of the concept of *parité* and the debates and practices surrounding that idea, as well as the original work done in exploring the position of French Caribbean

women in the light of these conceptions. The methodology and approach are further clarified in the contextualisation of ideas of equality, rights, citizenship and republicanism which form the second part of this chapter and which are further elaborated in specific discussion in Chapters Two, Three and Five.

The chapter outlines the epistemological basis on which the thesis is grounded, and indicates how the methods and methodology which are deployed make sense in terms of those assumptions. But it also indicates the author's own personal commitment to the subject and outlines her own involvement. This is appropriate in a study which is itself feminist, and which is therefore rooted in a sense that knowledge is necessarily both critical and personal even as it strives to be open to checking through an examination of its procedures and the assumptions it makes. The author has a longstanding personal commitment to the subject which shapes much of what follows. Such a commitment might not be appropriate in a more empiricist or scientifically based study, but, as the chapter argues, in a more qualitative discussion, it follows logically and clearly from the initial assumptions. The use of interview material, in which the author also had a role as participant, could be seen as problematic in a more empiricist piece of research, but again the author's involvement, frankly recognised and taken account of, is not an impediment to the 'production' of knowledge in a thesis such as this. This chapter thus underscores the coherence of the approach and the central place of a reflexive approach in the underlying epistemology and methodology followed.

Chapter 2:

French Feminisms, *Parité* and the Difficulty of Plural Identity in Contemporary France.

This chapter examines the assumptions of equality and indivisibility bound up with images of French republican citizenship, the official discourse of the Republic, from a French feminist perspective. Both French feminist theorists and activists have strongly challenged the conceptualisation of sexual differences that has historically legitimised the exclusion of women from the public sphere (Fraisse, 1997, Halimi, 1997).

The first section of this chapter therefore considers the issues of concern to French feminists, showing that, despite some profound divisions among them, French feminists are able to present a united front, especially whenever women's rights and welfare appear to be at stake. However, prior to considering the issues that bind them, the first section starts by outlining the main division among French feminists, showing how there is not one but at the very least two main French feminist discourses in France.

It is important to stress at this point that French Caribbean feminists' work should be considered in any examination of French feminist discourses, and in fact Chapter Five demonstrates how their work contributes greatly to a more inclusive form of feminist discourse in France. The reason why French Caribbean writers' work is not considered more fully in this chapter is that their work is largely absent from the more

'visible' French feminist discourses discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, this absence is examined at length in Chapter Five and contributes to a wider discussion on visibility and invisibility.

The second section of this chapter relates to the previous point, in that it considers a surprising lack of cross-fertilisation between feminist and anti-racist discourses in France, and as such provides a basis for further discussions, notably around blackness and whiteness, which are examined later in Chapter Five. The relative absence of 'race' from French feminist discourses is also illustrated by the arguments of advocates of *parité*, choosing to sideline other socio-cultural differences in their campaign for *parité*.

The third and fourth sections of this chapter explore different dimensions of the *parité* debates in France, analysing first the idea of *parité* as a discourse at the intersection of debates on equality and difference, and then the ways in which the debates have dealt with difference. This is a central building block of the argument of the thesis as a whole, for it demonstrates why *parité* debates have been limited to feminist identities and arguments, and why they would need to go beyond these limitations in order to be more inclusive, more able to deal with a plural society, and so to live up to the criteria feminists set for themselves.

An examination of the arguments for and against *parité* shows the complexity of the debate. Not only does *parité* straddle two traditionally opposing feminist discourses (universalist and differentialist), but it also became part of the official debate in January 2000:

L'Assemblée nationale a adopté, dans la nuit du mardi 25 au mercredi 26 janvier 2000, le projet de loi gouvernemental sur la parité, visant à accorder un égal accès des hommes et des femmes aux fonctions politiques.[15]

The complexity of that debate as well as the way it relates to the official republican discourse thus constitutes the principal focus of Section Three of this chapter. *Parité* here refers to an attempt to allow equal access by men and by women to elected public office. This is, of course, much narrower than an idea of equality (or 'equality of access') either in society or in the political system more broadly defined.

The final section of the chapter examines whether *parité* could replace the principle of equality, rooted in the French republican discourse and whether one could expect any changes to women's lives. *Parité* appears to deal only with equality between men and women, and as such, this chapter argues that it cannot be sufficient, especially as it clearly disregards any other socio-cultural differences. This chapter further argues that it is because *parité* became part of the official republican discourse that it had to publicly refuse any potential association with any other socio-cultural categories. In fact, another emerging feminist discourse appears to endorse the need to be fully inclusive when considering difference of any sort. This particular discourse is less theoretical than it is activist, and as such is still relatively marginalised. The idea of *mixité* and equal opportunities is promoted by these activists.[16] *Mixité, parité,* and the

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[15]Dépêche AFP, 26 janvier 2000; http://assemblee-des-femmes.com/dossiers/parite.htp.

[16]*Mixité* is not easily translatable into English. Literally it means 'mixing' and has traditionally referred to co-education of boys and girls in schools, as opposed to single-sexed schools (see Zaidman, C., 1992 and Fortino, S., 2000 on *mixité* in education). *Mixité* is a relatively new area of study for French feminists. Much work has outlined the fact that as a term and a concept, *mixité* remained far too vague and thus allowed, in practice, the exclusion of women. See for example the work of Le Doeuff, M. (1992), Zaidman, C. (1992) and Rochefort, F. (1995). *Mixité* as promoted by young feminist activists can be seen to refer to equal opportunities for everyone.

idea of equal opportunities are thus considered, providing the necessary platform for further discussions on the 'difference dilemma' in Chapter Three.

1) French feminist discourses: theories and issues

The fact that differences exist between men and women is not necessarily an issue; it is the fact that a hierarchy has been established between them that is questionable (Agacinski, 1998). Women's particularities have been used to legitimise their exclusion from public life. Gender relations have been constructed on that basis with consequences that can still surprise today. Indeed, the realisation that France was listed as one of the last countries in Europe in terms of its proportion of women in political institutions, came as a shock for some (particularly for male politicians), and was enough of a source of indignation for others to demand an end to discrimination against women:

> (...) en juin 1996, des femmes politiques, transcendant les clivages habituels, lançaient un manifeste pour la parité réclamant des mesures volontaristes pour établir une egalité effective des hommes et des femmes dans les instances de décision. Égalité effective signifiait aussi équilibre quantitatif, car il y avait alors en France 5,5% de femmes à l'Assemblée nationale, et 5,6% au Sénat (Agacinski, 1998: 7).

Whilst feminists have been united in their fight against discrimination, they have shown considerable differences in their conceptualisation of an 'ideal harmony'. As explained in the previous chapter, the understanding of the French nation is constructed around the idea that citizenship is the only real equaliser. Therefore, one vision of harmonious living is through a republican discourse that rejects difference to

the advantage of an abstract citizenry. The next chapter examines this question further in its consideration of French multiculturalist discourses. Feminists in France have generally tended towards the republican vision of universal equality between men and women.[17] However, others (often referred to as differentialist feminists), such as Irigaray (2000) and Agacinski (1998) have argued for a greater understanding and distinction between men and women. This dichotomy (often called the equality/difference debate) is examined more closely here and is argued to constitute two major discourses within French feminism.

The examination of those two conflicting discourses within French feminism demonstrates that despite different ideological conceptualisations of the world, French feminists have been able to unite against women's oppression on numerous occasions. Furthermore, as mentioned above, *parité* straddles those two conflicting discourses and became part of the official republican discourse. This is interesting in that it allows for the penetration and fertilisation of 'differentialist ideas' in the official discourse. Chapter Three and more specifically Chapter Five demonstrate how *parité* has opened the door to further cultural minorities' demands. As such, *parité* should be considered as part of a greater multiculturalist discourse.

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[17]It is interesting to note that Agacinski (1998) thinks the opposite. She belives that the majority of French feminists have left the universalist vision promoted by de Beauvoir. For her, French feminists embrace the different nature of women and militate accordingly. She mentions as examples the campaign for contraception and abortion. Whilst these examples affect women directly, it would be too simplistic to confine them to the differentialist discourse. These issues are also part of the universalist discourse about individual freedom.

Gendered construction of the republican universal neutral

The concepts of indivisibility and universalism have been constructed at the expense of women (Fraisse, 1997; Halimi, 1997; Scott, 1998). Their biological differences meant that their role as mothers and carers prevented them from being able to participate in public life (Agacinski, 1998; Fraisse, 1997). The insistence on a fundamental division of humanity between the two genders and the use of this to create two distinct public and private spheres clearly shows the influence of the naturalist ideology promoted by Rousseau:

> [Rousseau] procède à une entière naturalisation des femmes, à une construction de leur dépendance et de leur invisibilité sociale par le biais de l'assimilation entre "femme" et "mère". La mère ne peut, pour lui, participer au contract social puisqu'elle ne peut parvenir à l'impartialité nécessaire à la constitution de la volonté générale (Lamoureux, 2000: 174).

The public has been constructed as universal and masculine, for it excluded women quite explicitly through the recognition of French women's membership of the nation, but as 'passive citizens' from 1791 until 1945 (Varikas, 2000; Riot-Sarcey, 2000). The private, on the other hand has been a space mainly allocated to women. However it can be argued in accordance with Fraisse (1997), that although the public sphere's homogeneity was constructed on the exclusion of women (for sexual differences were seen to be the sole symbol of difference), it has also been achieved through the exclusion of other socio-cultural groups. Chapters Four and Five exemplify that point further with specific references to French Caribbean people. Therefore, whilst the homogeneity of the public sphere was assured through processes of exclusion, the private sphere, was to be extended to groups seen as 'unfit' for the public sphere, that

is the women, the poor, and foreigners. The plurality of French society was thus reduced to a singular white masculine neutral, which was to become the basis of French republican democracy: a highly gendered and racialised model, but one which also excluded many other social and cultural differences.

Definitions

Prior to considering the theories and concern of French feminists, it is essential to establish how the term 'French feminism' is going to be used in the thesis. 'French feminism' as a theoretical field is far from homogeneous and is also contentious (Varikas, 1993; Perrot, 1995; Allwood, 1998). Furthermore, a few feminists have emphasised how the meaning attached to French feminism varies from one place to another. In fact, Varikas (1993) and Delphy (1995) feel that the understanding of French feminism in the Anglo-American literature needs to be rectified for they create real misconceptions of French feminist issues *in France*.[18] Both Varikas and Delphy argue that 'French feminism' has been constructed outside France (principally in the US) and at the expense of 'real feminist issues' in France and that such misrepresentations of French feminism thus lead to a single (homogenous), particular (exotic), and separate French feminist discourse.

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[18]Varikas, E. (1993: 61-64) stresses the fact that French feminism has been misconstructed in the US. Some very prominent figures in actual French feminist debates are little known in the US literature (she cites for example Delphy, C. Guillaumin, C.).

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In the Anglo-American literature 'French feminism' has more often than not been associated with three names: Hélène Cixious, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva.[19] Yet, their work has seldom been considered to be representative of feminist writings by feminists in France (Varikas, 1993; Delphy, 1995). Their work has been mainly concerned with psychoanalysis and with post-structuralist theories, whilst in France, feminists have not engaged with those theories as much as in the US (Collin, 2000). Instead, as further developed below, French feminists have sought strategies to rid French society of its well-established gendered hierarchy at the expense of women. Where they have differed however has been in how discrimination against women should best be tackled. *Les féministes de l'égalité*, have pursued Simone de Beauvoir's thesis in their determined search for a new (demasculinised) universal neutral, whilst *les féministes de la différence* argue for the recognition and establishment of a gendered universal. Simone de Beauvoir's contribution to French feminism cannot be overrated, as her critiques and understanding of women's oppression were ahead of her time (Le deuxième sexe was first published in 1949). De Beauvoir's project is still as relevant today as it was then; that is to find a way of understanding sexual differences within a universalist framework, without any gendered hierarchy. Le Dœuff (1989: 250-251) further points out that de Beauvoir did not believe in the existence of a single feminine voice, already establishing the difficulty of theorising a counter hegemonic discourse in the light of the plurality of feminist positions:

> Quand nous arrivons à l'âge adulte, dans l'état que Simone de Beauvoir appelle de "femme faite", les hasards des différentes trajectoires

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[19]Allwood (1998) does stress however that unlike the other two 'French feminists' cited above, Irigaray does have a following in France in the French feminist tradition often referred as the 'difference feminism' (or among *les féministes de la différence*).

individuelles font qu'il y a, entre les femmes, des différences sensibles (...). Dans une telle situation, chercher un langage tel que "les femmes puissent parler leur sexe", c'est de fait, vouloir ramener cette diversité à l'univocité, dire une féminité une et unique, donc entrer dans une problèmatique du modèle.

De Beauvoir's search for universal equality was thus not without the understanding that women constituted a heterogeneous group. Furthermore, as Collin (2000) rightly points out, de Beauvoir also recognised that women's bodies affected them in particular ways. Although seeking universality, de Beauvoir nonetheless recognised the importance and relevance of difference, either between men and women, or among women. As such, de Beauvoir's work reflects the yet to be resolved debate over equality and difference in French feminism. The fact that de Beauvoir accounts for women's specificity, that is the need to take into consideration their particular biology, could also contribute to a differentialist argument. Agacinski (1998: 73) however disagrees with de Beauvoir's conceptualisation of the female body as a prison and a handicap. But she agrees with the naturalness of sexual differences and the universality of that fact, as do other 'difference feminists'.

Whilst feminism in France cannot simply be reduced to two separate discourses,[20] it is nonetheless legitimate to consider it within those conflicting parameters, separated over the issues of equality and difference. These issues do indeed constitute one of the main threads of the research project and have acquired renewed prominence in the recent debates on *parité* (discussed in the following section of this chapter). Furthermore, French feminists (such as Le Dœuff, 1989; Collin, 2000; Varikas,

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[20]Much has been written on the history of Feminism in France. For a detailed study of the different French feminist currents, see: Perrot, M. (1995) 'Identité, Égalité, Différence; Le regard de l'Histoire' in Ephesia La Place des femmes -Paris: La Découverte, pp. 39-55; Allwood, G. (1998) French Feminisms - London & Bristol (US): UCL Press.

2000a) as well as Anglo-American French specialists (such as Scott, 1998 and Allwood, 1998) have emphasised the particular centrality of the equality/difference dilemma. The two antagonistic positions do not therefore so much 'define' French feminism as they can be said to define the intellectual space within which French feminisms take their ground. While it is also true that these positions may also be found in Anglo-American feminist thought (Weedon, 1999), they take a distinctly pre-eminent place in the French feminist imagination.

Equality/Difference: a French Dilemma

Equality/difference appears a French dilemma, for Jenson and Sineau (1994) demonstrate that it is a tension that has characterised much of French political history and that remains deeply enshrined in French culture. Generally it is also accepted as one of the main source of division among French feminists (Picq, 1995; Scott, 1998; Ferry, 1999):

> Contestant les identités assignées, le féminisme vise à en forger de nouvelles, mais il bute sur la définition de celles-ci. C'est un débat que l'on retrouve dans chacun des mouvements de l'histoire, sous une forme ou sous une autre. Universalisme ou particularisme? Naturalisme ou culturalisme? Faut-il choisir entre ces deux positions ou les faire coexister, de façon pacifique ou non? Le Mouvement de Libération des Femmes en France a éclaté de façon si violente autour de cette question, à la fin des années soixante-dix qu'elle semble être une ligne de clivage absolue (Picq, 1995: 328).

As explained earlier, de Beauvoir's work has been strongly associated with one particular French feminism: equality feminism (Collin, 1995; Collin, 2000). These feminists (*les féministes de l'égalité*) argue that sexual difference should be

downplayed in order to achieve real and universal equality between men and women. For Delphy, according to Alphonso (2000a: 62),[21] the concept of gender should ideally disappear. Its presence only illustrates the need to rectify an unbalanced reality where women are discriminated against. The search for the universal neutral is thus central to this French feminist discourse: no longer should we (need to) identify with our womanhood or manhood. The emphasis is much more on humankind and the need for greater equality among human beings, whatever their gender. 'Equality feminism' is based on the principle that gender relations are socially constructed, and as such can be changed (Trat, 2000), reflecting de Beauvoir's position.

Françoise Collin (1995; 2000) situates the second strand of French feminists (*les féministes de la différence*) in psychoanalytic theory, and notably in the work of Lacan. For these feminists, sexual difference should be emphasised, and even celebrated (Rodgers, 1999: 55). The recognition that the world was constructed by men and for men and the fact that more room should be given to women is not enough: equality between men and women cannot be achieved in masculine terms; new terms need to be found (Collin, 1995; Allwood, 1998, Varikas, 2000a). These feminists have thus often argued for separatist politics, refusing to take part in masculinist politics (Jenson and Sineau, 1994: 251). Their recent support for *parité* should also be understood in that context, for *parité* could also be seen to emphasise the duality of humanity and thus sexual difference.

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[21]Alphonso, D. R. (2000a: 62) argues that Delphy sees a contradiction in 'difference feminism'. Delphy does not believe that it is possible to maintain an understanding of a gendered universal whilst searching for ways of overcoming the hierarchy between men and women:

> Delphy insists that we must imagine a society without gender, without the distinction between masculine and feminine, in order to imagine a society that does not privilege men over women.

The ambiguity of French feminist discourses

Through an historical account of women's involvement in French politics, Jenson and Sineau (1994) show how women's actions were sometimes interpreted as 'different' (from men), a stance that had often resulted in their exclusion. For example, women were seen to be more religious than men, and as such much more likely to be against the Republic. Women's voting behaviour during the fourth Republic appeared to confirm their conservatism and their detachment from political affairs by their abstention (Jenson & Sineau, 1994: 246). Those first patterns (relating to women's voting) can however be explained by the fact that women were excluded from the public sphere, and that the church was for a very long time their only 'public space'. It is thus quite understandable that they were greatly influenced by the church and that they were also uninterested in politics; not being used to, and having little knowledge of politics can also go some way towards explaining their abstention in the first few years of exercising their citizenship rights. With women taking advantage of more opportunities open to them in education and employment, women's voting pattern changed considerably from those early days. By the end of the 1980s, women were seen to be less conservative and more likely than men to vote for the socialists (Jenson & Sineau, 1994), a possible consequence of the fact that the Left seemed more prepared than the Right to consider women's issues (Offen, 1998).

Whilst gendered patterns in voting behaviour have reinforced the notion that men and women are 'different', it is the way that difference has been interpreted and theorised that has led to the division of French feminists. Historically, women themselves have either emphasised difference or equality, depending on the issue at stake (Varikas,

2000a; Scott, 1998). Scott (1996, 1998) and Le Dœuff (1989) have written quite extensively on that fact, demonstrating that French feminism has consistently been unable to reconcile women's specific needs with the universal neutral. Le Dœuff (1989) explains how the *Mouvement de Libération des femmes* (MLF) in the 1970s was not really following a particular philosophical direction. The *Mouvement*'s main concern gravitated around women's particular issues such as abortion and contraception. Furthermore, as Jenson and Sineau (1994) point out, 'difference feminists' were much more 'visible' than 'equality feminists' in the challenge to masculinist politics (of the official discourse) that characterised much of the *Mouvement*'s activities in the 1970s. The *Mouvement* criticised the fact that laws had been constructed by men and for men, thus arguing and campaigning for the equal consideration of women's needs and interests.

The creation of new laws protecting women was seen as an important step in the demasculinisation of French society. The campaign for the right to abortion was probably one of the most visible and controversial (Allwood, 1998; Del Re, 2000). Women directly challenged the official discourse by 'outlawing' themselves publicly when they signed a petition acknowledging having had an illegal abortion. Feminist organisations (such as MLAC and *Choisir*)[22] played a determinant role in making more visible the need for legislation that take account of women's specificity, especially in matters of reproductive rights such as the hard campaign for the legalisation of abortion in France (1975 and 1979).[23] Reproductive rights (legalised

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[22]Mouvement pour la Liberté de l'Avortement et la Contraception.

[23]The 1975 legislation was only a partial victory. The final law on the legalisation of abortion in France was passed in 1979. See Jenson, J. & Sineau, M. (1994: 253).

abortion and free contraception) illustrate a very successful outcome of French feminist coalitions in giving women more freedom and better chances in life.

Whilst 'equality feminists' and 'difference feminists' were united in their fight for the right to abortion and free contraception, their agenda remained divided. For 'equality feminists', the emphasis was not so much on the recognition of women's difference and specificity, but the need to bring down the obstacles to the achievement of equality with men. Varikas (2000a: 56) explains that the universalist discourse promoted by de Beauvoir turned women into 'imperfect men', and thus contributed to the creation of the 'super-woman', expected to manage family expectations and work (Descarries and Corbeil, 1999: 90).

Furthermore, whilst women gained more freedom and independence through the success of reproductive rights campaigns, their opportunities were still barred by sexist discrimination: further legislation was thus needed. The *Loi Roudy* in 1983 was supposed to prevent discrimination in accessing employment or promotion on the ground of sexual difference (Jenson & Sineau, 1994). This law proved less than effective as not only was work-related discrimination against women difficult to prove, but women workers also became perceived as a flexible and disposable workforce. However, whilst women's conditions may have improved, women's future is still on men's terms. Indeed, women's (biological) specificity (whilst recognised and legislated about) is still used against them: women are still seen as the main child-carer and are more often than men resigned to working part-time or having to work a double shift (Weedon, 1999). 'Difference feminists' see much of women's problems resulting from the fact that they do not and cannot fit in a man's world, for they are

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'different' and that no matter how they try to fit in, these differences will always result in their marginalisation.

The necessity to reconcile women's specificity with the official universal discourse is as relevant today as it has been throughout the history of French feminism:

> Dans la mesure où le féminisme agissait pour "les femmes", le féminisme produisit la "différence sexuelle" qu'il essayait d'éliminer. Ce paradoxe - le besoin d'accepter *et* de refuser la "différence sexuelle" comme condition d'inclusion dans l'universel - était la condition constitutive du féminisme en tant que mouvement politique tout au long de sa longue carrière (Scott, 1998: 291).

'Difference feminists' still believe in the impossibility of making women fit into a masculinist world. As such, they argue for an alternative official discourse, one that reflects the duality of humanity, where women and men are seen as equals, but also as different (Agacinski, 1998).

Scott (1998) argues that the equality/difference tension that characterises French feminism cannot be resolved within the sole parameters of French feminism. As mentioned earlier, feminists have argued both in the name of women's specificity and of women's equality. Still, despite their different agendas, they have successfully created coalitions around specific issues. As mentioned before, *parité* has been argued from both perspectives, furthering the somewhat paradoxical tradition of promoting a particular issue in the name of two conflicting discourses.

Prominent figures in the history of French feminism, such as Olympe de Gouges and Simone de Beauvoir have both oscillated between the 'difference discourse' and the

'equality discourse' (Scott, 1998; Varikas, 2000b), demonstrating the need for a more inclusive discourse. Chapter Three further examines that question showing in fact how the equality/difference tension is a reflection of the official republican discourse, unable to reconcile the recognition of socio-cultural difference within a universal and republican framework.

French feminists brought about changes for French women, despite their theoretical divisions. However these changes have not improved the lives of French women to the same degree. For some women, their condition as women is less an issue than their condition as a *black* woman or as a *Maghrebi* woman for example. For the French Caribbean women I met, everyday experiences paint a very different picture from that of guaranteed equality for all French citizens; Chapter Five discusses this matter in more detail.

The heterogeneity of French women is a relatively new issue in French feminist theories and concerns (Allwood, 1998). Whilst French feminists seems to have primarily been concerned with sexual difference, Anglo-American feminism demonstrates the influence of identity politics and post-structuralist theories, placing sexual differences in a socio-cultural framework, alongside other socio-cultural constructs such as 'race', ethnicity and sexuality (Allwood, 1998; Wendon, 1999). French republican principles have in part been blamed for French feminists' reluctance to consider other social constructions together with gender in their research (Pick, 1995) and explain why equality/difference continues to divide French feminists.

It has so far been demonstrated that the meaning attached to 'French feminism' is contested. The 'French feminism' label in Anglo-American literature has indeed been argued to be misleading for it refers to a theoretical perspective that bears little resemblance to feminist discourses in France. French feminism has been argued to revolve around two apparently irreconcilable discourses, promoting either sexual difference or equality. Yet, whilst that tension still bears relevance today (especially in the consideration of *parité*), it has been shown that coalitions of women were nonetheless possible: feminists were able to rally around particular women issues, although arguably for different reasons. Furthermore, 'equality feminists' find themselves in a double bind: arguing for the irrelevance of sexual difference, and the promotion of equality on the one hand, and the relevance of the creation of particular laws taking account of women's specificity (in matters of child-bearing for example) on the other. This paradox (Scott, 1998) may in fact be suggestive of the need for an alternative conceptualisation of the 'equality feminist' discourse, one which should not so much be understood as the opposite of the 'difference feminist' discourse, but partially constituted by it, and more inclusively by other discourses of difference. It is quite surprising that within both the 'difference feminist' and 'equality feminist' traditions, very little place has been given to the consideration of other socio-cultural differences, which the following section examines.

2) Gender & 'race' in French feminist theory

The lack of concern over identity politics and fragmented identities in French feminist literature has resulted in many contentious absences, notably the non-recognition of

differences (notably social and cultural) among *French* women (Varikas, 1993: 75; Duchen, 1995: 354; Trat, 2000: 133).[24] The problems arising from the unresolved dichotomy came to a head again with *parité* and the debates it started. The principal issue has been the establishment of equality between men and women, pointing out that discrimination still existed. However, advocates of *parité* were not inclined to engage with other socio-cultural discrimination that resulted in inequality among French women. This will be further investigated in the next section on *parité*.

The work of Colette Guillaumin is often cited for her valuable contribution to the understanding of 'race' and gender relations in France (Kandel, 1995: 365, Lloyd, 1998: 66). Gender and 'race' have traditionally been theorised in different spheres in France (Varikas, 1993; Juteau-Lee, 1995). Danielle Juteau-Lee (1995) stresses that point in her introduction to Colette Guillaumin (1995), Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology, a collections of essays on 'race' relations and gender relations, translated in English for the first time in 1995. A distinct contribution of the Guillaumin's book has been the introduction of French feminists to 'race' and racism, and readers mainly concerned with 'race' relations and racism, to feminist theories. Nonetheless the book does not provide an articulation of gender and 'race' as such. What it does provide is a collection of essays on gender and 'race' relations under the same cover.

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[24]It is important to note at this stage that the researchers of the GEDISST (Groupe d'études sur la division sociale et sexuelle du travail), have generally recognised the relevance of considering gender relations alongside other power relations, such as 'race' relations. Varikas, E. is a member of the GEDISST and has noted the relative absence of the intersection gender/ 'race' in French feminist research (2000a). She has also (alongside other GEDISST members such as Trat, J., 2000) criticised advocates of *parité* for not considering other socio-cultural categories in their reworking of the concept of equality (1994). Jenny, J. (1995) has also very explicitly expressed a desire to find a theoretical framework that would encompass other forms of domination and where they would be considered, not in terms of a hierarchy (in so far as one type of power relation would be more important than another), but as inter-relational. Members of the GEDISST can be argued to embrace a more inclusive understanding of the discourse of difference.

Guillaumin's contribution to the understanding of 'race' and gender relations has to be acknowledged, and most importantly the way she uses the same language to emphasise the parallels in racist and sexist discrimination. She has greatly contributed to the French literature on 'race', showing the importance of language in the propagation of racist ideology in the media, and most particularly in French newspapers (Alphonso, 2000b).

Kandel (1995: 366) emphasises the point that feminists in France learnt a lot from anti-racist movements, which provided a model for French feminist campaigns. Guillaumin contributed to this through her work on 'race' relations and gender relations (Juteau-Lee, 1995; Alphonso, 2000b). Whilst Kandel (1995) does not agree with Duchen (1995) that French feminists have tended to ignore questions of 'race', she is not really disproving it either. She nonetheless rightly acknowledges the work of some French feminists on 'race' and the importance of anti-racism in the understanding that both 'race' and gender are socially constructed (Kandel, 1995: 366).

Lloyd (1998: 66) rightly points out that despite the many parallels between feminism and anti-racism in France, "(...) French feminism developed with little contact with anti-racism." And a probable consequence of this has been the marginalisation of immigrant women's concerns by French feminists as well as the notable absence of racialised gender theory comparable to the work of Yuval Davis (1992, 1997a). Whilst much criticised by Anglo-American feminists (such as Duchen, 1995), some French feminists have themselves recognised such an absence, which they felt was particular to the French context. An interview with some French feminists published

in <u>Migrations-Societé</u> in 1997 brings up issues of particular concern to the argument of this thesis for it challenges the reasons why French feminists have been reluctant to consider issues of 'race' in their theorising of gender relations. Among some of the reasons why this has been the case Morokvasic (1997: 30) suggests that the absence of immigrant women (and of women of immigrant origins), from French feminist issues results from the fact that French feminists' primary concern has for a long time been *women*'s subordination in society. The consideration of women of immigrant origins posed a great challenge to the belief that the principal enemy of women was patriarchy. Furthermore, Anne Golub (1997: 30) emphasises that considering the inclusion of other categories of women in French feminism added more complication to the already divided French feminist movement. Class has indeed been an important issue in French feminism and whilst being from a working class background, immigrant women could have adhered to the class struggle strand of French feminism, their other socio-cultural positioning in French society would have remained unheard. Quiminal rightly locates the answer in what she might have called a 'French tradition' or what others have called 'the French exception':

> Il faut voir aussi que ce non-rapport aux femmes migrantes ou aux femmes du tiers monde est quelque chose d'un peu français, c'est un peu l'histoire des féministes françaises (Quiminal, 1997: 31).

Françoise Picq (1995) also acknowledges the fact that 'race' relations have not really featured in French feminist theory and suggests that it might be explained by the fact that 'race' is not recognised as such true to the principle of equality for all, and that racism should not therefore exist in line with the same principle:

> Si le postmodernisme (...) ne passionne guère les féministes, c'est peut-être que les philosophes postmodernes sont trop facilement assimilés à la tendance différentialiste du MLF. (...) C'est la même chose sur la question du racisme, difficile à penser parce que contraire aux principes de notre civilisation: "tous les hommes naissent libres et égaux en droits et en dignité." Ce n'est pas, bien sûr, que le racisme n'existe pas en France, mais qu'il ne devrait pas exister. C'est peut-être pour cela que nous avons tant de mal à l'affronter, que nous en restons à la condamnation morale et sociale, sans trouver les moyens concrets de lutter contre (Picq, 1995: 331).

Picq's suggestion is not helpful in that it implies that gender and 'race' should be approached differently. For if racism should not, in principle, exist, neither should sexism. Yet women have felt the need to denounce sexist discrimination as well as make demands to protect their presumed rights. Still, the inadequacy and limitations of the same presumed right of equality have yet to be considered in the case of women from different socio-cultural backgrounds from that of the majority of French feminists. In other words, Picq (1995) does not adequately challenge the reason why gender has been (and remains so to this day) set apart from all other socio-cultural categories. She does not challenge the racialised and gendered nature of the Republic, built on processes of exclusion in the name of the principles of unity and indivisibility. Chapter One has shown how the Republic has always recognised gender as a category of difference, (mainly to women's disadvantage) and whilst not all feminists agree that this should indeed be the case as demonstrated above, the debate is out in the open. 'Race', however has remained more of a thorny issue, not least for French feminists. Whilst French intellectuals and philosophers have indeed engaged with 'race' relations, the French socio-cultural context remains hostile to such an enterprise. The powerful ideology of the Republic is omnipresent and whilst French intellectuals engage with multiculturalist theories, the rigidity of the French

republican model tends to limit their scope of study, as the following chapter will show.

Anne Golub, Mirjana Morokvasic and Catherine Quiminal (1997) agree that ethnic issues have tended to be marginalised, and whilst feminists have started to recognise the fact that women migrants have brought other issues on the feminist agenda, Morokvasic (1997: 22, 23) stresses that studies around women migrants remain marginalised:

> (...) je ne sais pas si le thème est réellement sorti de la marginalité, si tout ce qu'on a écrit, dit sur la migration des femmes fait déjà partie du *Mainstream* (Morokvasic, 1997: 22).

Quiminal (2000) points out that research concerning women migrants and gender relations inclusive of 'race' and cultural difference remains underdeveloped in France. Whilst some studies have indeed started to consider the place of women in processes of acculturation, paying particular attention to gender relations in the migrant family,[25] very little feminist research considers 'race' and ethnicity *per se*, separate from migration studies. 'Race' and ethnicity appear to have been strongly linked to issues of migration and integration in France (see Chapter Three). Yet, French nationals experience racist discrimination and can sometimes even be referred to as 'immigrant' or 'foreigners' (Quiminal, 2000: 115; Allwood & Wadia, 2000:14). Such is the

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[25]Morokvasic, M. (1989) 'Femmes immigrées en France et en Europe francophone: bilan et perspectives' in Actes du Séminaire scientitifique sur les tendances migratoires actuelles et l'insertion des migrants dans les pays de la francophonie -Québec: Les Publications du Québec, pp. 211-218; Gaspard, F. (1992b) 'La société française confrontée à la polygamie, quelques éléments de réflexion' in Revue française des affaires sociales, December, pp. 181-196; Nicollet, A. (1992) Femmes d'Afrique noire en France, la vie partagée -Paris, CIEMI: L'Harmattan; Tribalat, M. (1995) Faire France -Paris: La découverte; Hommes et Libertés, No. 84, 'Les freins à l'intégration des femmes étrangères', July-August 1995, pp. 3-15; Bentchicou, N. (ed.) Les femmes de l'immigration au quotidien -Amiens: La Licorne, 1997; Informations Sociales 'Les femmes d'origine étrangère et l'emploi', No. 63, 1997.

experience of French Caribbeans living in Metropolitan France (Chapters Four and

Five examine this question in more detail), as well as that of many people of African

(including North African) origins. Furthermore the label 'immigrant' has not only

been used to differentiate and discriminate particular groups of migrant origin

populations, it has also homogenised the image of the 'non-French' and the

impressions of the migrant woman (Beski Chafiq, 1997). The following chapters

consider the dangers of understanding socio-cultural categories as fixed in their

examination of plural identities and search for more inclusive forms of discourses of

difference.

Issues relating to migrant women (such as family reunification, female genital

mutilation and polygamy) have contributed to make them more 'visible' in feminist

research and migration research in France (Gaspard & Khosrokhavar, F., 1995b;

Beski Chafiq, C., 1997). The Islamic headscarf affair of the late 1980s and early

1990s has contributed to a greater visibility of migrant women.[26] However, the nature

of the debates it provoked was a clear demonstration of the inadequacies of the

official discourse in the consideration of gendered integration issues. The debates

generated by the headscarf have largely revolved around issues of integration and

secularism bound up with the French (official) republican discourse. Chapter Three

explains how a renewed republican discourse emerged in the mid-1980s due in part to

the *Front National* party's take on the then emerging discourse of difference. The

headscarf at school was seen as directly challenging 'French traditional republican

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[26]The headscarf affair (or *l'affaire du foulard*) started in 1989 when three school girls were excluded from school for wearing the Islamic headscarf. The exclusion was accepted and legitimised by many (especially school teachers) for the headscarf was considered a challenge to the secularity of French schools. For further reading on the debates it generated, see bibliography, notably: Gaspard, F. & Khosrokhavar, F. (1995); Benani, S (1995); Lloyd, C. (1998).

ideas' of secularism and integration. Chapter Three challenges the label 'traditional' arguing that it only serves to legitimise a chosen and explicit exclusionary position of government officials and intellectuals of the time.

Whilst the debates surrounding the headscarf affair can be argued to have contributed to the challenge of the masculinist nature of migration studies (Quiminal, 2000), the gendered and racialised dimensions of immigration questions were, in the end, masked by religious questions and issues of secularism. 'Race' and ethnicity were indeed by-passed by an overwhelming obsession with Islam.

The main debate was indeed centred around the fact that republican schooling promoted a space for free education for all, independently of teachers' or pupils' religious beliefs. Religious education, if desired, was to be left to the parents' discretion. Wearing the headscarf was felt to be a direct challenge to the republican principle of secularism, and as such should be forbidden in state schools. Teachers and politicians appeared adamant on the subject, and the *circulaire Bayrou* did little to help clarify the problem for it clearly objected to the wearing of "ostentatious religious signs" without ever defining what should be considered ostentatious (Fysh & Wolfreys, 1998: 193). The whole affair proved to be very unhelpful and unsympathetic to the girls' schooling. In fact secularism can easily be used to legitimise racist discrimination for Christian pupils can often be seen wearing a crucifix, without problems. Wearing a cross is thus not regarded as offensive to the Republic's secularism but the headscarf is.

The particularity of the racialisation of gender was exemplified by the public's inability to deal with cultural difference and how this may affect women. Feminists and anti-racists did not know how to deal with it either, feeling the entrapment of the Republic's principles. Gisèle Halimi's resignation from *SOS-Racisme* was a direct result of the organisation's inability to step outside the republican rhetoric of integration (Fysh & Wolfreys, 1998; Lloyd, 1998). She clearly pointed out that alongside a cultural and racial issue, it was also a gendered one (Lloyd, 1998). As briefly mentioned earlier, Chapter Three examines further the newly found republican consensus in the mid-1980s. The headscarf affair has to be understood within the particular context of the time.

In effect, the mishandling of the headscarf affair contributed to turn 'race' into a religious affair, thereby missing the point that girls of Maghrebin origins may have to comply with their family's wishes and customs. Interviews with immigrants' children (especially with children of Maghrebin origins) and reports by the organisation *Nanas Beurs* have shown how immigrants' children were not always living their 'double identity' very well.[27] The French republican discourse at school has not always been easily reconcilable with their families' traditions and way of life.

Although the headscarf affair emphasised the need for greater contextualisation in understanding the complexity of 'race' and gender relations, French feminists continue to marginalise 'race' in theorising gender. Also, the fact that 'race', and religious issues were brought to French feminists via research on migration may explain why 'race' and ethnicity remain considered as 'borrowed' topics, that are only

considered every now and then, whenever appropriate. 'Race' and ethnicity have not infiltrated French feminist theories as yet. Studies are being conducted *on* women migrants, but nothing on the fact that all French citizens are racialised, that 'race' relations are such, that white French women have more opportunities in life than black French women. French feminists have never engaged with theories of whiteness and blackness, which are examined in Chapter Five. Morokvasic and Quiminal (1997) argue that 'elsewhere is not necessarily better' in response to the fact that French feminism appears to 'lag behind' Anglo-American feminist theories.[28] They also suggest that the development of a more racialised French feminist discourse (in that it takes account of 'race' relations) may in fact result in the marginalisation of racialised issues and the fragmentation of French feminism:

> "Les recherches féministes de leur côté ont négligé les femmes migrantes". Moi je vous renvoie la question: à quoi assignez-vous les recherches féministes? Qu'est-ce-que les recherches féministes? Car, d'une certaine manière, je considère que je m'inscris dans le courant des recherches féministes, et qui en fait partie et qui n'en fait pas partie? (Quiminal, 1997: 31)

> Il ne faut pas toujours penser qu'ailleurs c'est mieux. (...) Enfin, ce qui est assez intéressant dans la remarque de Catherine Quiminal [above], c'est qu'il s'agit d'une autre façon de poser la question: est-ce-que par votre question vous ne marginalisez pas déjà la problématique des femmes immigrées? Il s'agit presqu' un peu d'une autocondamnation à la marginalité. Nous nous considérons des chercheurs ayant une approche féministe. (Morokvasic, 1997: 31-32)

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[27]See for example: Bentchicou, N. (ed.) Les femmes de l'immigration au quotidien, Amiens: Licorne, 1997, pp. 57-67.

[28]Although there is a case to be made against the whiteness of the French republican discourse, as well as against the counter-hegemonic (white) French feminist discourse, I agree with Lloyd (1998) in that it remains difficult to conceive of Anglo-American conceptualisations of gender and 'race' as being more sophisticated and more 'advanced' than the French. Whilst I do believe that French feminist theory would benefit from greater cross-fertilisation with Anglo-American feminist theories, the direction of French feminist theory is understandable given the particular French context. 'Lagging behind' here reflects the reactions of Anglo-American feminists and activists I met at the International Conference 'Politics, Rights & Representation' (October 14-17, 1999) after giving my paper '*Parité*, 'Race' and, demonstrating the importance of contextualisation.

The lack of consideration for ethnic and racialised issues in French feminism appears to be legitimised by an overwhelming desire to present a strong united front and by the belief that ethnic divisions within French feminism may lead to the marginalisation of certain issues. Despite this, whilst French feminist research has not known the same divisions as Anglo-American feminism (Morokvasic, 1997: 31), research concerning immigrant women and ethnic minority women has remained marginalised. What is more, French Caribbean women have also been excluded from French feminist research. Not only have they remained invisible as a subject of study both in the French islands and in the Metropole, but French Caribbean women's writing (examined in Chapter Five) has never been included in what is considered French feminism. Yet French Caribbean women are French, like any other French Metropolitan woman. This issue is considered in more detail in Chapters Four and Five. However it is important to point out that whilst black French feminism does not exist as such in France, French Caribbean women writers remain on the margins of French feminism and French Caribbean women's interests and concerns (in the islands and in the Metropole) are not considered. For example, and as the following section shows, French Caribbean women, as a particular group of French women, have not been included in the debates that have surrounded *parité*, such as the issues of more inclusive citizenship and accountability and representation in French politics.

The heterogeneity of women has been acknowledged by some French feminists who are against *parité*, but no one has yet brought up concrete examples of just how both gendered[29] and racialised[30] interests can be. Gender relations in the French Caribbean

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[29]Allwood, G. & Wadia, K. (2000) give a good account of the issue of representation, and whether women constitute enough of a group to suggest that there is such a thing as 'women's interests'.

[30]Based on interviews with author in Paris, summer 1999; See Appendix A.

are an important issue, but very few studies have been done in recent years, and authors such as Arlette Gautier (1994) emphasise the need for further updated research in that area. Along with this there should be more comparative work between gender relations in the French Caribbean and gender relations in metropolitan France (including the study of gender relations among the French Caribbean community living in the Metropole), so as not to exclude 'race' from such studies.

Women of French Caribbean origin living in the Metropole are also under-researched. Condon (1994) brought up French Caribbean gender issues, but through her research on immigration. The fact that it is mainly through immigration literature that French feminists started to explore the intersection gender/ 'race' may have contributed to the marginalisation of French Caribbean women's issues by French feminists. French Caribbean women immigrants constitute a particular group, since their migration is internal, as it does not cross national boundaries.

The equality/difference debate remains topical in France, both among feminists and anti-racists (Lloyd, 1998). The next chapter will examine that particular debate among multiculturalist and anti-racist theorists. Nonetheless the issue of cultural difference, whilst discussed by multiculturalists and anti-racists, has not really permeated French feminism. This was very explicitly demonstrated during the *parité* debate which the following section considers in order to show how divisions among French feminists over the equality /difference debate remain strong and that French feminists' distinction can be explained by the fact that they are generally embracing French republican principles.

3) *Parité* and the intersection of two discourses

Parité is not a new idea. Gaspard (1994a: 31) points out that the idea of *parité* goes as far back as 1885 with Hubertine Auclert. It is also far from a *French* concept, for it emerged in American feminists' politics in the 1960s. However, it is in the late 1970s that attempts were made at turning the idea of *parité* into a realistic political project. The incredible disparity between the numbers of men and women in elected bodies was first tackled through the attempted establishment of quotas in 1980 (Mossuz-Lavau, 1998; Halimi, 1997).[31] From the late 1980s *parité* became part and parcel of European social issues, and was notably highlighted in 1989 in the conference *'La Démocratie Paritaire'* organised by the *Conseil de L'Europe.*

It was however in the 1990s, and more particularly in 1992 (Scott, 1997: 8; Gaspard, 1994a: 34), that *parité* became a campaign, a movement and attracted great media and political attention. It also became politicised: first the Green Party decided to include *parité* as part of their political programme in 1988, followed by the Socialist Party (Gaspard, 1994a:32).[32] Advocates of *parité* were making bold demands argued to be anti-constitutional by some and unrealistic by others. The debate was very well documented and replies going back and forth could be found in national newspapers,

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[31]Mossuz-Lavau (1998: 29-30) explains how the recognised disparity between men and women in political institution was acknowledged by a strong majority of MPs in the early 1980s, endorsing the idea of the creation of a maximum quota of 80% of candidates of the same sex on local council's electoral lists. This idea however had already been put forward by Giroud in 1975, explains Mossuz-Lavau. Still, whilst the project gained much support, it nonetheless fell short of going to the *Sénat*. Halimi (1997: 107) relates in detail another aborted attempt in 1982 when a quota of 25% of women on electoral lists was first voted by both the *Assemblée* and the *Sénat* only to be turned down by the Constitutional judge who believed the project to be anti-constitutional.

[32]Both Gaspard (1994) and Scott (1997) give a good chronology of *parité* (from the time it started to be used as meaning 'formal equality' between men and women in all elected bodies in France) in Nouvelles Questions Feministes (NQF), Vol 15, No 4, pp32-33 and The New Left Review No 226 respectively.

namely *Le Monde, Libération, L'Humanité* and *Le Figaro,* as well as in national magazines such as *L'Express, Le Nouvel Observateur, Le Point.*[33] Opinion polls placed *parité* advocates' demands in a more realistic frame for the public appeared to be in support of numerical equality between men and women in elected bodies (Allwood, 1998; Allwood and Wadia, 2000).[34] Politicians could no longer really ignore *parité* advocates who consistently confronted them with exceptionally low figures of women in elected bodies. Beyond the concrete demands of *parité* advocates, namely the establishment of a numerical equality between men and women in elected bodies, the low percentage of women in parliament was being highlighted and discussed in public life.

1992 has been seen as a milestone in the campaign for *parité* (Scott, 1997). It is indeed the year when European female politicians in senior positions signed the Athens Declaration[35] and when the book *Au pouvoir citoyennes! Liberté, Egalité, Parité* was published.[36] It is also at that time that a few grassroots organisations in support of *parité* began to emerge.[37] On November the 10th 1993 *Le Monde* published

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[33]In fact some of these arguments (those against *parité*) were collected and republished under the title Le piège de la parité: Arguments pour un débat -Paris: Hachette, 1999. The other side of the argument has also been published: Fraisse, G. and Bachelot, R. (1997) Deux femmes au royaume des hommes - Paris: Hachette; Mossuz-Lavau, J. (1998) Femmes/Hommes Pour la Parité -Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.

[34]L'Express (June 6, 1996) publishes an opinion poll showing that 77% of French citizens would be happy with a constitutional change so as to include *parité*.

[35]The text was signed on the 3rd of november 1992 by female politicians, or women who had had political responsabilities. The objectif of the declaration was clearly one in support of *parité*, making *parité* a pre-requisite for democracy (Gaspard, 1994a: 35).

[36]Françoise Gaspard, Claude Servan-Schreiber and Anne Le Gall (1992), Au Pouvoir Citoyennes! Liberté, Egalité, Parité -Paris: Seuil.

[37]Organisations such as "Parité" and "Parité 2000", the later being more of a club (Cf. Gaspard, 1994a: 34-35) were created in 1992. Later, other organisations such as "Elles aussi" began to support *parité* and the establishment of a *parité* network "Réseau Femmes pour la Parité" enabled the coordination between events supporting the *parité* campaign.

a manifesto demanding a '*parité* law'. The publication of such a text brought *parité* into the public light and started what can be called the '*parité* debate'. Indeed, feminists, academics and non-academics regularly published their opinion for or against *parité*.[38] Whilst not all French feminists support *parité*, the media attention it attracted meant that newspapers and magazines started to enquire about the state of feminism in France, and depicted *parité* as the biggest French feminist issue of the 1990s.[39]

Although *parité* was supported by, and led by French women, not all women felt concerned by the idea of numerical equality in elected bodies. Furthermore, not only were there French feminists who disagreed with *parité*, but they did not all agree or disagree for the same reasons. Whilst all feminists agreed that women's access to politics was still hindered, they could not all be mobilised around that particular issue.

In the previous section it was noted that French feminists had been able to mobilise around certain issues, such as abortion and reproductive rights in general, despite their apparent opposite ideological framework. In the case of *parité* French feminists' different view-point over-ruled any idea of mobilisation. The complexity and contradictions in the conceptualisation of *parité* prevented a total mobilisation of French feminists and accentuated the old divide among them discussed in the previous section. Gaspard (1994a; 1994b) has pointed out that some of the issues arising from discussions around *parité* originated in the fact that the concept had not been properly theorised and as such created problems for French intellectuals. She felt that the

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[38]See footnote 33.

[39]*Elle, Le Nouvel Observateur, L'Express, Ça M'intéresse,* are but some of the widely read French magazines that have had articles about women's conditions, women, and *parité*.

campaign was far more advanced than the theorisation. Grounding *parité* in a solid theoretical framework was thus essential to increase the legitimisation of *parité* advocates' demands. However, whilst seminars, conferences as well as public discussions in national newspapers flourished from 1993 onwards, *parité* remained at the intersection of the two discourses outlined previously, basically meaning different things to different people, including French feminists. *Parité* was seen as a concept, as a principle and as a right by some (Gaspard, 1994a, 1994b), whilst others could not quite agree but still supported the idea (such as Fraisse, 1994).

Whilst *parité* was able to mobilise some feminists across the equality/difference divide, others (mainly 'equality feminists') criticised it for not even approaching a tangible solution to the problem of discrimination (Trat, 1996). Furthermore, although *parité* had also been thought to 'reconcile' French feminists over their old quarrel (Scott, 1997), it contributed to the re-assertion of antagonistic positions among feminists and created other dividing lines. Among critics of *parité*, feminists, such as Badinter (1999) and Pisier (1999), presented their arguments within the official republican discourse of indivisibility. Their concerns revolved around the real possibility that a law on *parité* would encourage further demands of quotas (notably ethnic quotas), resulting in the weakening of the Republic's unity:

> La dualité des genres reste incompatible avec le principe de souveraineté nationale: le député ne tient son mandat d'aucune "section du peuple". Sauf à changer la Représentation nationale (Pisier, 1999: 196).

> (...) l'argument du nombre, autrement dit des quotas, engendrera inévitablement de nouvelles revendications paritaires de la part d'autres communautés, raciales, religieuses, voire culturelles ou sexuelles. (...)

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> Faut-il répeter que la politique est avant tout un choix idéologique, où
> la spécificité sexuelle n'a guère à dire? (Badinter, 1999: 18, 19)

The other main argument against *parité* is bound up with the meanings attached to the political representation in France. 'Equality feminists' have pointed out that *parité* would do little else but promote a female elite and that difference among French women should be considered (Hirata *et al*, 1994; Trat, 1996; Sallenave, 1999).[40] Furthermore, in one of her comments at the Toulouse conference on *parité* Trat (1997) stressed that other socio-cultural categories needed to be considered on a par with *parité* advocates' demands. She argued that the debate was far too closed and solutions to gender inequality needed to be inclusive of other socio-cultural differences. Tardy (1998: 125) who presented a paper at the conference included in her conclusion the fact that for democracy to really exist, other social categories needed to be more adequately represented:

> C'est au nom d'une meilleure expression de la démocratie que l'on doit revendiquer des assemblées élues plus représentatives de la composition de la société, en termes de classe, de sexes et d'ethnies.

Such an opinion evidently goes against French republican principles and has not been promoted by French *parité* advocates as such. Evelyne Tardy is also from Quebec and therefore presented a view-point influenced by what can be called an Anglo-American tradition (as opposed to the French republican tradition).

Sometimes criticised for the underlying essentialist nature of their arguments, *parité* advocates have argued that their claim was very much in the spirit of the universal

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[40]Josette Trat was the only person of the hundreds present at the international conference 'La Parité, Enjeux et mise en Œuvre' (Toulouse Le Mirail, February 6-7) to mention this possibility. Her comments were not considered helpful and have not been included in the conference proceedings.

and emphasised that the construction of sexual differences was socio-historical. Whilst *parité* is supported by 'difference feminists', the discourse of difference is refuted by other *parité* advocates, notably Gaspard (1994a, 1994b), Mossuz-Lavau (1998) and Servan-Schreiber (1994):

> Nous ne fondons pas la parité sur la différence (...). La parité vise à l'application d'un idéal d'égalité universelle, au-delà des similitudes et des différences propres à chaque individu. Mais elle se fonde aussi sur le fait qu'il n'y a pas d'inscription possible de l'universel dans la réalité sociale qui ne passe, d'abord, par l'un ou l'autre sexe. C'est à partir de là qu'il faut travailler et non pas à partir de la justification ou de la dénégation de la différence des sexes (Servan-Schreiber, 1994:74).[41]

Gaspard further (1994a) emphasises that she does not believe that women should be numerically equally represented in elected bodies because only women could represent women, nor does she agree with the belief that there should exist a parallel political system for women. *Parité* advocates have nonetheless usually been criticised for the essentialist nature believed to be bound up with the idea of *parité*.[42] Gaspard further justifies the specificity of formal gender equality by the fact that the Republic has been able to integrate other socio-cultural differences, but has been highly exclusive of women:

> Lorsque j'étais députée, j'ai compté mes collegues en fonction de leur origine nationale. Je me suis aperçue qu'il y avait de nombreux élus dont les parents avaient - ou avaient eu - la nationalité italienne, polonaise, espagnole... Mais tous, comme mes collègues français "de souche" (dont les grands-parents, peut être, étaient eux aussi venus d'un autre pays) étaient des hommes. Nombre d'entre eux, fils de

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[41]Comments by Claude Servan Schreiber during the Journée de L'ANEF the 28th May 1994 in Paris. Supplément au Bulletin de l'ANEF No 16 Pouvoir, Parité et Représentation Politique

[42]For an overview of the arguments against *parité* see Le Piège de la Parité: arguments pour un débat - Paris: Hachette, 1999; Nouvelles questions féministes, 'La parité "contre"', Numéro spécial, May 1995.

Français ou d'immigrés, étaient des enfants de prolétaires. La République intègre donc des différences, nationales et sociales, mais elle n'intègre pas les femmes ou ne le fait qu' à petite dose (Gaspard, 1994b: 48).

Gaspard makes no mention of French Caribbean men and Chapters Four and Five demonstrate the fact that contrary to the assumptions in the above quote, the Republic has not been able to integrate French Caribbean communities. Despite efforts to be non-differentialist, the Republic and the concept of citizenship bound up with it, were built on a tradition of racism and sexism, through sometimes quite explicit discrimination. As explained earlier, French feminists (such as Le Dœuff, 1989; Fraisse, 1997 and Perrot, 1998) have indeed demonstrated how the universal was gendered and constructed at the expense of women. The following chapters further argue that whilst that is indeed the case, the Republic has also been exclusive of others, such as French Caribbean communities.

Whilst the overall message of *parité* advocates is not, they claim, one that stems from a differentialist tradition, *parité* has attracted the attention of 'difference feminists' in France, but also from outside France. Both 'difference feminists' and *parité* advocates see in *parité* an opportunity for women not only to get a 'fairer go' in the competitive political arena, but also to have the right as a woman to be represented by a woman (Skjeie, 1994:11). This view makes the clear assumption that interests are gendered. The conclusion drawn from this is that the representation of women requires women representatives. Skjeie (1994: 12) further argues that the existence of typically 'female offices' (health, social issues in general and environmental issue) and 'male offices' (security, foreign affairs, internal affairs, transport, energy and

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economic issues)[43] demonstrate that men and women could have 'something different' to offer, complementing each other. She agrees however that women are still made to justify their presence in politics (as opposed to men), and thus sees in quotas, and *parité* by extension, the opportunity for women to show how their contribution might enrich politics.

However, some offices are held in higher esteem than others. It is clear that the most important offices tend to be held by male politicians. The emphasis on 'difference' does not tackle the power relations at stake. If some differences are valued more highly than others (reflected in the fact that women's offices are usually less valued), the existence of *parité* is not going to change the distribution of power and as clearly outlined by Hirata *et al*, power will remain in the hands of men (1999: 13):

> (...) dans l'état des rapports sociaux actuels, un homme et une femme ne sont pas équivalents en termes de rapports de pouvoir et cinquante hommes peuvent user des rouages du système au point de rendre inefficiente l'intervention de cinquante femmes.

Political offices traditionally given to women are often not held in the same esteem as those held by men. It could in fact be suggested that whenever women enter a sphere of power then that power diminishes. Wherever women go, power escapes them. Although women are entering politics, they are still strategically kept on the margins of power. There has however been some speculation concerning possible changes and positive outcomes of the presence of 'enough' women (Allwood & Wadia, 2000).

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[43]Mariette Sineau (1998) points out how much political office is gendered. This is also backed up by public opinion despite the untraditional positions held by women during Mitterrand presidency (where a woman, Edith Cresson, became Prime Minister for the first time). Cf: 'La féminisation du pouvoir vue par les Français-es et par les hommes politiques' in Martin J. (ed.) La Parité. Enjeux et mise en Œuvre (Conference proceedings) -Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, pp. 61-81.

There is nothing to suggest, however, that the same principle could not be extended to other social categories, in that their presence in parliament in greater and sufficient numbers may make a difference in the challenging of hegemonic power relations.

Parité advocates are of the opinion that gender cannot be seen as a category, for it transcends all the other socio-cultural categories. (Gaspard, 1994a, Mossuz-Lavau, 1998; Roudy, 1998). They emphasise the fact that we are born either man or woman; gender is therefore seen as an "ultimate category" and is legitimised by the fact that the Republic has always recognised the duality of humanity (even though this was used against the inclusion of women in the public sphere). *Parité* is not seen to be a form of positive discrimination, simply the only way to accomplish "real equality" (Agacinski, 1998: 187), for women are seen as half the population of the world and should, according to *parité* advocates, be represented accordingly.

Whilst *parité* advocates argue that *parité* should be understood as the advancement of greater equality, 'equality feminists' have nonetheless understood *parité* as a threat to the status of equality they had fought for over the years:

> (…) on enferme les femmes dans une spécificité et un rôle dont on a mis vingt ans à essayer de sortir. Car tous les progrès réalisés sur la voie de l'égalité des femmes ont été accomplis au nom du principe opposé: hommes et femmes sont fondamentalement ressemblants. Ils ont bien sûr des différences mais pour un certain nombre d'activités, dont les activités citoyennes, ce qui les unit est bien plus important que ce qui les distingue (Badinter, 1999: 41).

Furthermore, equality of opportunity is also very different from equality of results, the latter actually emphasising difference. Whilst Gaspard (1994a) quotes Joan Scott to support the argument that anyone asking for equality is logically recognising a state of

difference, that difference is one that results from unequal social relations based on prejudices. Therefore asking for equality by using the divisions imposed by patriarchal ideologies does little more than to reinforce them. Recognising discrimination against women and unravelling the mechanisms behind such discrimination is the only way to real equality. Merely adding women to parliament does not guarantee the end of discrimination against women for, to mention the argument of Hirata *et al* once more, it is the existing power relations that need to be tackled, not merely the percentage of women in elected bodies. In fact power relations have never really been an issue among *parité* advocates. Only one presentation at the Toulouse conference on *parité* in fact correctly suggested that more than women in power there was a need for more feminists in power (Tardy, 1998), a statement that carries a lot more meaning than the general message of French *parité* advocates:[44]

> Les élues féministes pourront faire changer [les] règles du jeu politique qui défavorisent encore grandement les femmes. Parce qu'elles sont solidaires des autres femmes, elles se montreront plus sensibles qu'un homme ou une autre femme à l'égalité des droits, à la lutte contre la discrimination, au respect du droit à l'avortement, à la lutte contre la violence familiale, etc.
>
> C'est pourquoi il est non seulement important de revendiquer la parité de représentation dans les assemblées élues, mais il faut travailler fort pour qu'il y ait une majorité de féministes parmi ces élues (ibid, p 125).

The issue of power relations has indeed been used against *parité* advocates, notably by feminist members of the *Gedisst*.[45] Tardy (1998) supported *parité*, but felt it

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[44]Evelyne Tardy, 1998, 'Profild d'élues municipales au Québec: des reines-abeilles aux féministes' in J. Martin (ed.) La Parité. Enjeux et Mise en Œuvre (conference proceedings) -Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, pp. 111-126.

[45]For example: Varika, E., Hirata, H., Trat, J. and Kergoat, D.

important to examine some of its limits, not to provide arguments for the other side, but in an effort to make sure *parité* would, in the long term, challenge gender relations.

Whilst *parité* has been promoted as a vector of equality it has also been both supported, and criticised, for being quite the reverse, promoting in fact sexual difference. It has been mentioned that the ambiguous nature of the concept came from the fact that *parité* had not been solidly grounded in theory. In fact, whilst it is indeed based on French feminist theory, it has been difficult to conceptualise within French political theory. Furthermore, as it has been demonstrated, French feminist theory is greatly divided, and whilst *parité* advocates have campaigned on the ground of equality, they have often lapsed into a differentialist discourse notably around the issue of representation, or as they (*parité* advocates) say, 'fair representation'. The problem has been to define what they meant by 'fair representation' and whether *parité* was really the only way of achieving it.

4) *Parité*, *Mixité*, and the Struggle to Account for Difference

The idea of *mixité* can no longer be easily situated within the French feminist discourse, for its meaning appear to have changed over time, and appear to be in the process of further developments. *Mixité* can refer to a pre-*parité* stage among *parité* advocates for whom *parité* was the achievement of 'fair *mixité*' by the institutionalisation of numerical equality in French politics (Halimi, 1997: 132). For others, *mixité* refers to a desire for 'greater fairness' for women *and* for men in all

public areas of French society, a project that 'equality feminists' have generally defended (Varikas, 1995; 1999; Rochefort, 1995). 'Difference feminists' have also used *parité* and *mixité* inter-changeably, arguing that *mixité* refers specifically to the duality of humanity (Halimi, 1994, 1997; Agacinski, 1998).

It is in education that the word *mixité* became normalised and accepted as part and parcel of reality: boys and girls were able to go to the same schools and share the same classes. 'Mixed schools' were supposed to be central in the integration of women in society by giving them the same opportunities as men (Rochefort, 1995). Yet *mixité* in schools and at work did not prevent women from being discriminated against, nor did it challenge gender stereotypes (Zaidman, 1992a, 1992b). A few studies on why *mixité* has generally not succeeded in challenging gender relations has led some researchers to advocate the need for greater anti-sexist education and the consideration of affirmative action measures for women (Fortino, 2000).

Rochefort (1995: 189) explains that *mixité* has always been bound up with 'equality feminism', with roots going as far back as Hubertine Auclert in 1898 who had expressed the need for the creation of a 'mixed academy'. The aim of 'equality feminists' is the integration of women into all social, cultural and political structures. As previously noted, 'equality feminists' have argued that women and men should be given the same opportunities in all areas of life, thereby encouraging *mixité*.

However, as briefly mentioned in this chapter's introduction, the very definition of *mixité* has been considered problematic. In fact, *parité* advocates have argued that it has contributed to the promotion of gender inequalities. *Mixité* is defined as the co-

existence of men and women (or boys and girls) in the same social space (Zaidman, 1992b: 7), without reference to any minimum or maximum proportion of either gender:

> La mixité ne s'est jamais définie par un quota particulier et une seule femme dans une assemblée d'hommes (ou l'inverse) suffit à la qualifier de mixte (Rochefort, 1995: 198).

Parité advocates therefore departed from the idea of *mixité*, for they argued that French elected bodies already displayed *mixité*, which was clearly masculine (Gaspard, 1994b; Le Dœuff, 1992). The lack of reference to some minimum proportion requirement of either gender has thus contributed to the exclusion of women from political institutions. For Gaspard (1994b), *mixité* can only disguise discrimination, thus only giving the illusion that equality of opportunities does exist for all French citizens.

The only solution was thus to prescribe a minimum proportion of men and women in any definition of *mixité*. Zaidman (1992a) points out that this brings the problem of what constitutes the right proportion of men and women in a same social space for it to be qualified as 'mixte'.

In the particular context of political institutions, the idea behind *parité* was thus to turn what was believed to be an obvious 'masculine *mixité*' (Zaidman, 1992b), into a real or 'true *mixité*' (Agacinski, 1998: 101), one which would take account of the duality of humanity:

La tentation universaliste a voulu neutraliser la différence des sexes au profit de l'universalité du sujet: il s'agit aujourd'hui, à l'inverse, de *politiser la différence des sexes*, c'est-à-dire de travailler à toujours réinventer le sens de cette différence. Penser la mixité, c'est considérer qu'il y a deux versions de l'homme, et se représenter l'humanité comme un couple. Politiser la différence implique de traduire politiquement la valeur de la mixité.

For *parité* advocates, *mixité* has often been described as a preliminary step in the achievement of *parité* in elected bodies. For other feminists in support of *parité*, greater *mixité* should also be considered in other areas of French public life (Le Dœuff, 1989: 346). By extension, then, *parité* should not just refer to numerical equality between men and women in elected bodies, but should also consider other areas such as education and work. Research on the practice and development of *mixité* in the public sphere has shown the establishment of 'feminine *mixité*' (considerably higher proportion of women) and 'masculine *mixité*' (considerably higher proportion of men) in particular branches of education and work (Fortino, 2000). Furthermore, *mixité* does not challenge gender relations, for in areas where there is a higher proportion of men, power and prestige are the greatest. Zaidman (1992a, 1992b) and Maruani (1997) argue that *mixité* does not guarantee equality. In fact, whilst the practice of *mixité* has strongly challenged the exclusion of women from public life, it has not stopped them from being discriminated against.[46] It remains to be seen whether *parité* (in elected bodies) will be able to successfully challenge gender relations for *they are* the issue. *Parité* in fact runs the risk of becoming yet another illusion of equality, with little positive impact on women's lives:

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[46]Gender inequalities continue in the work place. One example of such inequalities is the fact that women's salaries remain below that of men. For more details on unequal salaries see: Silvera, R. (1996) <u>Le salaire des femmes: toutes choses inégales...</u> -Paris: La Documentation Française. See also Laufer, J. and Fouquet, A. (1999) 'Femmes cadres: carrières, accès au pouvoir et à la décision' in <u>Cultures en Mouvement</u>, No. 14, February, pp. 39-42.

> Dans l'état présent du monde politique, cette idée entretient l'illusion
> d'un changement de rapports de force entre les hommes et les femmes
> en laissant croire, de fait, aux transformations des antagonismes par le
> simple vote d'une loi (Hirata *et al*, 1999: 13).

Parité may indeed give the impression that gender inequalities have been resolved and will no longer be an issue. Furthermore, not only does *parité* promote an illusion of equality, it is also making a strong and ambiguous statement about the nature of that equality, namely one that promotes sexual difference. This, Kandel (1999: 179) argues reinforces the double discourse of equality-difference.

Parité is indeed only officially acceptable if it is framed within the universalist republican discourse of equality. *Parité* advocates have never openly agreed with the fact that *parité* was promoting a certain 'divisibility' of the nation, and do not see any contradiction with a dual conception of humanity and the republican discourse (Agacinski, 1998; Halimi, 1997):

> La parité devrait être la mixité de la "représentation nationale" dans son
> entier, pour représenter la mixité de l'humanité de la nation en son entier.
> Il n'y a pas, c'est du moins mon approche, de représentation d'un groupe
> de citoyens par un groupe d'élus (Agacinski, 1998: 196).

They strongly defend the claim that gender is not a 'category', that women do not constitute a 'community' (Halimi, 1997: 132), and that on that basis, there is no fear of departing from the indivisibility prescribed by the official discourse. Nonetheless, those against *parité*, cannot dissociate such arguments from essentialism and 'difference feminism'. In fact Fraisse (1994) and Collin (1993) have both described *parité* as a necessary evil, which was theoretically unsound but practically sound (to

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paraphrase Fraisse).[47] This pragmatism was reiterated at the Toulouse conference mentioned earlier, both by Fraisse and Gaspard. Both Collin and Fraisse's positions reflect the difficulty of understanding *parité* within the universalist republican framework. In fact, as mentioned before, it reflects the general difficulty of contemplating the acknowledgement of difference in general, for French feminism has consistently shown a tension between equality and difference. The promotion and endorsement of that double discourse within the official discourse nonetheless result in the promotion of a mixed message: sometimes, one should recognise sexual difference, and at other times, it will not be appropriate.

The fact that *parité* found allies in the differentialist tradition as well as in the universalist one resulted in its grounding in two opposite discourses, giving the impression of complexity at best, and vagueness and clumsiness at worst. The only real consensus among them has been that more women should be able to access positions of power, and notably parliament. The disagreements stem from the reasons why this should be the case (on the grounds of difference or on the grounds of equality). Nonetheless, it is because the demand for *parité* could be made from within the universalist model that it found sympathetic ears among French politicians.

The republican system of representation relies on an 'abstract citizen', that is the idea that the French citizen should be perceived as neutral and therefore as ungendered and unracialised, which this thesis argues is not the case. Political representation in France relies nonetheless on the French republican principles of unity and

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[47]Both Collin and Fraisse are quoted by Kandel (1999: 178). Collin, F. (1993) 'La parité: une autre démocratie pour la France?' in <u>Les cahiers du Grif</u>, No. 47; Fraisse, G. (1994) 'La souveraineté limitée des femmes' in <u>Libération</u>, June 14.

indivisibility, and as such on the idea of 'abstract citizens'. French members of parliament do not represent a constituency as such, they are always seen as representatives of the nation. No one is there to represent a particular social or cultural group for the idea of community is not in line with the principle of indivisibility of the French nation, and any threat to the Republic's indivisibility has never been acceptable. Therefore a man should be able to represent the best interests of the whole of the French nation (that is that of women, children, gay and lesbians and ethnic minorities). This is why Badinter (1999), Pisier (1999) and Schnapper (1999) to name a few, have argued against *parité*, considered to be a way of representing a particular category of the French population, and as such, considered to be anti-republican and unconstitutional.

Yet, *parité* advocates have specifically explained that the gendered conception of humanity was not unconstitutional, arguing against gender as a category of any sort. Halimi (1997) explains that there should not be any reason for fearing that *parité* should slide into some 'multiculturalist discourse', for she stresses that gender transcends all socio-cultural categories. Other *parité* advocates (such as Mossuz-Lavau, 1998 and Agacinski, 1998) make the same point, but they usually rely on a differentialist discourse to support their argument. Halimi (1997: 126) quotes Irigaray (a well known 'difference feminist) in her attempt to place gender above all other socio-cultural categories, and Mossuz-Lavau's work on the specificity of women hides again a certain attachment to the idea of nature (Ferry, 1999: 130),[48] and so to the French feminist differentialist discourse.

Still, as explained, *parité* only became part of the official discourse on the grounds of the universal (dual) nature of its claim, making the legitimacy of further similar socio-cultural demands very difficult. With the endorsement of *parité* came the rejection of plurality in the official discourse. The next chapter investigates the multicultural discourse in France, paying considerable attention to the association between multiculturalism and *communautarism*, an important issue among *parité* sceptics (Halimi, 1997, Mossuz-Lavau, 1998). Whilst *parité* advocates refused to (openly at least) consider other socio-cultural categories in their argument for greater (and real) equality, the next section examines the fact that some women have backed up the project in the hope that *parité* would, in fact, open up the multicultural debate and the consideration of ethnic quotas.[49]

It has been demonstrated that the concept of *mixité* was not sufficiently precise in that it can easily hide gender discrimination. Advocates of *parité* have however refused to consider the fact that it can also hide racial discrimination. In fact, the refusal to engage with the heterogeneity of French women by *parité* advocates reflects a certain French feminist tradition (Quiminal, 1997: 31) outlined earlier on in this chapter (Section Two). The fight for greater equality between men and women within the parameters of republican discourses may have diluted the strength of French feminism. Also, the relative absence of racialised French feminist issues and theory strongly undermine the counter-hegemonic nature of French feminist discourses. In any case, one cannot help but wonder whether the official endorsement of *parité*

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[48]Especially her book co-written with a gynaecologist: Mossuz-Lavau, J. and Kervasdoué, A. (1997) <u>Les femmes ne sont pas des hommes comme les autres</u> - Paris: Odile Jacob.

[49]Mme Pau-Langevin, from the ANT explained that she supported *parité* for the potential extension to ethnic minority quotas, and knew of other women who shared that vision. See Appendix A.

results in bringing the counter-hegemonic discourse even closer to the official republican discourse, which this thesis argues, remains contained within racist parameters.

5) *Parité* does not reflect the true *Mixité* of society

The concept of *mixité* was at the heart of the early feminist discourse, profoundly rooted in the universal republican ideology (Rochefort, 1995). The desire for greater equality between men and women was thought to be achievable by the inclusion of women in areas of life previously closed to them. However, although the early feminists found allies among men, feminist organisations became closed to men. Feminists today feel that this non-*mixité* was necessary at a time when women were far too often excluded (Kremer, 2000: 12):

> Au XIXe siècle, le féminisme est né mixte. Mais, en 1970, le féminisme français s'est séparé des hommes pour analyser les mécanismes qui faisaient que les femmes ne prenaient pas la parole dans les groupes mixtes.[50]

Mixité might have resolved the issue of women's exclusion, but it is clear that it has not overcome gender discrimination. *Parité* advocates argued that the only solution was the recognition of *parité* which effects would, in the long-term filter down to all women, in all areas of life. Although *parité* has been constructed as the alternative to a masculine *mixité*, it transpires that *mixité* is itself an alternative to *parité*. New feminist organisations are indeed emerging in France, branding the name of *mixité*.

Mix-Cité, and *Mixture à Lille* are but two of these organisations.[51] Whilst members of these organisations understand the need for the lack of *mixité* of the 'old MLF generation', they strongly support the idea that the feminist discourse can no longer be constructed without men. They argue that gender relations and conceptions of masculinity and femininity can only change by bringing men and women together.

This renewed feminist activism reflects the positions of 'equality feminists' in that it supports the idea that gender relations are socially and culturally constructed, and therefore can be transformed. Furthermore, it promotes a desire for equality by inclusion, refuting any idea of 'natural difference' backed up with a reference to Simone de Beauvoir:

> (…) estimer les différence atomiques essentielles, c'est transformer l'origine des hommes et des femmes en destin et justifier les inégalités. Si tout était conditionné par la naissance, il serait en vain de se mobiliser pour changer les choses. Nous pensons que le poids de l'histoire et de la culture est déterminant. "On ne naît pas femme, on le devient", disait Simone de Beauvoir. Aussi est-il possible d'agir pour que la culture, l'éducation, les mentalités évoluent vers l'égalité.[52]

For these young feminists, transforming gender relations constitutes the crux of their fight, which cannot be achieved without *mixité*. Furthermore, they also radically transform the meanings attached to *mixité*, by making a very strong statement of inclusivity and solidarity with other socio-cultural categories:

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[50]Montreynaud, F. quoted by Kremer, P. (2000) 'La jeune garde féministe, "aux antipodes de la guerre des sexes" in <u>Le Monde,</u> March 8, 2000.

[51]Sarfati, A.-C. (2000) 'Nouvelles féministes: jamais sans les hommes!' in <u>Elle,</u> January 10, 2000.

[52]See the presentation of *Mix-Cité*, http://www.multimania.com/mixite/Pres.htm.

> Tout doit être possible pour chacun, quels que soit son sexe, sa couleur de peau, sa sexualité. Être féministe, c'est pour nous être universaliste.[53]

Mixité, as a word, presents the advantage of being more easily inclusive than *parité* ever was. It can allow for change and development, instead of the fixed quotas categories proposed by *parité*. Whilst both *mixité* and *parité* are concepts strongly associated with gender relations, *mixité* has not had the media exposure of *parité* and also emerges from a renewed feminist activism. This could have beneficial consequences for the construction of a more inclusive French feminist discourse. *Mixité* can easily be used in the context of French gender relations, but also in that of French 'race' relations. Adopting *mixité* instead of *parité* could thus emphasise the desire for greater equality for everyone, whatever their social and cultural background.

The lack of a 'true cultural *mixité*' can be noted alongside the 'distinct masculine *mixité*' in all areas of French public life. As women are still too few in positions of power and responsibility so are men and women from migrant origins. Greater cultural *mixité* in terms of greater access to equality by French 'cultural/ethnic minorities' was where the debate really lay for French Caribbean people (mostly women) I met in Paris in 1999. Whilst an examination of the debates around *parité* has shown that women have different ideas about what constitutes equality and fairness and that women who support *parité* do so for different reasons, some women do not feel concerned by it all.

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[53]*Ibid.*

The overall attitude of the women I met in Paris towards *parité* was of great ambivalence. In fact most of them had never heard of *parité*, the notable exception being Mme. Pau-Langevin who not only knew of *parité*, but was also active in its support. When I ask them whether they had heard of parité and what they made of its claims to be the path to greater equality, Mme. Monfils replied that she had no idea and that she had never heard of the word before meeting with me:

> C'est quoi, ça la parité? J'connais pas... J'ai jamais entendu parler de ça.

The answers of Mme. Talange and M. and Mme. Caspar were very similar. In all the above interviews I had to explain what *parité* meant. Whilst I did not always use the same words, in each case I said that *parité* was a proposed law to establish numerical equality between men and women in political institutions. This I continued to explain, was a bid to challenge gender inequalities and to establish a better representativity of women in politics. Whilst Mme. Talange engaged with my short presentation of *parité*, to my question "Do you think it is likely to change things?", she replied:

> Ben, écoutez, moi je n'sais pas. Je pense qu'en tout cas ça va permettre à plus d'Antillaises d'être inscrites sur des listes... aprés tout, y'en a déjà, même si elles ne sont pas toujours sur les bonnes listes! [rires] ... en tout cas il devrait y avoir une meilleure representation des autres communautés, ça, c'est sûr... Parce que la France, c'est un mélange... Moi, je suis française. Je suis d'ici... mais je suis née là-bas...

Mme. Talange's ideas about *parité* were not that dissimilar to those of Mme. Pau-Langevin. However, whilst Mme. Talange had not thought about the potential of *parité* before that day, for Mme. Pau-Langevin, *parité* had always been part of a much

wider agenda. She said that it was for her and others an underground strategy for the introduction of quotas in the official rhetoric. Once the idea of quotas became acceptable, ethnic quotas could then be introduced. The reason why the 'strategy' was underground was because they (Mme. Pau-Langevin and her activist peers) were only too aware that such arguments would be used against *parité* by the 'Enemy' (her word). Mme Pau-Langevin and Mme Talange's attitudes to *parité* do not fit the official *parité* discourse, they go beyond it, suggesting therefore that gender inequality needs to be considered in the wider and more inclusive discourse of difference. Both M. and Mme. Caspar also felt that "once the idea of quotas is accepted, it might create more possibilities for minorities". Although they "felt very well integrated", they welcomed, as did Mme. Talange, the possibility of "something approaching the situation in the US", where black people are more 'visible' and accepted as part and parcel of everyday life:

> Quand on considère le paysage audio-visuel français, on remarque qu'il n'y a pas de noirs... C'est pas comme aux USA... Mais le problème c'est qu'ici on se sent jamais trop concerné... On ne forme pas un groupe de pression sérieux... C'est ça aussi qui contribue à cet espèce de décalage, ou bien à cette invisibilité comme on disait tout à l'heure... (M. Caspar).

The idea of ethnic quotas thus appeared to be a solution to the apparent lack of political identity for the French Caribbeans living in the Metropole. Mme. Hilaire and Mme. Angélique, as well as Mme. Talange, all seem to agree that French Caribbean people living in the Metropole were not sufficiently well represented. However, whether they felt "unconcerned" (Mme. Talange) or "lazy" (Mme. Angélique and M. Caspar), the distinctive lack of political identity was noted. For Mme. Talange, Mme. Angélique and Mme. Hilaire, the problem was a problem of identity. Mme.

Angélique argued that the problem of identity among French Caribbean communities was a direct consequence of the French state's lack of concern with ethnic communities. As a result, young French Caribbean people living in the Metropole lack a *valued* reference point.

Both Mme. Monfils and Mme. Angélique's reactions to my short presentation on *parité* suggested a distinct feeling of non-representation. Mme. Monfils was adamant that *parité* had nothing to do with her, and would do very little in improving her life chances:

> Ça m'intéresse pas trop ces histoires là... Et puis, ... c'est pas ça qui va changer ma vie! J'vois pas comment ça résoudra mes problèmes. (...) J'arrive pas à trouver du travail et j'ai une petite fille à nourrir, alors...

Mme. Angélique did not understand why on my second conversation with her I was talking to her about *parité*. She asked me to explain how I was linking my concerns about French Caribbean communities and *parité*. I thus explained that I was considering the issue of representation of other socio-cultural groups because *parité* advocates were only concerned with that of women. Both Mme. Hilaire and Mme. Angélique agreed that women should not be considered a homogeneous category, and that more French women in Parliament were unlikely to change anything for specific groups of women. In fact, both Mme. Angélique and Mme. Monfils felt they had been discriminated against because of their skin colour, and both were very angry and resentful about it. They both had 'stories' to tell about people they knew who were turned down for jobs on the phone, convinced it was because of their distinct French Caribbean accent. Mme. Monfils resented the customary passport picture on the CV, which could be used against her. For her, *parité* could do very little. She explained

that she did not have many (white) Metropolitan friends and did not think there was much solidarity between black and white women generally, making *parité* an issue of concern to white women. Mme. Monfils gave the impression of someone who really struggled, and brought back any conversations to her material conditions and the basic fact that she had to bring her daughter up the best she could:

> Hum... Moi je suis secrétaire et je ne trouve pas de travail. Une secrétaire ou une réceptioniste noire, c'est pas vue pareil qu'une blanche. Mon problème c'est que je ne trouve pas de travail et que j'ai une petite fille à nourire. Est-ce que les femmes politiques comprendraient ça mieux que les hommes? C'est pas sûr ... [pause] En fait je pense que ce truc là, l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes, c'est sans doute bien pour les blanches, mais pour nous, les noires... juste l'égalité, ça, ça serait bien. En fait, les Métropolitaines ont plus de chances que les Antillaises, alors c'est normal qu'elles se comparent avec les hommes. Nous, c'est pas pareil. Moi je me compare toujours avec la situation des autres femmes et je vois bien que c'est différent.

Although Mme. Monfils and Mme. Angélique were the most outspoken about the lack of equality between white and black women in France, everyone, without exception, believed that greater equality could still be achieved between black and white people in France. For the majority, *parité* was seen as a first step towards "something like the Americans" (to use M. Caspard's words). For Mme. Angélique and Mme. Monfils however, *parité* was seen as yet another advancement for white women. Both clearly stated that they would start to feel more satisfied if they could see more black people, let alone women in French political institutions:

> Je suppose que vous avez raison... Y'a sans doute pas beaucoup de femmes en politique... Mais des noirs, y'en a combien? Qui c'est qui s'occupe de nos affaires à nous? ... On nous dit qu'on est français. Mais, moi, je vous dit que les Français là, les politiciens, ils s'occupent

pas de nous... C'est des Français blancs qui s'occupent des Français blancs... C'est comme ça. En tout cas, c'est mon avis...

As Mme. Monfils hinted at the possibility of feeling better represented if there were more black people in politics, I asked her the question. She replied that she would feel a little more reassured and that it would bring a little hope because, she said, "the French sometimes forget that you can be French *and* black".

Whilst the people I met gave the impression of being unconcerned by *parité* (except for Mme Pau-Langevin), they all had thought about, even discussed the issue of ethnic quotas (although not very often with a white person said M. and Mme. Caspard, Mme. Monfils and Mme. Angélique). It is therefore legitimate enough to suggest that for them, *parité* could become symbolical of greater opportunities for French Caribbean people. Chapter Five in fact considers the link between *parité* and the recent demands for ethnic quotas in the film industry, arguing that *parité*'s symbolism could indeed go beyond the original (and acceptable) statement about the desire for the end of gender disparity.

6) Conclusion

Parité has challenged many concepts bound up with French republican principles. Rights, citizenship and representation have all been used to support or condemn a law on *parité*. Whilst not all French feminists have been in agreement over such a step, *parité* did mobilise opinion on feminism and women's issues, notably the lack of access to politics by women. However, whilst *parité* brought up many interesting

questions and debates over issues related to the above concepts and principles, other topics were more often than not left on the margins. One important contribution of the thesis is to consider one such absence, that is the questionable representativeness of *parité* when taking the experiences of French Caribbean women into account. Achieving an equal number of men and women in parliament in the belief that this would eventually lead to a more balanced politics or 'fairer representation' has already been questioned. Furthermore some women have argued that the belief in a gendered universal would slow women's progression for equality since the Republic had always recognised the biological differences between men and women, to women's disadvantage. Simply adhering to such an ideology is reinforcing the dominant masculinist way of thinking.

Gendered stereotypes remain acknowledged. Did Skjeie (1994) and Mossuz-Lavau (1997) not emphasise the feminine perspective on politics? Sineau (1998) also showed how public opinion generally associated women with particular forms of (feminised) political office.

Parité advocates did find a way of holding their argument together by insisting that the aim was much more symbolic than anything else (Gaspard, 1994a: 40):

> [La bataille engagée pour la parité] a pour objectif l'obtention d'un droit destiné à permettre l'inclusion, à égalité, des femmes dans la représentation politique, symbole de la reconnaissance de leur présence dans le domaine public. Les féministes qui la mènent font d'ailleurs l'économie d'une argumentation qui consisterait à affirmer que la politique sera nécessairement meilleure parce que les femmes seront en nombre dans les assemblées et, qu'en raison de leur présence, triomphera le féminisme. Elles ne se font pas d'illusion, en effet, sur le choix des candidates par les appareils: entre deux canidates, l'une

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féministe et l'autre qui ne l'est pas, ils choisiront plus certainement,
dans l'état actuel du système partisan, la seconde.

Yet if *parité* is about the right to universal equality, as *parité* advocates are advancing,
what does it add to the prior existence of such a right guaranteed by the constitution, a
right that is extended to everyone, not just one category or one section of the
population? Furthermore, as explained above, *parité* could be used as a symbol for
quotas in general. If Mme. Monfils, Mme. Angélique and Mme. Hilaire do not feel
adequately representated and did not think *parité* would change that, the possibility of
ethnic quotas similar to *parité* were welcomed. In fact, for all of the people I met it
seemed that 'seeing' more black people in positions of power as well as on TV would
be a statement of *égalité des chances* for all.

Furthermore, if women do not hold the 'illusion' that more women in politics will
transform politics and gender relations through the influence of more feminists, then
what can *parité* advocates hope for? The hope, says Gaspard (1994a: 40), is that the
way we do politics is going to change. However, is this necessarily true? Changing
the way politics is done may be a good idea, especially if we consider the
'representation crisis', often illustrated by the fact that people in general feel less and
less concerned by politics and as a result do not vote. However *parité* is not really
offering a better way of doing politics. It is simply looking to include more women in
parliament. It is not however looking at the whole picture, namely considering the
fact that other social groups remain excluded from politics too (contrary to what she is
suggesting in her 'counting exercise' quoted earlier). It is true that we cannot always
include the interests of everybody else. However, purposely leaving the rights and
concerns of ethnic minorities out of the debate, probably in an effort to have an

argument more in keeping with French republican principles is somewhat suspicious. Whilst I cannot guarantee that this was indeed the overall strategy of *parité* advocates, the conversation with Mme. Pau-Langevin referred to earlier made me ponder.

Parité has managed to mobilise public opinion and politicians on women's issues, but it has failed to become more inclusive of other sections of the population in its challenge of French republican representation. As such, it has tended to be seen as remaining grounded in the differentialist tradition and promoting women as a universal group, consisting of one half of the whole of humanity (Gaspard, 1994a, Halimi, 1997; Agacinski, 1998). In failing to open the debate to other socio-cultural categories and in holding on to the belief for a universal category, *parité* advocates have thus failed to challenge the system of representation in France. They deny holding on to the belief that only women should represent women, but insist that 'fair representation' requires *parité* in elected bodies. Their idea of 'fair representation' is also not to be extended to socio-cultural groups, for women do not constitute such a group. Among the many flaws in *parité*, the refusal to consider ethnic minorities' rights and problematic political representation as part and parcel of *parité's* logic somehow fits in with the relative absence of ethnic and racial issues in French feminist theory. In fact, the way *parité* has been made to fit within a republican framework has meant that, not only has *parité* not challenged the principle of republican representation in France, but it has not challenged the 'race' relations entrenched in the republican tradition either. As such it can be suggested that *parité* can be deemed racist, for it propagates a dominant racist ideology of exclusion (Ducoulombier, 2002: 84).

This chapter has argued that a *parité* law was only possible on the grounds that *parité* could be seen as furthering the cause of women within the French republican framework. *Parité* advocates did not therefore challenge the very model that has traditionally excluded women. The republican principles were in fact reiterated throughout the whole *parité* debate. Some French feminists argued against *parité* on the grounds that it was anti-republican, and thus anti-constitutional (in so far as it attracted too much attention to difference and particularity), others felt *parité* would attract the attention of other socio-cultural groups, placing the unity of the Republic at risk. In fact, whilst French feminists have demonstrated how sexual differences have historically prevented women from entering the public sphere on equal terms with men (Fraisse, 1997; Halimi, 1997), they remain determined to adhere to that very republican system. Furthermore, in addition to the fact that the Republic has traditionally been deeply sexist, it has been shown that it has also been deeply racist (see also Chapter Five). This chapter has highlighted the exclusion of 'race' and racialised discourses from the *parité* debate as well as in general French feminist theory (see Chapter Five).

Parité is argued to be exclusionary of other women, but also of other socio-cultural groups. There does not seem to be any sort of legitimacy for favouring *parité* and so, sexual difference, over any other affirmative action policy aimed at other groups. *Parité* does not deal with the issue of difference adequately for it is too restrictive, only concerning women, and as this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, argues, only a certain category of women. Furthermore *parité* legitimises the gendered construction of the universal that French feminism has challenged for so many years. Little can be done by simply adding women into existing political institutions. It remains to be

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seen whether more women in parliament will have an effect on the way we do politics, or whether they will simply be 'men in skirts', promoting the same discourse.

The issue of representation of particular socio-groupings is a very difficult one, and one that is practised as part of multiculturalist policies. The next chapter considers that issue more closely, arguing that seeking a particular representative voice is not helpful and can contribute to the marginalisation of less privileged members of one group. *Parité* is the ultimate example of a closed and fixed categorisation of people, one that pays little attention to the voices of the less advantaged women.

Mixité as an alternative remains a little vague, and as such can be seen as too weak a response or strategy. Yet it is more inclusive than *parité*. Also, whilst the intention of these young activists is very honourable in that it is wanting to be inclusive of all differences, there needs to be further practical developments, of the kind discussed in the next chapter and put forward by Yuval-Davis and Touraine.

<u>**Chapter 3:**</u>

Multiculturalisms and the Difficulty of Plural Identity in Contemporary France.

This chapter explores the character of the discourses, official and unofficial, surrounding the conception of multiculturalism in France. One important objective in this chapter is to show that whilst the French 'assimilationist' model of integration is consistently seen as the opposite, the counter model, to the US 'pluralist' model of integration, in practice, the two models overlap. This discussion revolves around the official republican discourse and the unofficial popular discourse, raising some interesting hypotheses, ones which are especially relevant in consideration of the adoption of *parité*. This conception can be argued to fall within the parameters of affirmative action policies, forming part of the official discourse, and contributing to the search for an alternative vision of integration. It is indeed because the US and French models of integration are, as this chapter will show, seen to be at opposite ends of the multicultural spectrum (the first seen as 'multicultural' and the latter as 'anti-multicultural') that it is interesting to bring in an element of comparison between the two. This discussion in fact not only contributes to a search for an alternative integration model, as suggested above, but also to different ideas of communities, identities and, thus, citizenships. In the official discourses, the French understanding of the US is that it is constituted of 'ethnic communities', contributing to a fragmented identity. By contrast, French intellectuals and politicians have emphasised the relevance of a 'communauté de citoyens' (Schnapper, 1994), the only guarantee of a unified and integrated French identity. A consideration of the multiculturalist discourse in which these debates are contained shows how models of

integration are merely ideals, profoundly ideologised and politicised (Heller, 1996, Martiniello, 1997). The fact that in practice governments and localities have to adopt a more pragmatic approach needs careful consideration and demonstrates the need to see integration or multiculturalism differently.

Unavoidably, this will involve my using the word 'multiculturalism' to refer both to a broad debate in which there are a number of positions and to one of the key standpoints within that debate. This is unavoidable not merely for convenience; it is the case, as the reader will quickly gather, that the language is used differently by different writers, and the discourse has evolved in such a way that for some - but maybe not for all - participants the meaning has evolved significantly even in the last decade. This is therefore to warn the reader that 'multiculturalism' cannot be used in a simple or single sense if the complexity of contemporary debates is to be captured accurately.

The conceptions of *parité* raised in the previous chapter can be understood more clearly in the contexts of these discussions of multiculturalism (or its homonyms). As noted earlier, Chapters Two and Three of the thesis follow from Chapter One 'in parallel' rather than 'in series', in order to establish the key discursive parameters within which the main focus of the thesis, specific debates about *parité*, 'race' and gender, have evolved, and in which they make sense.

The first section of this chapter sets out to situate the French debate on integration and multiculturalism which constitutes a discourse of considerable power; it shows how questions relative to multiculturalism were generally discussed in terms of integration.

In the past ten years, the word 'multiculturalism' (imported from the US) has infiltrated the French intellectual and political scene. The first section explores the consequence of this import, particularly the fact that it has led to a kind of backlash, a reinforcement of the republican rhetoric set against a particular understanding of US multicultural policies (Favell, 1998; Kastoryano, 1998). This was also linked to the emergence in the 1980s and early 1990s of forces of reaction with a new strength, including the growth of the *Front National* (FN) and the implementation of stricter migration policies. Through these arguments, conflicts over identities have become directly engaged with questions of multiculturalism.

The second section of this chapter explores further the common ground between the US and France through their conceptions of nationhood. This section sets out to demonstrate that contrary to the self-understanding or ideals of the French model of integration, France's national identity has been constructed at the expense of some immigrant communities. In fact Chapter Four shows how this does not simply relate to immigrants but also to French migrants who happen to be non-white. This section thus argues that whilst the French model of integration had been set off against that of Germany and the US for their ethnic conception of nationhood, the French model can only be understood in a comparable light: despite its more universalistic claims French identity is also ethnically (or racially) grounded.

The third section concentrates on French anti-discrimination practices. In this section the disparities between the official discourse of the idealised republican model and the practical realities are brought to the fore (Fassin, 2000). This section also demonstrates that the integration and multicultural debates are framed and dictated by

the immigration debate. Far from understanding France as a nation of 'ethnic communities', the tendency has been to see it as a nation of *communauté de citoyens* (Schnapper, 1994) within or outside which lies a 'community of immigrants', potentially endangering national identity. This section also shows that before the mid-1980s a multiculturalism *à la française* was being established. It is only after the mid-1980s that 'French multicultural policies' (described at the time as integration polices) became less preventive and more prescriptive (having to respond to problems), due to the collision of multiculturalism and identity.

The fourth section brings back *parité* into the multiculturalist discourse, through the exploration of conceptions and policies for Affirmative Action. This section explores the inadequacies of the multiculturalist discourse, especially in France. The fact that such a discourse has been framed by immigration and anti-racist issues has generally left women out of the debate. This section argues for the need to rethink multiculturalism and possibly to rename it so that it encompasses all kinds of socio-cultural categories. This section argues that tackling inequalities and discrimination adequately could be sufficient in establishing a stable social order.

1) French Multiculturalisms?

Defining multiculturalism is not an easy task: it refers to different kinds and different levels of social relations. Wieviorka (1997b: 106; 1998) proposes a working definition of the term, one that he borrows from Christine Inglis and that recognises three different levels: for him, multiculturalism refers firstly to the description of

modern societies, reflecting their plurality and cultural diversity; secondly, to the philosophical debates bound up with plurality; and finally to policies, governmental practices seen as an appropriate response to cultural diversity. As Wieviorka points out, when one talks about multiculturalism, one tends to refer to the different aspects of the word. Multicultural theory and philosophy cannot be dissociated from these lived realities. Nonetheless reality is interpreted in different ways. As a result, the expression 'multiculturalism' means different things, for example depending on whether one is American, Canadian, Australian or French, but also depending on the position one holds in these societies. The literature on multiculturalism tends to reflect this (Martiniello, 1997: 65). Loosely speaking, multiculturalism refers to the plurality of cultures of a particular society. On the whole, advocates of multiculturalism tend to be seen as endorsing cultural plurality in the name of democracy and tolerance. As such, multiculturalism is a 'value concept' intrinsically linked to issues of morality (Heller, 1996: 27). The degree to which one should, or should not accept/promote cultural diversity varies considerably among multiculturalist advocates. The moral subtext contained in that discourse explains the importance of such a discourse. In the context of France, the debate is more or less split between those for whom endorsing cultural plurality can only be acceptable providing that it does not distract from the project of a strong citizenry (Schnapper, 1994, 1998), and those for whom cultural plurality is only one aspect of an individual's positioning (Wieviorka and Touraine). This divided French multiculturalist discourse can also be described as advocates of 'republican integration' versus advocates of multiculturalism. Although Wieviorka (1997b) and Boucher (2000) both understand multiculturalism in terms of four distinct categories, this chapter argues that the debate is indeed dichotomous.

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As previously mentioned, whilst the word 'multiculturalism' is relatively new in France, some of the issues raised by the Anglo-American debate have not been absent from the French intellectual and political scenes. In France, those issues have revolved around immigration policies and immigrant welfare, creating a particular framework for the development of the French multiculturalist discourse (Schnapper, 1998). The early multicultural discourse in France can be argued to have taken shape around three related concepts: assimilation, insertion and integration. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the French debate was largely dominated by the promotion of the republican integration model (Favell, 1998; Wieviorka, 1997) and a general anti-multiculturalism *à l'américaine*. The end of the chapter will consider an emerging French multiculturalism in the writings of Wieviorka, Touraine and Lacorne.

Whilst the French multicultural debate can be understood in a linear progression, some writers have fixed it in terms of four different perspectives: 'assimilationist', 'integrationist', 'multiculturalist' and 'communitarist'.[54] This model represents the multiculturalist discourse on a spectrum that goes from the least tolerant to the most tolerant, in matters of the recognition of ethnic particularities.

In France there are very few intellectuals and politicians who see themselves as either 'assimilationist' or 'communitarist'. Wieviorka (1997b) himself acknowledges that there is no-one who could fit into the communitarist perspective. As for the assimilationist perspective, Emmanuel Todd (1994) is about the only one and his work has even been described as 'bizzare' (Fassin, 1999). I thus argue that the

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[54]In his overview of the French debate on integration, Boucher (2000: 197) follows Wieviorka's model.

multiculturalist discourse in France is a dialectical one, and that generally influential French intellectuals, such as Pierre-André Taguieff, remain faithful to the ideas behind the republican model of integration (Bertheleu, 1997; Favell, 1998). Although Wieviorka (1997b) tries to define a general framework for the multiculturalist discourse, I believe that it is not necessary. The French debate started on a different footing from the Anglo-American debate in that it was approached through concerns over immigration issues, unlike in the US where it was a response to issues resulting from established ethnic communities. As mentioned above, multiculturalist discourse in France is argued to have been an extension of the immigration debates in France in the 1970s and 1980s, notably around the concepts of assimilation, insertion and integration. Through a consideration of those concepts, the first two perspectives defined by Boucher as 'assimilationist' and 'integrationist' will be explored. The 'communitarist perspective' will then be considered as part of the greater debate surrounding the anti-American, anti-multiculturalism of the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Finally the multiculturalist perspective, which is argued to be the second main perspective of the French multiculturalist discourse, will be explored within the context of the chapter as a whole.

Assimilation

Both Boucher (2000) and Wieviorka (1997b) define the assimilationist perspective as the rejection of cultural plurality in the public sphere. Instead, equality and individual freedom for all citizens are seen as only achievable if everyone recognises the same (liberal) value system. The assimilationist perspective tends to be described as the

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principal ideology behind the 'traditional French model of integration' (Martiniello, 1997; Boucher, 2000), that is to 'absorb' the Other into French culture through citizenship (Kastoryano, 1996; Schnapper, 1998). Although assimilation and integration have slightly different emphases, in both cases there is a strong attachment to the importance of the republican principles and a belief in social cohesion through citizenship. The principal difference between integration and assimilation is the absence of individual choice in the latter. Integration allows the choice to belong to the 'community of citizens' (Schnapper, 1994), whilst assimilation describes a process of absorption directed by the French state without choice. Immigrants were thus given the choice to belong through integration to the 'community of citizens' or to remain part of a 'community of immigrants'. Whilst the language has changed, the overall arguments and ideologies appear to have remained the same, and have been re-established in the 1980s under the new (and more politically acceptable) term 'integration'.

As mentioned above, self-defined assimilationists are very few in France, for the word itself is too heavily bound up with colonial ideologies (Boucher, 2000: 26; Kastaryano, 1996: 32):

> Depuis la décolonisation, la notion d'assimilation est peu à peu abandonnée. Elle n'est presque plus utilisée car devenue péjorative. En effet, dans un contexte de combat pour l'indépendance, l'assimilation apparaît pour les anciens colonisés comme un processus dévastateur pour la construction de l'estime de soi. Il s'agit de se défaire du colonialisme en affirmant une culture, une histoire et des valeurs propres (Boucher, 200: 26).

As the above quotation suggests, in the context of decolonisation, the idea of assimilation was no longer appropriate: no longer should the culture of the colonised

be suppressed. Whilst in the context of independence this change of attitude might be easily understandable, decolonisation in the French Caribbean took a different form. Chapter Four explains the shift from the status of French colony to that of French department in some details and shows how assimilationist attitudes were still prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s. Whilst the assimilationist policies of the French state have since been criticised (see Chapter Four) and French Caribbean sub-cultures may be emerging (see Chapter Five), assimilationist (although a very small minority) and 'integrationist' advocates see, in the acknowledgement of cultural difference, the appropriation of a differentialist ideology, feared to resemble American multiculturalism.

Emmanuel Todd (1994: 11) can be set apart from the rest of French social scientists for he strongly supports the need for an assimilationist perspective on the basis of his anthropological research. For him, cultural diversity leads to assimilation or exclusion, and is always a factor of momentary disruption. Furthermore Todd sees inter-ethnic marriages as an important contribution to the assimilation process. Tribalat's research (described below) suggests that assimilation can occur, but does not necessarily prevent exclusion. Inter-ethnic marriages in France are considerable, yet exclusion and discrimination occur. In fact Todd (1994: 371) believes in the overall republican assimilationist project and rejects the idea that ethnic segregation could occur in France:

> À aucun moment les populations françaises n'ont laissé transparaître une - négrophobie - de type anglo-saxon, susceptible d'envoyer les Noirs au ghetto comme aux États-Unis, ou de les reléguer dans un sous-prolétariat culturellement distinct comme en Angleterre.

An important contribution of this thesis is to demystify the French republican model of integration. A certain degree of assimilation might indeed occur in French society. However, the belief that assimilation leads to 'absorption', a 'French melting pot' has proven to be untrue (Wieviorka, 1997; Favell, 1998). Besides the suspicious ideological (and neo-colonial) nature of such a desire, the fact is that important sections of the French population have suffered from discrimination and exclusion. This thesis addresses that particular issue with regard to the French Caribbean communities. Chapter Five demonstrates that their 'successful integration' in French society remains questionable, not least in a sense that their skin colour gives them the label of 'non-French'.

Todd (1994) further believes that the roots of French republicanism are so deeply enshrined in French culture, that cultural fragmentation cannot occur in France. Such an over simplified and determinist vision of French integration is described by Fassin (1999: 228) as a "somewhat bizarre anthropological determinism [allowing] a perfect (and perfectly reassuring) contrast [to the situation in the US]."

Tribalat (1995) argues for a certain 'depolitisation' of the word assimilation. For her scientific research points towards a 'natural process' of adoption of the host's culture by immigrants' children in French society. She argues that such a process can be observed and measured. The consideration of the abandonment of certain cultural practices such as religious practices, the numbers of mixed-marriages and the levels of education, all pointed towards the somewhat astonishing result at the time,[55] that

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[55]From the mid-1980s onwards, populations of Northern African origin living in France became highly 'visible' in integration debates and tended to be 'problematised' by the media and the extreme right party.

descendants of Northern African origins were 'assimilated' into French society (Favell, 1998). She explains that their cultural practices did not differ from the dominant culture and the higher levels of education were also suggestive of a good 'adaptation' to French society. She suggests that whilst immigrants may keep strong ties with their country of origin, their children and their children's children will 'naturally' adopt the dominant 'host' culture, and this despite exclusionary practices on the part of the host populations. Her use of assimilation is nonetheless quite controversial. Generally speaking, such observations about a particular social group tend to be described as 'good social integration'. Tribalat (1995), in her research broke two 'rules': she considered the population in terms of their country of origin and she decided to re-establish the word 'assimilation' in sociological research. She may have a point: although many social scientists have emphasised the crisis of the 'French model of integration', notably its failure to 'integrate' as it once used to (Wieviorka, 1997), Tribalat's research appears to point to the prevalence of a strong republican socialisation process. However, the discrimination directed towards certain groups called for specific measures in an attempt to prevent further exclusion. These policies went by the name of *politiques d'insertion* and *politiques d'intégration* (Kastoryano, 1996; Favell, 1998; Boucher, 2000).

Insertion & Integration

The last fifteen years can be characterised by the need to find the right word to describe the process of acknowledging as French the descendants of the 'foreigners' established in France (Gaspard, 1992). The idea of assimilation having become

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obsolete (Schnapper, 1998: 407), a search for a new word began especially as concerns over immigrants' welfare was growing in the 1970s. However, as immigration questions became more and more politicised and ambiguous, so did the vocabulary relating to policies aimed at immigrants' welfare:

> Le débat politique français se réfère tantôt à l'intégration, tantôt a l'insertion, en préservant les ambiguïtés quant à leur contenu et leur portée à la fois politique et sociale. L'insertion se lie parfois à l'économique, parfois au social, et l'intégration se rapporte tantôt au culturel, tantôt au social et tantôt au national (Kastoryano, 1996: 33).

Nonetheless, Favell (1998) and Boucher (2000) both describe 'insertion policies' as the policies developed by the Left in the late 1970s and early 1980s, designed to demonstrate the respect of cultural difference and a commitment to anti-racism. It is important to note once again, that the French multiculturalist discourse only emerged through concerns over immigrants' welfare. As such, much of the post-war years were characterised by the avoidance of direct references to 'race' or ethnicity. Instead, policies were either specifically directed at immigrants and their children, or more generally directed at all marginalised groups.

The French government's *"laissez-faire approach"* (Hargreaves, 1995: 192) in immigration controls and social policies resulted in poor housing conditions for the immigrants and their families. It was not until the second half of the 1970s that a ministry in charge of 'immigrant social issues' such as housing was created. Whilst policies were targeting specific groups in ways that could be argued to defy republican rhetoric, they were in fact designed so as to make repatriation easier. Furthermore discrimination against non-French groups was legitimised by French republican discourse through citizenship rights (Simon, 2000: 54).

The emphasis of the 1970s policies was on encouraging the immigrant population to cultivate cultural links with their culture of origin in the hope that immigrants may wish, or may be forced, to return to their country of origin (Hargreaves, 1995).[56] The state thus encouraged investments from sending countries in projects such as teaching children their mother-tongue, and the establishment of places of worship for workers in schools and factories. However, the superficial social policies in favour of immigrants found meaningful support with the coming to power of the Left in 1981. The Left continued to encourage immigrants' own cultural practices but removed the hidden agenda of the previous years by establishing that immigrants and their children were in France to stay (Bleich, 2000; Hargreaves, 1995). Their policies were defined as *politiques d'insertion*, that is social measures aiming to 'insert' or add immigrants and their children into French society whilst preserving their cultural heritage (Costa-Lascoux, 1989). The 'right to difference' had been part of the Left project and was reflected in their policies and social projects. Favell (1998) certainly recognises that 'insertion policies' reflected a certain tolerance and flexibility of the republican discourse in aiming to address the social issues facing immigrant communities (such as education and housing). Moreover, the Left government of the early 1980s backed cultural projects, such as the building of Mosques in France (Kastoryano, 1996: 28; Favell, 1998: 57). In fact with an emphasis on cultural differences and a commitment to equality, the Socialists seemed to back a multicultural vision of French society, thus moving away from the traditional republican vision, that is the assimilationist project described above:

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[56]Repatriation was not always on the agenda as such, but was seen as a possibility. It figured more prominently on the agenda under Stoléru (Hargreaves, 1995: 194).

> Alors que l'étranger avait toujours été considéré comme un sujet de droit (…), on parle de plus en plus, à partir des années 80, des "communautés", quelles soient "étrangères", "maghrébines", "juives", "musulmane" etc. (Gaillard, 1997: 126).

However, far from a response to what could be seen as pressures from the outside, assimilationism has also been challenged from the inside. Regions called for a greater recognition of their difference and the right to promote and retain their own regional language. Martiniello (1997: 58-59) argues that regional issues continue to challenge the idea that there is such a thing as a 'unified and indivisible' French Republic based on a particular model of integration. One particular example relates to the relationship between the Metropole and Corsica. Whilst Corsica is a region of France, the movement for its independence placed enough pressure on the French government for it to acknowledge the existence of a "Corsican people" within the Republic:

> [La question Corse] a ouvert une autre brèche dans le "modèle" assimilationiste français (…). L'État est allé jusqu'à proposer, dans les années quatre-vingt, la notion de "peuple corse" comme composante du peuple français (Martiniello, 1997: 59).

This thus departs quite considerably from the understanding that the Republic should not be seen as divided into communities, whether Corsican or others. Nonetheless, whilst concessions have indeed been made, this thesis argues that the Republic retains its assimilationist perspective (under the more acceptable name of integration as explained below) and continues to exclude the 'misfits', an example of which is the French Caribbean and more generally the black populations of France.

From the mid-1980s and well into the 1990s words such as 'communities' and 'cultural difference' fed both anti-racist and racist discourses (Taguieff, 1990; Wieviorka, 1998b; De Rudder *et al*, 1998). The support for the right to difference by the Left and anti-racist groups thus backfired, for internal and external cultural and economic tensions became perceived as threatening to national identity. Favell (1998: 50) rightly points out that the immigration issues of the mid-1980s have to be understood in the context of wider political issues such as:

> (...) the growing power of regionalism, the decline of the nation as a source of social solidarity and the decline in real terms of both the state's powers of governance and its ability to fund social programmes. Seen this way, the question concerning the incorporation of North African and other immigrants into French life was but one in a class of questions beginning to challenge the effectiveness of the dominantly centralised French state in securing the social and political integration of the French nation as a whole.

Taguieff (1996) believes that the *Front National* party (FN) could not resist jumping at the opportunity to appear as the only political party capable of defending the best interests of the Republic in the face of so many references to cultural differences. The position of the FN party can be seen as highly opportunist since one of their major arguments was that soft immigration policies and socio-cultural policies in favour of diversity were threatening French identity and were against traditional republican principles (Kastoryano, 1996). The FN thus argued that cultural difference was fine, and in fact the right to difference should be encouraged, but outside rather than inside, the French borders (Taguieff, 1996; Favell, 1998).

In light of the fact that the FN party successfully linked multicultural ideas (and the right to be different) with the threat to national identity, the government response was

to pull away from its tentative 'multicultural politicies' (Kastoryano, 1996; Favell, 1998). Cultural differences were thus played down rather than celebrated and the special ministry in charge of immigrant populations disappeared (Hargreaves, 1995). The change of emphasis was accompanied by a change of vocabulary: the word 'insertion' was to be replaced by 'integration'. The re-appraisal of the mid-1980s socio-cultural policies reached an almost total consensus. 'Integration' became the language of both official and unofficial discourses. Not only was there a consensus among the intellectual (leading influencial 'integrationists' being Schnapper and Costa-Lascoux) and political elites, but even anti-racist groups like *SOS-Racisme* adopted an integrationist republican take (Bleich, 2000). Concerns over integration led to the creation of the *Commission de la Nationalité* between 1987 and 1988 and that of the *Haut Conseil à L'Intégration* in 1990. The aim of the *Commission* was to explore the law on nationality and the new socio-cultural context of the 1980s. Favell (1998) explains that the *Commission*'s research received plenty of media coverage; the interviews around which it was based were broadcast. The report of that research established the leading idea of integration. Favell explains in some details the consensus over the idea of integration through an appreciation of the place given to the *Commission* and *Haut Conseil*'s reports in public affairs (1998: 45).

Although in the official discourse integration was greatly praised and seen as the only real alternative to assimilation, this chapter argues that the integration subtext is very similar to that of assimilation. Integration is merely a more acceptable word, less charged than assimilation. Also, its official definition describes it as the middle way between assimilation and insertion, emphasising the need for the host community and the immigrant community to 'make an effort' to get along (Hannoun, 1987). Whilst

inoffensive and encouraging at first glance, the suggestions for the efforts in question

are mainly directed towards the immigrants wishing to become integrated into French

society:

> l'intégration est la voie de l'avenir. Par son éthymologie, cette notion
> suggère l'opération de rendre complet ou entier. (...) L'intégration
> implique un effort réciproque. La France doit faire des efforts pour
> permettre aux étrangers de s'intégrer. Ceux-ci doivent, s'ils le souhaitent,
> faire un effort pour s'intégrer à la société française (Hannoun, 1987: 105-
> 106).[57]

The report from which the above quotation is taken suggests that racism needs to be

tackled in France if immigrants' integration is to be successful. Also, as explicitly

mentioned, there is an element of choice given to the immigrant populations. In fact

the report stresses the importance of controlling immigration as well as the relevance

of *aide au retour*, conclusions reflecting the somewhat paranoid context of the mid-

1980s in matters of immigration issues. Whilst French society needs to become more

tolerant, the immigrant communities are being asked to demonstrate their willingness

to become French and to be an active member of French society (through the

appropriation of French language). Integration is seen as a contract between French

society and its immigrants, where the latter are expected to show 'willingness' to

abide by French rules and values.

It has been shown that the republican model of integration is but a construction, a re-

packaged assimilationist model, that appeared as though by magic in the mid-1980s

(Favell, 1998: 50). The promotion of the re-packaged model became justified in light

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[57]Hannoun M., Député au secrétaire d'état auprès du Premier Ministre chargé des Droits de l'Homme.
'L'homme est l'espéranec de l'homme', rapport sur le racisme et les discriminations en France,
November 1987.

of the fear of *communautarism* or 'US-multiculturalism' (Kastoryano, 1996; Favell, 1998, Wieviorka, 1997, Martiniello, 1997), as explained below.

Integration: the return of the myth?

Boucher (2000) places Taguieff within the assimilationist perspective, although he could be placed into the 'integrationist' category albeit as less 'tolerant' perhaps than Dominique Schnapper. Both Taguieff and Schnapper argue for a common republican project. Taguieff (1996) goes further in that he believes in the renewal of a republican nationalism by a non-racist republican ideology to restore social cohesion, insisting at length on the fact that nationalism is, nowadays, associated with racism and fascism (and the FN party).

Schnapper (1994, 1998) also holds on to the idea of a civic nation made up of a 'community of citizens' where common values are necessary. The emphasis of her thesis is on the construction of an ethic of tolerance allowing the coexistence of distinct communities. This perspective is more tolerant, more flexible in that cultural differences can be tolerated in the public sphere so long as their expression does not disrupt public order:

Schnapper's perspective suggests a strong emphasis on 'rooting' plurality to a strong common base. Wieviorka further argues that whilst the Republic's principles assumed an assimilationist perspective, and that such a perspective has indeed been promoted throughout post-revolution French history, the 'tolerant perspective', or integrationist

perspective in Boucher's words, would correspond more closely to what happened in reality: there had to be a renegotiation of republican values in the face of an influx of migrants. The renegotiation in question could be taken to refer to the *politiques d'insertion* described above, that is governmental responses to immigrants' welfare. Wieviorka makes a distinction between the assimilationist and integrationist perspective, believing that French history reflects more flexibility than the Republican model is usually understood to stand for. Still, the official discourse can nonetheless be seen to remain assimilationist, except for a short period (the insertion years) at the beginning of the 1980s. Although policies, in practice, have reflected perspectives that are usually associated with the pluralist model of integration, in theory, the official take has remained profoundly based on republican integration. The gap between the official and unofficial discourses is discussed later in the chapter where it is argued that the establishment of a 'double discourse' can work against ethnic communities.

Whilst integration issues are not new to French intellectuals, journalists and politicians, the word 'multiculturalism' is, as I noted at the start of this chapter, relatively new in France and is often described as an American import (Fassin, 1999). Linguistically speaking multiculturalism and multicultural policies have only recently appeared on the political scene in France. Nonetheless, as also previously mentioned, multicultural issues in France have tended to be bound up with immigration issues and were given the generic name of integration, following the perceived shortcomings of insertion. Therefore, since the mid-1990s, French multiculturalism went by the name of integration. This was true of the official discourse, but was also where the intellectual debate lay (Favell, 1998). The imported concept of multiculturalism came

onto the French scene at a time when questions of integration revolved more and more around issues of national identity (Kastoryano, 1996: 12). Concerns about the preservation of unified national identity led to the reaffirmation of French republican values, by setting the French model against the American model so as to promote the former (Bertheleu, 1997; Kastoryano, 1996). In France multiculturalism is often perceived as a problem and, more often than not, the American case is cited as the reason why multiculturalism would not work in France. American multiculturalism is often criticised and used as the basis on which the French model of integration is justified (Lacorne, 1997; Martiniello, 1997).

A good proportion of French intellectuals continue to view multiculturalism with suspicion. Some, however, have started to acknowledge the futility of the binary position, shown not to reflect reality (such as: Martiniello, 1997; Fassin, 1999; Schain, 1999, Wieviorka, 1997; Touraine, 2000). This aspect of the French multiculturalist discourse is discussed in Section Four of this chapter.

Although migration into France is at least as old as the French empire (and the slave trade), France had to face a significantly changing population that began to place some strain on the homogenous French public sphere in the aftermath of the Second World War (Kastoryano, 1996). The post-war immigrant populations started to challenge the well guarded unified image of the French Republic. These populations (French Caribbean and African populations) were more 'visibly' different; they were physiologically more noticeable and brought with them different lifestyles. Although the context of re-introduction of the republican model of integration was quite complex, as discussed above, the 'visibility' of post-war migrants is nonetheless

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relevant. As immigration and national identity were discussed on a par, the greater visibility of migrants resulted in their easy identification as non-French. Cultural differences, exclusion, racism and ghettoisation could no longer be seen as 'overseas' problems and began to fuel debates among intellectuals and politicians in the 1980s. Although French citizenship is seen as the vector of successful integration, it does not deal with racial discrimination. The fact that there is a need for 'integration policies' acknowledges the failure of citizenship to be sufficient for constituting a whole inclusive nation. French republican integration has been exclusionary, and not only towards new immigrants but also towards already established French Caribbean communities.

Unfortunately, 'inclusiveness' has only been understood within the context of integration, as explained by the earlier quote by Hannoun (1987). Furthermore integration issues were seen to only concern 'adopted foreign populations', who wanted to become French. The establishment of ethnic communities was feared, and denied. Concentrations of particular immigrant communities were not conceived of as ethnic communities. Yet Kastaryano (1996: 36) argues that even if the fear of *communautarisme* or social fragmentation (associated with US multicultural policies) brought back the old official republican discourse, the later could not help but be transformed eventually:

> (...) le paradoxe est que les mêmes hommes politiques qui prêchent la spécificité française (...) s'adressent de plus en plus aux "communautés": "communauté immigrée", "communauté algérienne", "communauté musulmane."'

This paradox is investigated further in the course of the chapter. It demonstrates the penetration of US linguistic practice and conceptualisation in French theory and the inability of the latter to engage adequately with concepts (such as communities and multiculturalism) that are politicised and 'ideologised' (Heller, 1996: 26). This paradox also illustrates the limits of theory and 'models' when the issues at stake concern people.

However before engaging with this paradox, let us explore the reconstruction of the French integration myth as the antithesis of the US model.

The multiculturalist backlash or the fear of *communautarisme*

French integration is bound up with republican principles and is well guarded by the French state. The belief in a unified and indivisible community of citizens who share the same vision of the French nation justifies, but also contributes to, political integration. This general view, which descends from Rousseau, includes the specific belief that French citizens are accountable to the French state, and only to the French state, not to specific/distinct cultural communities (Kastoryano, 1996; Favell, 1998). In this view also, the state is accountable to its citizens as a whole, and not to specific sub-groups or separate interests among them.

The fact that US society is the product of immigration is clearly emphasised in US official discourse. American society is indeed seen as the reflection of its culturally diverse heritage, composed of distinct communities living side by side (Cohen, 1996).

This image of US society (which may well itself be an idealisation) is also very prevalent in France. US multicultural policies are seen to reinforce the idea that the US is a fragmented nation and that its 'ethnic problem' (read 'Black, Hispanic or Asian problem') is a direct result of multicultural policies (read affirmative action). The tendency to associate US multiculturalism with affirmative action in France has over-simplified the multicultural question and has resulted in a distortion of the US model of integration (Martiniello, 1997; Wieviorka, 1997b).

The belief that social cohesion can exist alongside pluriethnic rights is shared by many Anglo-American social theorists and most notably by Will Kymlicka. For Kymlicka (1995, 1999) the protection of cultural minorities against the cultural elite through the adoption of particular rights should be part of the liberal democratic project. Kymlicka believes that the granting of group rights needs careful consideration and would depend on the adoption/respect of liberal principles. Liberal principles of respect and choice would thus enable cultural groups to live side by side without fearing fragmentation and social instability. Kymlicka (1995, 1999) also suggests that special rights should not be given to particular groups if these do not want to comply with liberal principles. In other words, internal restrictions and discrimination placed on individuals within a cultural group should not be allowed.

In France, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the 'comumnautarist perspective' does not really exist. Although in the US multiculturalist policies have yet to give specific communities particular rights, the existence of preferential policies aimed at particular socio-cultural groups fed growing fears in France over national identity and national cohesion. As explained above, in the context of decentralisation

and increasing globalisation, immigrants were seen as a threat to national identity. Their only real choice was between returning or 'integrating' by embracing French republican principles.

The role of the French state in the integration process is thus important and very pro-active in the preservation of indivisiblity and unity in the face of an intake of outsiders. Policies are designed to ensure the successful integration of outsiders into the national community and into political society (Boucher, 2000). Whilst governments have gone about it in different ways, the motivation remains the same: guarding the sacred republican principles of unity and indivisibility. These principles are seen as 'sacred' not least in the sense that they cannot legitimately be questioned. In order then that outsiders could ever be part of the French nation and the Republic, in effect for them to really become insiders, they would have to come to share the same beliefs as any other French citizen and be accountable to the French state (Martiniello, 1997). Therefore, when authors refer to the 'traditional French model of integration' it refers to the historical tendency to absorb outsiders, that is immigrants, into French culture:

> Au nom de la lutte contre la fragmentation de la nation et de l'éclatement de la societé politique, il s'agit, pour le nouvel arrivant s'installant en France, d'abandonner ses valeurs propres, celles de sa communauté d'origine et de s'aproprier les valeurs fondamentales de la nation française (Boucher, 2000: 41).

Gaining the status of insider (and as such of French national) means being able to function within the national community, and for that to be the case speaking the host language is seen as an important measure of willingness to integrate (Hannoun, 1987; Boucher, 2000: 42). The fundamental values, which this discourse asserts, reinforce

and protect the indivisibility and unity of the Republic. The only way to establish unity has been to insist on the neutrality of the public sphere and equality for all. Therefore, in theory all French citizens have the same chances, for they are equals in spite of any cultural or social differences. Secularity in the public sphere is also seen as a prerequisite for the neutrality promoted and sought after by the French state.

Education played a vital role in the construction of a national community in France (see Chapter Four) and continues to be seen as relevant today (Martiniello, 1997). The socialising aspect of French education is geared to ensure the creation of responsible French citizens and to ensure the successful integration of immigrants' children. The promotion of an image of neutrality and of secularism in schools is part of the socialising process. This image is not necessarily neutral nor (except in a narrow sense) secular, since it is geared to promote the most powerfully held republican values, those which are sacred to, and seen by their protagonists as constitutive of, the modern nation. To reject them would be to reject the nation itself.

In this way, the strong belief in the unity and indivisibility of the French nation has legitimised assimilationist (or integrationist) policies. Turning outsiders into French men and women was even considered something of an honour and was never really called into question until after the Second World War.[58] And as Favell (1998: 59-60) points out, the idea of a 'global republicanism' fuelled French colonial ambition. Cultural differences were traditionally discouraged. Even once they were more or

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[58]The belief in the superiority of French culture was in fact passed onto immigrants, who were made to feel proud of being given the opportunity to become French citizens. French Caribbean early migrants to the Metropole experienced such a process. Testimonies collected by Pineau showed just how grateful the women interviewed felt for being given the chance of a better life in the Metropole. The fact that the organised immigration to the Metropole was giving them lessons on how to be French did not seem to bother them.

less tolerated (as from the integration policies of the 1980s), the emphasis remained on the importance of a unified collectivity (Boucher, 2000; Wieviorka, 1997). In this context, 'tolerance' means 'putting up' with difference rather than a genuine acceptance of it, still less a welcoming of it.

The mid-1980s witnessed a swift return to assimilationist strategies in a bid to preserve national unity. American policies were observed with suspicion and were highly criticised by French intellectuals and politicians. Fearing similar 'ethnic issues', French official discourse clamped down on anything approaching minority group rights. The American model of integration, described as 'multicultural', has tended to be seen as the opposite of French republicanism. Yet, in practice, America and France share similar (ethnic) questions and also similar actions. Furthermore, whilst nationhood in France is not as overtly exclusive as is that of Germany, in practice, inclusivity is less obvious, as explained in the following section.

2) Ethnic and Civic Conceptions of Nationhood

This section explores the fact that America does not fit the 'traditional multicultural model' nor does France fit the 'traditional republican model of integration'. It then considers that whilst France does not encourage nor celebrate its legacy of cultural difference (regional, colonial and the impact of immigration), it has become a multi-ethnic society, whose reality is not unlike the American experience.

Whilst there is no disagreement over the fact that the US is a 'traditional country of immigration' alongside Australia and Canada, the US is by no means the most multicultural in practice (Castles and Miller, 1994; Wieviorka, 1997b; Raynaud, 1997). Still, Castle and Miller (1994: 226) argue that nationhood in the US can be described as multicultural, that is that "membership of the nation [is based] on the basis of residence and acceptance of core political values". However, the US differs from other countries of immigration in that there is less direct intervention in "ethnic affairs" (Castle and Miller, 1994: 227). Wieviorka (1997b; 1998) also differentiates US multiculturalism from that of the other countries of immigration. He sees US multiculturalism as split in half: one aspect would come under affirmative action and is mainly social, the other aspect could come under academic studies and is mainly cultural:

> (...) le multiculturalisme américain, c'est d'un côté, l'*affirmative action*, et d'un autre côté, c'est surtout quelque chose qui a à voir avec le fonctionement du système d'éducation et surtout du système universitaire, notamment dans les *cultural studies*. (...) aux Etats-Unis le débat est en quelque sorte dissocié entre d'un côté les dimensions socio-économiques de *l'affirmative action*, et d'un autre côté, des dimensions strictements culturelles avec souvent des tendances à devenir une pensée critique, très gauchiste (Wieviorka, 1997b: 121).

The French understanding of affirmative action as multicultural politics mistakes the subtlety and complexity of the US debate (Wieviorka, 1997b: 120-121):

> Ce qui est intéressant dans le débat américain sur *l'affirmative action* est qu'il est bien peu culturel. Je veux dire qu'il ne renvoit que très peu à l'idée qu'il faut respecter les particularisme culturels, son problème en realité est beaucoup plus social ou socio-économique. Il s'agit avant tout de compenser les discriminations sociales à l'intention de groupes qu'on peut certes définir culturellement, mais pas tant que cela finalement. Lorsqu'on dit: on va faire une politique *d'affirmative action* pour les Noirs, on ne dit pas qu'on va sauver la culture noire, qu'on va respecter la

culture noire, ou ce genre de choses. Non, on dit: on va réduire les inégalités dont souffrent les Noirs, définis d'ailleurs sur des critères raciaux car, (...), la race aux États-Unis fait partie du vocabulaire courant, ce qui n'est pas le cas chez nous.

The US can thus be described as more multi-ethnic than multicultural (Raynaud, 1997: 155). This argument is also that of Taïb (1999), Lacorne (1997) and Raynaud (1997). They point out that whilst the US adopts an ethnic conception of nationhood in embracing the 'patchwork' image mentioned above, there remains also a strong belief and desire in unity and a common identity (Raynaud, 1997: 152). In fact Lacorne (1997) explains that two visions of nationhood (ethnic and civic) have coexisted in the US and still do:

> (...) c'est bien cette tension entre un rêve assimilationiste et son contraire qui alimente une bonne partie de l'histoire des États-Unis (Lacorne, 1997: 161).

The 'melting pot' has not been supplanted by the 'salad bowl' or 'patchwork' images (Taïb, 1999). It is interesting at this point to compare the US and France. Whilst the French conception of nationhood is primarily civic, it can be argued that in practice, as in the US, nationhood in France has also been ethnic by exclusion, a point that is further explored in the last two chapters. Christian Jelen (1997) believes that the assimilationist tradition in France cannot possibly be compatible with a multiculturalist model of integration. Furthermore he points out that multiculturalism in the US was brought about in an attempt to deal with the 'black problem', justifying therefore the rejection of multiculturalism in France. As Emmanuel Todd (1994) mentioned above, Jelen (1997: 142-143) believes that France has never had a 'black problem':

> [L'idéologie multiculturaliste] est née de la volonté de corriger les effets ravageurs du racisme dont les Noirs ont été victimes dans le passé et qui les a empêchés de s'intégrer dans la nation au même titre que les autres minorités. Mais, en France, il n'y a jamais eu de racisme comparable à celui que les Noirs américains ont endurés pendant plusieurs siècles. Pourtant, c'est en s'efforçant de faire croire à l'existence d'un racisme de grande ampleur et à des discriminations de toutes sortes que la mouvance multiculturaliste cherche à se frayer un chemin. (...) Personne ne nie qu'il y ait des racistes, des antisémites et des xénophobes. Mais une forte majorité de Français ne croit pas que ce pays, dans ses profondeurs, soit raciste.

He continues to argue that multiculturalism would bring nothing but encourage further racism and divisions. As mentioned above, both Taguieff and Todd share the similar view that emphasising cultural difference cannot but result in further discrimination. The only solution for Jelen remains adhesion to a common republican project, the only guarantee of civil peace. Lacorne (1997) also believes that the US multicultural approach is ill suited to the French Republic. Yet, the vast research on racism and anti-racism in France demonstrates the extent to which social exclusion is fuelled by racist ideologies in France. In fact the next section explores the discrimination issue in France, and suggests that the need for anti-discrimination legislation is an indication of the failure of the French traditional integration model. Furthermore, recent research show that an important section of the French population (over a third) declares itself openly racist.[59] And moreover, this remark may only make sense in terms of intentional forms of discrimination rather than more structural or institutional forms.

An important argument of this research project is also to demonstrate the extent to which the French integration model has in fact failed immigrant populations and their

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[59]See Antonio Perotti '1996: l'année noire du discours raciste' and Yvan Gastaut "Sommes-nous racistes?", both in Migrations Société, Vol. 9, No 49, January-February 1997.

children, and the populations of its former French colonies. Sociological research of the kind undertaken by Tribalat (1995) is helpful in that it demonstrates that there seem to be a 'natural process of assimilation', measured by the abandonment of cultural practices from one generation of immigrants to the next. Where it becomes more difficult to ascertain the degree of non-integration of certain groups is a direct consequence of the lack of ethnic or racial categories in France (Simon, 1998). Chapters Four and Five explore such questions and consider the specific discrimination endured by the (black) French Caribbean populations, and consider the emergence of a distinct black identity in Metropolitan France.

In the context of this thesis, nationhood in France is argued to be both civic and ethnic. Furthermore, as the next section demonstrates, the adoption of specific anti-discrimination laws shows a willingness to remedy the effects of the 'traditional' model of integration (Costa-Lascoux, 1997). Many social scientists agree that the old institutions promoting social integration have become insufficient (notably Wieviorka, 1997).

France and the US both have a schizophrenic conception of nationhood, one that is both civic and ethnic. However far from being a synthesis, a medium and moderated position between the German ethnic conception and the traditional civic French conception, this "ethno-civic" conception is problematic (Fassin, 1997: 133). In the US it seems to take the expression of a split multiculturalism, that is one where social and cultural are divided (Wieviorka, 1997b, 1998), and where most of the state multiculturalist interventions are translated into social interventions (Wieviorka, 1997b; 1998; Castles and Miller, 1994). A similar case can be made in France. There

are indeed direct state social interventions to remedy discrimination as the following section demonstrates. Furthermore, the French traditional anti-affirmative action stance needs careful reconsideration in the context of *parité*. Affirmative action in the US has been shown to be less cultural than it is social and *parité* was brought in as a social measure seen to compensate discrimination against women in political institutions.

The last section of the chapter explores the arguments made against affirmative action and exposes the contradiction between a narrow conception of multiculturalism in France and the acceptance of *parité*, both in the name of greater democracy. An exploration of tolerance and democracy is thus proposed in an attempt to propose a more inclusive vision of multiculturalism, like that promoted by Wieviorka and Touraine.

3) Multiculturalism & Discrimination

The previous section outlined the difficulty of conceptualising a French multiculturalism, especially considering the fact that the latter was associated with a distorted version of US multiculturalism. The previous section also started to draw parallels between French and US conceptualisations of nationhood, which combine ethnic and civic dimensions. This section further explore this double (ethnic and civic) conceptualisation of the nation as it investigates French approaches to racial discrimination. This section argues that an ethno-civic conception of the French nation has permeated French history (despite republican rhetoric) and has facilitated

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the promotion of discrimination.[60] This section also shows that preferential policies and positive discrimination measures have not been as unfamiliar in France as is sometimes believed, further emphasising the gap between French republican official discourse and the reality. The section also explores the recent recognition of 'race' and ethnicity in official discourse and considers this in the context of *parité*.

Racial discrimination in France has traditionally been approached as being primarily bound up with immigration and integration issues, and has generally been understood to be a post-war (World War II) phenomenon. Bleich (2000) points out that French research and policies have reflected this. The principal concern was that of social cohesion and national unity. Consequently most research has concentrated on immigration and citizenship, immigration policies, questions of integration and national identity and issues of racism and anti-racism (Bleich, 2000; Kastoryano, 1996). This body of research generally reflects the republican discourse where 'race' and/or ethnicity have traditionally been downplayed, the idea being that the promotion of equality and unity through the official republican discourse would prevent the racialisation of French society and the fragmentation of the nation (Martiniello, 1997; Fassin, 1999). The republican discourse has thus been promoted as the antidote to the racist discourse through its refusal to recognise either 'race' or ethnicity (Taguieff, 1996; Simon, 1998). Despite a short 'multicultural experiment' in the 1980s (*politiques d'insertion*) which backfired with the rise of the FN party, the general trend until recently has largely been to ignore questions of ethnicity and 'race'. Integration policies were thought "to be best served by erasing reference to ethnicity" (Hargreaves, 2000) and the promotion of French citizenship. The civic conception of

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[60]Chapters Four and Five further demonstrate how 'race' has shaped French national identity.

nationhood has generally prevented a full appreciation of the role of ethnicity and/or 'race' in the construction of national identity (see Chapter Five) and in the promotion of discrimination and marginalisation.

Furthermore, the non-recognition of racial or ethnic categories has prevented any measurable studies on discrimination and integration from taking place (Simon, 1998). Research on integration by Michèle Tribalat (1995) broke away from that tradition as she tried to consider the population in terms of 'category of origin' such as first generation North African, second generation North African migrants and so on. However, according to the 1978 law preventing the recording of data based on ethnic origins without individual consent, considering the population in such terms is unlawful (Bleich, 2000: 58). The adoption of ethnic categories in an attempt to measure discrimination practices would be a total departure from the colour-blind republican state where citizenship is seen as the guarantor of equality. Discrimination based on ethnicity or 'race' is thus denied in an effort to prevent it. In theory, inequality has been legitimised between French and non-French citizens, not among French citizens. In fact the assumption has been that 'the French integration machine' (such as schools and the army) would stamp out any such practices (Martiniello, 1997; Wieviorka, 1997). In reality, discrimination based on ethnicity and/or 'race' does take place, although it has been infamously difficult to prove difficult to prove and its extent difficult to measure (Simon, 1998; Hargreaves, 2000). Interviews with second or third generation migrants on their experience of day-to-day discrimination and pilot studies in recent years conducted by anti-racist groups (such as *SOS-Racisme*) show how discrimination against certain groups takes place in employment, social housing, access to certain night clubs etc. (Perotti, 1997). Whilst the state

promotes colour-blindness, social interactions are racialised. Furthermore, whilst racial discrimination (speech and certain categories of action) has been unlawful since 1972,[61] the difficulty in proving deliberate and direct racist acts has resulted in very few convictions and growing resentment of this among French minorities (Simon, 1998; Hargreaves, 2000). All this despite an enormous shift in the official discourse in the late 1990s regarding question of ethnicity and 'race' in France.

Cultural difference largely disappeared from the political agenda with the re-introduction of the republican integrationist model. Nonetheless integration policies have been argued to target ethnic minorities, for although they were not promoting cultural diversity as such, they were designed with marginalised groups (often defined in religious or ethnic terms) in mind (Martiniello, 1997; Schain, 1999). During what we could call the 'integration years' stretching from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, the question of ethnic minorities was never directly addressed but could not be avoided either (Kastoryano, 1996; Schain, 1999). The consequence has been what De Rudder *et al* (1998) call a "double discourse"; that is, policies with unofficial subtexts, aimed at the management of ethnic minorities either within a company (as in the research conducted by De Rudder *et al.*) or within local councils (such as for the allocation of local housing). The next section further explores the fact that far from shying away from positive discrimination and preferential policies, France's strategy

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[61]Eric Bleich (2000) gives a good history of the way anti-racist laws came about. He emphasises the role of the MRAP behind the 1972 law. Bleich (2000: 56-57) explains that the MRAP's law proposal designed in the 1950s was a direct response to the perceived resurgence of anti-Semitism. The 1972 law gave a certain power to anti-racist organisations (being able to act as civil parties in cases involving racist discrimination or racist crimes) and penalised against discrimination in employment and in the provision of good and services, and against 'hatred, racist speech' (essentially anti-Semitic speech which was more of concern at the time). This law was then reinforced in 1990 with the Gayssot law. The latter was also a direct response to the *Front National* party's rising racist discourse (2000: 60). See also Yves Gastaut "Sommes-nous racistes?" in Migrations Société, Vol. 9, No. 49, January-February 1997: 53-66.

in the last decade especially has been to hide its ethnic politics under the label of social politics (De Rudder *et al.*, 1998; Calvès, 2000, Bleich, 2000; Schain, 1999).

Calvès (2000) argues that as long as the state's unspoken aims are achieved, such as bringing minorities out of their marginality, the fact that there is no public acknowledgement of ethnic management by the state is inconsequential. Furthermore being seen to practise positive discrimination can backfire and bring resentment from the ethnic majority (Bleich, 2000: 65):

> In race-conscious societies, policies targeted for the narrow benefit of minority groups or even policies that disproportionately benefit minorities groups are often the subject of envy and hostility among the majority population. (...) The colour-blind state might not completely prevent problems of backlash, but it may help undermine the charge that the state favors some groups over others.

The problem with hiding ethnic politics behind what looks like a republican discourse is that their effects on ethnic communities cannot be investigated since ethnic communities are officially unrecognised. Furthermore, whilst ethnicity is recognised in practice, it is still not formally acknowledged. This creates obvious contradictions when management is asked about its policy on recruitment of minorities and its general attitudes to ethnic minorities in the company. This can be illustrated in the case of particular firms such as the hypermarket *Continent*:

> La stratégie de l'hypermarché est construite sur un jeu de présence-absence de l'ethnicité, souvent fondé sur la manipulation de l'officiel et de l'officieux. D'un côté, elle affirme qu'aucun compte (...) n'a été tenu des origines ethniques dans le recrutement. De l'autre, l'encadrement a été sensibilisé "aux problèmes des ethnies" et s'en soucie dans l'organisation du travail: "Il y a des gens, si vous les mettez à travailler

ensemble, tôt ou tard, ça risque de mal finir." (De Rudder *et al.*, 1998: 45-46)[62]

Since ethnic relations are part and parcel of French society, keeping to the official discourse negating ethnicity becomes more and more difficult as the above quote demonstrates. The fact that ethnic management has been conducted as such an underground and vague project means not only that real progress could not be measured, but also that no guidelines/regulations for better practice could be drawn up. The lack of consistency in industry as in local institutions vis-à-vis ethnic minorities cannot but result in the frustration of the latter. Management can also be affected in its negotiation of the two conflicting discourses. Indeed, as in the case investigated by De Rudder *et al* (1998), the lack of regulation on 'ethnic management' has meant that management had to adopt a 'day-by-day' attitude, never quite sure what to expect. Ethnic groups, especially regarding religious practices have at times requested particular adjustments. The hypermarket's management mentioned above dealt with those on an individual basis. In the absence of real ethnic politics, companies and local institutions resort to their own strategies. In the case of *Continent* it appears that whilst stressful and tense at times, ethnic relations are managed. However as any consensus tends to be implicit, it is never fixed and is continuously re-negotiated.

The lack of explicit ethnic politics has also contributed to the creation of what can be called an 'under cover ethnic police', who take it upon themselves to monitor the concentration of ethnic minorities in a particular area and act according to 'internal',

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[62]The quotes refer to interviews with the management staff of a big hypermarket in Marseille. The hypermarket was seen to be part of a big development and its politics of recruitment were of interest to the researchers as they were advertised as wanting to favour the locals.

although unofficial and illegal guidelines: *bricolage ethnique* (De Rudder *et al*, 1998: 30). What this can mean is that in the case of the allocation of social housing for example, ethnic minorities have tended to be discriminated against in favour of the white ethnic majority so as to prevent the formation of ethnic ghettos (Bleich, 2000: 52-53). These practices are widely accepted despite the fact that their potential positive effects cannot easily be checked (Martiniello, 1997: 61). Furthermore research into social housing and ethnic minorities has shown that the properties in the worst condition tended to go to minorities, whilst better properties tend to be allocated to the (white) French ethnic majority (Simon, 1998).

The French state's approach to integration and racial discrimination has unveiled a rather complex and somewhat confused attitude towards 'race' and ethnicity since the mid-1980s. The lack of explicit ethnic policies has enabled racial discrimination to take root and allowed the development of hidden/implicit ethnic management practices. The state's promotion of an official civic discourse with an ethnic subtext has been reflected in practice: everyone recognises the existence of ethnicity whilst also conspiring in 'hiding' it, believing that one should not speak of 'ethnic divisions' unless one wants to exacerbates these divisions.

From the mid-1980s onwards making reference to minorities and cultural differences were forbidden on the grounds that this would encourage racism and the racialisation of French society at the expense of its unity (see integrationist advocates such as Taguieff). Yet Bleich (2000) rightly points out that well before 'insertion' and 'integration' issues came to the fore in the 1980s, the government of Vichy actively supported an ethnic discourse. During the Vichy years France's conception and

promotion of nationhood was ethnic by exclusion of the Jews. Whilst the 1980s policies of insertion did not mention ethnic minorities and referred instead to immigrants and their children, these were to become ethnic minorities (especially since the government at the time encouraged and celebrated cultural difference and committed itself to a politics of non-repatriation). The vision of the Left was thus ethnic by inclusion (or perhaps to follow the model proposed by Castles and Miller, 1994: a multicultural one). France has thus embraced different models of nationhood: ethnic, civic, multicultural and ethno-civic in recent years. The following chapters provide further examples of that point with specific reference to the French Caribbean.

Recent changes have taken place in French politics. In fact, since 1997, acts of racial discrimination are taken more seriously and 'race' and ethnicity figure overtly in official discourse. Is there a move back to a multicultural model?

4) Multiculturalism, Affirmative Action & *Parité*

So far it has been demonstrated that the republican discourse has been far from homogeneous. Different versions have oscillated between different visions of the French nation. The traditional republican discourse has tended to be about the promotion of greater inclusiveness and unity with French citizenship as the only path to social inclusion and equality. Therefore, in accordance with such a discourse cultural differences are not recognised as legitimate and are unwelcome for they do not generate a sense of solidarity and togetherness. Citizenship has tended to be seen

as *the* great equaliser (Schnapper, 1994), and has in fact resulted in legitimising the exclusion of non-French citizens. Therefore, whilst equality was guaranteed through French citizenship, inequality was also promoted. Non-French immigrants were thus legitimately excluded. However, even after obtaining French citizenship they remained excluded, discriminated against. The greater visibility of post war immigrants can been seen as having contributed to their exclusion for 'difference' was associated with 'non-French' and 'immigrants'. Looking non-French therefore became a factor of exclusion and discrimination.

Whilst the French state promoted a civic nation, implicitly it also guarded the interests of the ethnic majority through assimilation policies. What is more, in practice, distinguishing between French and non-French became increasingly difficult, resulting in the experience of a differentiated and racialised citizenship. Citizenship and assimilation policies could do little against the greater visibility of immigrants. Chapters Four and Five explore the issues of visibility (phenotypes) and invisibility (citizenship) further.

Although the republican message had traditionally been against the recognition of cultural difference and 'race' and/or ethnicity, it has also been mentioned that exclusionary practices based on ethnicity were not absent from French history (Chapter Four explores the historical exclusion of French Caribbean people). Therefore either implicitly or explicitly this chapter argues that the French Republic has promoted an ethnic conceptualisation of nationhood. This has been further demonstrated through the ethno-civic politics of the French state in the post-war era, which attempts not to officially recognise 'race' and ethnicity, whilst in practice being

unable to ignore them. Although there were some attempts by the Socialists in the 1980s to recognise cultural differences, the traditional republican rhetoric re-emerged and with it ethno-civic politics in the face of the rise of the FN and xenophobic forms of pseudo-multiculturalism (tending to apartheid).

The late 1990s seem to point towards a return to a more multiculturalist vision of French society. Furthermore, whilst in the 1980s there was no explicit mention of 'race' or ethnicity, this time direct references to 'race' and ethnicity have been made. Hargreaves (2000) gives a detailed account of the changes that took place in the course of this period, and considers that while there are grounds for hope, there are also problems. In fact whilst greater recognition of 'race' in official discourse can be seen as progressive, for Hargreaves, it is only a 'half measure'; he argues that the French state still has some way to go before the need for change is fully recognised.

One of the best examples of a shift in official thinking can be illustrated by the change of position of the *Haut Conseil à L'Intégration* (HCI). Whilst in 1990 the emphasis was still on the promotion of traditional republican values, in 1999 not only are 'race' and ethnicity recognised, but the report also considers the possibility of introducing an independent anti-racist body similar to the British Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) (Hargreaves, 2000: 85). The suggestion received strong support from Employment and Solidarity minister Martine Aubry, Interior minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement, and Justice minister Elisabeth Guigou. However, whilst the importance of the greater recognition of 'race' in official discourse cannot be downplayed, Hargreaves (2000) rightly points out that this change of perspective has yet to be translated in practice. In fact the reluctance to turn the GED (*Groupe*

d'Études des Discriminations) into a fully operating independent anti-racist body is emphasised by the appointment of a national-republican advocate at his head (Hargreaves, 2000: 95).

Furthermore, a newly established body to combat racial discrimination (Commissions d'Accès à la Citoyenneté, CODACs) has not proven very successful in getting more convictions (Hargreaves, 2000: 94). Hargreaves also points out another very relevant contradiction that further underlines the lack of real commitment on the part of the French state. 'Race' and ethnicity have been acknowledged publicly, but considering the French population in terms of ethnic categories remains problematic. In fact, there is evidence that the old trick of coded social discourse with ethnic subtext remains deeply enshrined in French official discourse:

> The Interior Ministry [announced] that 19 percent of youths hired as *adjoints de securité* came from neighbourhoods described as *zones urbaines sensibles* (...). Data of this kind comply more faithfully with the traditional ban on ethnic categories, but by the same token they are of doubtful utility as a measure of progress in the incorporation of minority ethnic groups. (Hargreaves, 2000: 95)

This is a view shared by others, notably Schain (1999). In short, in the 1990s it appeared as if there was progress towards a more inclusive sense of nationality, which took account of 'race' and ethnicity, and to this extent it was hoped racial discrimination might be tackled more directly. But all the same there remain important problems, and the French government can be seen as having incorporated "half measures" (Hargreaves, 2000) into its policies without really accepting the full implications of its changing demography. Indeed, paying lip service to 'race' and ethnicity may be a substitute for more serious or more radical policies. The fact that

the *parité* debate was taking place about the same time may explain what seems to be a relative backtracking on the part of the French state.

The previous chapter has shown that *parité* could be understood according to two different axes. On the one hand *parité* promotes and emphasises differences between men and women, on the other, it promotes greater equality between men and women, in line with republican principles. It has been argued that it is essentially because *parité* could be defended from within the traditional republican framework that it gained sympathy among politicians. The fact that *parité* was promoted and accepted as part and parcel of the official republican discourse may also have been to the detriment of an emerging official multicultural discourse.

Advocates of *parité* never promoted *parité* as a positive discrimination measure, or as a quota. Yet, Chapter Two has argued that *parité* cannot be read as anything else; in this sense, *parité* became a difficult and politicised topic by the end of the 1990s and many feared that its implementation would open the door to further demands by other socio-cultural groups in France. In this context it is not difficult to see why the French government might have retreated slightly to a more republican (or ethno-civic) official discourse. Promoting pluralism and cultural diversity at a time when the French government was considering the implementation of numerical equality between men and women in political institutions may have been seen to raise hopes and expectations on the part of minorities and anti-racist organisations for similar treatment. In the context of the *parité* debate, turning the GED into something approaching the British CRE may have been considered too radical. One important argument of *parité* advocates was that gender should not be considered on a par with

'race' and ethnicity. The fear that *parité* would bring further demands from ethnic minorities was thus not an issue for them. Yet as mentioned above the official discourse became increasingly racialised at the end of the 1990s. Both racial and sexual equality were highly politicised, but somehow, *parité* was seen perhaps as the least problematic measure to implement.

Affirmative action has been practised in France, although more as a subtext than overtly. The post-war official discourse has tended to be ethno-civic, interrupted by short periods of something approaching an official multicultural discourse. The previous chapter demonstrates that the Republic had been constructed largely at the expense of women. This chapter, through the consideration of multicultural theory and integration policies has pointed to the fact that nationhood in France has also been constructed to the detriment of non-French immigrants and their children. Despite anti-discrimination laws protecting women and ethnic minorities, discrimination has occurred. Whilst finding out the extent to which women were discriminated against in various areas was easy, for women have been recognised as a social category. The situation for ethnic categories was quite different for such categorisation remains unlawful. Yet, this chapter has shown the extent to which the French government has in fact practised affirmative action aimed at 'sensitive populations', albeit unofficially. So, it seems that the official discourse remains rooted in French republicanism, resulting in the dilution of racialised issues in profit of a gendered republicanism. It appears that the fear of fragmentation voiced by anti-paritists was heard.

Whilst gendered and racialised issues could be considered in parallel, they are part of different discourses: furthermore, each has an official and a more covert or possibly underground face. One of the purposes of this project is to show how gendered policies, such as *parité*, affect different women differently. Gender and 'race' should be considered simultaneously and need to be part of the same discourse for policies to be effective. Similarly the multiculturalist discourse and integration policies have tended to concentrate on the consideration of ethnic minorities at the expense of any other social categories.

Some intellectuals (Martiniello, 1997; Wieviorka, 1998) are asking for an alternative word: multiculturalism no longer refers to simply a greater acceptance of other cultures (meaning either that of ethnic groups or that of newly arrived immigrants). Other social categories have been asking for their share of public recognition as women, gays and disabled people for example (Martiniello, 1997; Okin, 1999; Yuval Davis, 1997). Martiniello suggests concentrating on the problem of discrimination rather than on culture as such:

> Le débat sur le multiculturalisme et son dépassement gagnerait donc à s'inscrire dans un débat beaucoup plus vaste auquel nul n'a le droit de rester insensible: le renouvellement et le renforcement de la démocratie et de la justice sociale. Ainsi, un des moyens les plus sûrs de sortir des "ghettos" culturels est de rompre la logique de l'exclusion et de l'inégalité sociales et économiques (Martiniello, 1997: 121).

Wieviorka (1998) shares the same view. The recognition of cultural differences and social exclusion should contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of social relations. For Wieviorka (1998), subjectivity is not reduced to a particular cultural identity; instead, it is a complex negotiation of multiple identities resulting

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from a person's interactions with the social environment. This view is also shared by Touraine (2000) and is further discussed below.

The need to move away from too much emphasis on culture is also evident in feminist criticisms of the Anglo-American debate on multiculturalism (notably Yuval-Davis, 1997; Okin, 1999). Too much emphasis on the preservation of cultural codes may lead to culturalist determinism and may be harmful to women. The main problem with multicultural politics is that they tend to rely on a representative voice for a particular collectivity. This thus implies a general tendency to homogenise that particular group, paying little attention to internal conflicts and power relations (Okin, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Yuval-Davis further explains that the 'representative voice' tends to be male and not in fact representative at all. A narrow understanding of culture could thus lead to the legitimisation of practices that would otherwise not be acceptable in Western societies (an example is female genital mutilation). Both Okin and Yuval-Davis also emphasise that gender relations can be used to explain and define particular cultural traditions, which may further legitimise and promote the subordination of women in the private sphere. Unacceptable behaviour of the kind women endure in the name of preservation of traditional customs therefore often remains undetected.

Furthermore cultures are not fixed, and so cultural categories cannot be considered once and for all. Cultures are constantly re-invented through social interaction and ethnic categories change over time (Hollinger, 1995). Individuals define themselves according to many different factors and as such belong to different groups simultaneously (Touraine, 2000; Wieviorka, 1998, Yuval-Davis, 1997). Therefore,

trying to categorise people into fixed categories is not helpful, and can in fact be harmful. As mentioned above, the representative voice of a particular collectivity carries much power, and decisions made accordingly affect the members of that collectivity differently, depending on their position. As explained above, women have tended to suffer in the name of cultural traditions. In fact, Yuval-Davis (1997: 200) rightly points out that representatives of particular collectivities are not alone in the promotion of the subordination of 'their women'. Women who tried to use the host's country's law to fight against certain practices found themselves reminded of the fact that it was 'their culture'. Multicultural politics should keep culturalists at bay. Cultural practices and cultural differences are not merely reproduced; exchanges (social interactions) lead to the production of new cultures. Social policies cannot be drawn on the basis that cultures are fixed and ahistorical, nor should they rely on 'the representative voice' of a particular collectivity for they would then only benefit a small (and likely male) minority at the expense of others (especially women). Policies should thus regularly be re-appraised, and re-considered through a greater understanding of plurality and subjectivity.

The main issue might not necessarily be a cultural one, but one that is social, or perhaps socio-cultural. This move away from an emphasis on cultural identities has the advantage of considering difference in its widest (and most inclusive) sense possible. A new branch of the French multiculturalist discourse has appeared around these issues. Since the mid-1990s the work of Wieviorka and Touraine has started to engage with multiculturalism in a less dialectic way. They both recognise the fruitlessness of the binary debate that has characterised much of the French

multiculturalist discourse and argue for 'a middle way' between the universal and the particular in the name of democracy and tolerance.

Whilst Wieviorka and Touraine stand out from the French intellectual scene, their ideas and concerns are not a million miles away from those of Anglo-American theorists, notably Kymlicka and Holliger. In fact, their perspective has been described by both Boucher (2000) and Wieviorka himself (1997b), as falling into the 'multicultural category'. Wieviorka (1997b) recognises himself among what he calls 'moderate multiculturalists' (including in that category are Touraine and liberal multiculturalists like Kymlicka and Hollinger). These theorists argue for the need to establish an integrated plural society:

> Les multiculturalistes les plus tempérés (...) considèrent qu'il faut combiner les valeurs universelles, le droit, la raison et, je vais emprunter le mot à Charles Taylor, la "reconnaissance" des différences culturelles (Wieviorka, 1997b: 114).

This view is not a total departure from republican principles, since some degree of universality and uniformity is acknowledged as necessary for social cohesion. However the idea of the abstract individual and citizen stripped of its humanity and cultural particularities is not accepted either. Charles Taylor's concepts of 'recognition' and 'presumption of legitimacy' of cultural differences inspire Wieviorka's definition of multiculturalism, which is based on the idea that mediation and negotiation between cultural differences and uniformity requires us to treat cultural differences as legitimate in the first place. Unless they are seen as legitimate, there is no possibility of dialogue. Nonetheless Wieviorka (1998) recognises that multiculturalism as such cannot be seen as the answer to all socio-cultural issues. For

him, cultural issues should not be separated from the social context. 'Race' and ethnicity have social consequences such as poverty, unemployment, and segregation.

There is growing recognition of the need to go to beyond the binary dialogue between the universal and the particular which has so long marked French intellectual life. Fassin (1999), Schain (1999) Lacorne (1997) and Boucher (2000) have acknowledged the contribution of Wieviorka and Touraine's work to the search for a 'middle way'. Wieviorka (1997c) and Touraine (2000) argue that universality and *communautarisme* are two poles of a triangle, with subjectivity as the third. In his book <u>Can we live together?</u> Touraine provides a very detailed analysis of the importance of understanding the place of the Subject in human interactions. He argues that individuals cannot be understood as passively responding to outside stimuli:

> In a world of permanent and uncontrollable change, the individual's attempt to transform lived experiences into the construction of the self as actor is the only stable point of reference. I call the individual's attempt to become an actor 'the Subject'. The Subject has no content but its own production. It serves no cause, no values and no law other than its need and desire to resist its own dismemberment in a changing world in which there is no order or equilibrium (Touraine, 2000: 13).

A greater understanding of subjectivity is central to Touraine's project. He argues that we need to view others as Subjects before being able to develop ways of respecting and acknowledging others' differences. Touraine's project therefore promotes greater tolerance and freedom through a greater understanding of our complex subjectivities. For successful and fruitful inter-cultural communication among Subjects, Touraine believes in the need for institutional safeguards, where education plays a vital role:

> If we are to be able to answer the question 'Can we live together?', or in other words, 'How can we reconcile the freedom of the personal Subject, the recognition of cultural differences and the institutional guarantees that safeguard that freedom and those differences?', we have to discuss education (Touraine, 2000: 265).

Touraine argues that education should be rethought. It should no longer be seen as the principal agency for socialisation into a universal understanding. Instead education should be individualised and should take into account the changing world, especially the changing role of the family. As such, education is seen as a place where diversity and tolerance are promoted and where life-skills are taught (in view of the decline of the family). The promotion of diversity should also result in the creation of heterogeneous schools, rather than having schools defined by their allegiance to particular religious beliefs (as such, secularism is welcome), gender or class. Furthermore, Touraine argues for a realistic consideration of inequality of opportunity and the development of compensatory measures. The creation of such schools, would, according to Touraine encourage and develop our understanding of other's subjectivities, thus developing inter-cultural communication.

Women, immigrant populations and young people have sought after greater recognition of subjectivity. Touraine insists that the way we do politics has to change for it prevents the valorisation of subjectivity and is no longer applicable:

> The political world is still dominated by the interests and representations of industrial society, even though that society is in decline. If politics continues to lag behind, there is a possibility that political life will be increasingly ignored by public opinion, and this could be very dangerous. It is to be hoped that those who have chosen to become the people's elected representatives will make their own contribution to the necessary revival of social thought and social action (Touraine, 2000: 304).

Both Wieviorka and Touraine have greatly contributed to the French multiculturalist discourse, successfully challenging the universal/particular division by stressing the importance of subjectivity in that discourse. Their research also points to the inadequacies of the French political system in dealing with difference and suggests a more integrated discourse on difference and subjectivity.

As mentioned above, Anglo-American feminists have engaged with multicultural theory, criticising much of its cultural determinism. Yuval-Davis (1997) suggests the idea of 'transversal politics' as an alternative to multiculturalism. Like Touraine and Wieviorka in France, she is interested in trying to create solidarity and reconciliation among the great multiplicity of identities. Her concerns also lay in making sure that the voices of the usually unheard members of particular groups are heard, so as to establish a dialogue with others in the hope of being able to 'live together with our differences', to paraphrase Touraine (2000) again. She is keen to also differentiate 'transversal politics' from 'identity politics', which again tend to create fixed and homogeneous groups or sub-groups:

> Identity politics tend to not only homogenise and naturalise social categories and groupings, but also to deny shifting boundaries of identities and internal power differences and conflicts of interest (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 203).

Everything that turns a person into an individual should be considered and acknowledged as much as possible by the individual in question as well as by the

others.[63] Everyone is situated and everyone, she argues, should respect each other's positioning prior and during any dialogue:

> Transversal politics are based on dialogue that takes into account the different positionings of women, or people in general, but does not grant any of them *a priori* privileged access to the 'truth'. In transversal politics, perceived unity and homogeneity are replaced by dialogues that give recognition to the specific positionings of those who participate in them, as well as to the 'unfinished knowledge' that each such situated positioning can offer (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 204).

The idea of 'transversal politics' is not therefore that dissimilar to the idea of inter-cultural communication promoted by Wieviorka and Touraine. In each of these cases, the desire for greater dialogue, understanding and tolerance is emphasised. Furthermore whilst Touraine and Wieviorka's arguments might be a little abstract, Yuval-Davis (1997) demonstrates through concrete examples like the coalition of Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) that 'transversal politics' can work.[64] She explains that the women members do not see themselves as representatives of any particular groups, only as individuals who share the same aim, that is "advocating 'the Third Way' against fundamentalism and racism" (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 204). In practice, 'transversal politics' requires a certain 'rooting' and understanding of where one might be coming from (one's positionality), as well as a certain openness (Yuval-Davis calls it 'shifting') and the desire for empathy with others. Again, this relates to Touraine's idea of greater understanding of others as 'Subjects'. Only through that understanding can we truly begin to respect others' difference.

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[63]Yuval-Davis (1997: 204) mentions gender, class, 'race', ethnicity, location, sexuality, stage of the life cycle, and ability as examples of particular dimensions of positioning. She also argues that "the particular value systems and political agendas of the participants in the exchange" should be taken into consideration.

[64]Yuval-Davis (1997: 206) nonetheless points out that unfortunately solidarity is not always possible.

So far, cultural difference has tended to be part of one particular discourse, that is the integration/multicultural discourse (principally bound up with immigration issues), and sexual difference has formed another, separate discourse, namely the feminist discourse. The debate on *parité* could have brought those two discourses together, but the prevailing official discourse's republicanism does not appear ready to tackle difference in a wider and more inclusive sense. Again, social fragmentation and *communautarisme* seem to be well established fears that limit the scope of challenges to the status quo.

5) Conclusion

Although it has often been hard for French republican thinkers and activists to accept, there is no contradiction between the ideal of having a unified conception of civil society and the practice of allowing people to identify with particular separate groups. The idea of civil society embraces difference at least within certain limits, and the pursuit of an effective civil society separate from the state (something which has not always appealed to republicans any more than it appealed to monarchists or petainists) demands an active encouragement of citizens who use their citizenship to pursue their own separate and disparate rights and interests. To encourage this at a policy level, targeted social measures may be necessary, and can be acceptable in the spirit of the inclusion of difference, providing that there are no special rights reserved for minorities which undermine the cohesion of the society as a whole. This is what 'multiculturalism' implies and entails in the French multiculturalist discourse.

The idea of compensation measures has been noted. Positive discrimination is only one aspect of such measures, one that has so far been seen as unacceptable in France, for the aim is equality of results. Yet, whilst falling outside official regulations and discourses, practices approaching positive discrimination or preferential practices have occurred. Already, as mentioned above, there is 'unspoken' recognition of ethnicity and a very active 'ethnic politics' in France. This can be seen as operating underground, but it is there nonetheless. It is also interesting to note that in France affirmative action (or preferential policy) has tended to concentrate on social issues and social integration. Although the idea was not as obvious and open as in the US, in practice, in France as in the US, specific social groups were targeted. *Parité* on the other hand falls within open positive discrimination legitimised by law. The adoption of *parité* may still encourage further changes on policy on ethnicity and religion which many (anti-paritists) feared. Chapter Five considers the extent to which this is true through the consideration of French Caribbean theories of difference and the emergence of a new 'Metropolitan blackness'.

The emphasis in official discourses remains colour blind, and tends towards non-acceptance of cultural differences in the public sphere, at work and at school. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, companies and local authorities are forced to take into consideration what has traditionally been ignored by government officials until recently: that is that ethnicity *is* a French question and that France *is* multi-ethnic. How this multi-ethnicity is approached is a determinant factor in the greater discourse around difference. This chapter has shown how the unofficial discourse is racialised and that the official discourse oscillates between a racialised and a republican

discourse. In both cases, such discourses have contributed to the construction of distinct racialised communities.

This chapter has argued for the understanding of difference as part of a more inclusive discourse. The multiculturalist discourse in France has tended to officially ignore racialised issues, whilst promoting unofficial culturalist perspectives. Although the official discourse promotes a common republican citizenry, the unofficial discourse has promoted the homogenisation of 'the Other' as 'non-French' or 'immigrant communities' in a first instance, and as 'Algerian' or 'Maghrebin' communities in another. There has not been much consideration of other socio-cultural groups, nor of internal conflicts of interests within particular cultural groups as well as between different ethnic groups (De Rudder *et al*, 1998). Again, the acknowledgement of an 'inter-ethnic racism' is 'present-absent': in practice it is acknowledged, but not officially. Anti-racists and advocates of integration remain faithful to a 'universal solution' (Wieviorka, 1997d; Costa-Lascoux, 1997). The official discourse therefore needs to refocus on subjectivity, if it is to implement effective social policies for all. The social implications brought about by discriminatory practices are real and need careful consideration. Only the understanding that there is not one, but many different forms of racism and sexism (and many other forms of discrimination), will lead to successful 'social integration', to being able to live together with our differences.

The multicultural discourse in France has generally remained closed to other sets of discourses dealing with issues of difference, such as feminism, *Négritude*, *Antillanité* and *Créolité*, discussed in Chapter Five. Chapter Five also exemplifies further the

need to develop a greater appreciation of subjectivity in the consideration of the subordination of French Caribbean women's writings in French Caribbean theory.

Chapter Four demonstrates how the republican discourse has resulted in the social exclusion of French Caribbean citizens and Chapter Five shows how the white republican discourse has permeated other underground discourses, such as in this case, French feminism. It appears that the 'Subject' is understood to be gendered (through the adoption of *parité*), but the idea of 'the Subject' being racialised remains more problematic. Chapter Five tackles the fact that French (Metropolitan) multiculturalist and feminist discourses have been constructed outside French Caribbean discourses of difference, arguing for greater cross-fertilisation. Metropolitan multiculturalists and feminists may indeed learn from the concepts of *Antillanité* and *Créolité*, as well as from French Caribbean women's writings.

Official discourses of civic and ethnic nationalism have deep roots in French identity and in the history of republicanism. They suggest ways of constituting social solidarity in ways that are necessarily exclusive of groups who might be seen as divisive, including in this context women as well as migrant communities and those of varied religious affiliations. The discourse has served the function of excluding, delegitimising and suppressing those who are seen as threatening. The US may not have managed change in response to challenges of group identity and difference any better; but it has managed them rather differently to France. *The perception* that it has managed them better informs much of the conversation about responses to difference in France in the 1990s and today. Concepts and practices of multiculturalism provide key reference points around which the debates need to be understood, but they also

provide a rich and diverse set of arguments in themselves out of which the capacity of the republican tradition to reinvent itself successfully has emerged. The republican discourse is a powerful one which feminist arguments have sought to take on. The remainder of the thesis explores how that has taken place and how successful French feminism has also been (or not been) in reconfiguring gender, ethnicity, and 'race' in the face of this still very powerful discourse.

Chapter 4:

Discourses of Discrimination

The principal aim of this chapter is to consolidate the arguments of Chapters Two and Three. Empirical data in the form of interviews and statistics are used, providing concrete evidence that French Caribbean women's experiences differ greatly from that of Metropolitan women, both in the islands and in Metropolitan France.[65] This chapter also demonstrates how French Caribbean women in the islands cannot always relate to the experiences of those who either emigrated to, or were born in, mainland France. Chapter Five picks up from Chapter Four in that it explores the difficult issue of considering a French Caribbean identity when faced with a legacy of colonial and racist republican discourse. As Chapter Five considers and develops French Caribbean politics of difference overlooked by anti-racist and multiculturalism discourses in France, Chapter Four brings out differences and similarities among French Caribbean women islanders, French Caribbean women in the Metropole and (white) Metropolitan women.

This chapter also demonstrates the extent to which French citizenship is racialised through a brief historical consideration of the relationship between Metropolitan France and the French Caribbean islands, consolidating the claims made in the previous chapters that French republican discourse is one that has traditionally

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[65]The interview material I refer to in this chapter is not always my own. This is a deliberate attempt at providing the widest possible range of evidence. The concerns of the few women I interviewed did not depart from issues raised by some French Caribbean writers and theorists and anti-racist groups (Chapter Five examines in some detail discrimination against black people living in Metropolitan France).

excluded specific socio-cultural groups. As Chapter Two argued that French republican discourse had been constructed at the expense of women, this chapter shows that it has also been at the expense of French Caribbean people.[66]

The importance of this chapter lies in its relation to *parité*. It demonstrates that although *parité* advocates claim that women remain discriminated against and cannot exercise their citizenship rights to the full (their eligibility right more specifically), a similar case can be made for French Caribbean people. The first section of this chapter thus considers the deep-rooted colonial and racist ideologies contained in the French republican discourse which have resulted in the construction of a particular understanding of French citizenship, that is based on the eradication of cultural differences. The examination of the racialised nature of French citizenship in this chapter further questions the legitimacy of *parité* advocates' claim that gender cannot, and should not, be considered alongside socio-cultural categories such as 'race'.

Also, Chapter Two has shown that *parité* carried different meanings and different expectations, stressing the need to consider women's heterogeneity. Sections Two and Three of this chapter illustrate more concretely that need by comparing women's conditions in the islands with those of women in the Metropole, as well as comparing gender relations in the islands and in the Metropole. The chapter's last section concentrates on French Caribbean women and employment, bringing out gendered patterns (outlined in the organised gendered migration of the BUMIDOM years in Section One) of discrimination, as well as racialised ones.

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[66]The comparison between the historical exclusion of women and French Caribbeans from French citizenship can be found in Ducoulombier, A. (2002) 'Parity is about 'Race': A Reading of French Citizenship Through the case of the French Caribbean', in Modern and Contemporary France *Debating and Implementing Gender Parity in French Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, February 2002, pp. 75-87.

1) Historical relationship between Metropolitan France and the French Caribbean islands.

The following brief account is intended to establish the background of the social, economic and political factors which dictated later relationships between mainland France and the French Caribbean populations. As such, this section informs the larger concerns of the thesis and prepares the ground for more detailed analysis of the contemporary situation. It pursues the arguments of Chapters Two and Three in its call for a greater consideration of socio-cultural diversity in the search for equality.

From slavery to the establishment of assimilation policies

Although slavery was abolished in the Jacobin period of the 1789 French Revolution, it was re-established under Napoleon Bonaparte's regime in 1802, as he found himself under great pressure from the white plantation owners to have slavery restored. This pressure was in effect carried over into his private affairs as his first wife's family were white Martinicans (Aldrich, 1995). Slavery was thus restored during Bonaparte's regime in all the remaining French colonies.

It was only in the Second Republic in 1848, and for economic and socio-political reasons, that slavery was truly abolished (Aldrich, 1995: 101-102). The slave trade was no longer regarded as profitable, and many of the white plantation owners were in fact in great debt to Metropolitan merchants, who were very much aware of the

growing socio-political tension on the islands, thus increasing the difficulty of investing and developing the plantations further.

Besides strong economic reasons to abolish slavery, the growing number of slave uprisings became a good indicator of the disintegration of slave society. Furthermore, for years, the French Caribbean people saw glimpses of hope which would then be crushed as the constitutional positions of France fluctuated between Republic and Empire. For years they were given some basic rights, which would then be taken away from them in the next regime.

> French colonial policy in the Caribbean swung from promising the moon
> to failing to deliver even the basic necessities of life for the "labouring
> masses" (Hintjens, 1991: 39).

Emancipation could thus be traced back to the very first allusions to freedom enshrined in the French Revolution of 1789. What is more, as pointed out earlier, periods of relative freedom were experienced, thus reinforcing the feeling of the right to freedom. In France, only the freed slaves were given equal rights by 1833. However, as by 1838, emancipation had reached the British Caribbean, measures were brought in to diminish slavery, such as making buying one's freedom more easily accessible: freedom for the French islanders was only a matter of time (Fredj, 1989: 23).

The seeds were sown and the islanders (essentially the 'mulattos' and the freed slaves at first)[67] saw in the French Revolution many possibilities and considered the independence of Saint Domingue[68] in 1804 as proof of the shift from 'France the coloniser to France symbol of freedom' (Giraud, 1991: 240). If France were to hold on to its possessions in the Caribbean, this could no longer be achieved by force; justifying colonialism was to become an increasingly difficult task. Indeed as Fredj (1989: 23) explains, the newly re-established French republican government of 1848 (Second Republic) signed a decree (dated April 27) stipulating the end of slavery. Nonetheless, it is revolts in the islands on May 22nd in Martinique and May 27th in Guadeloupe that established freedom before the decree had the chance to arrive. The newly freed islanders became French citizens.

Burgeoning reforms came to a halt in 1851 (second Empire), and whilst slavery was not re-established, newly acquired rights were withdrawn (Greenwood & Hamber, 1987), a move welcomed by the white islanders who resented the inclusive ideals of the republicans (Deville & Georges, 1996).

Under the Third Republic (1871), the French Caribbean colonies were given representation in the French Assembly in Paris. It is also at that time that the socio-political make-up of the islands started to take shape. Indeed, rights were restored to the islanders, and the 'mulattos' saw in republicanism the possibility to finally

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[67]I am aware that the word 'mulatto' can, in some contexts, be seen as racist (especially for its links with 'mule', a hybrid of donkey and horse which is infertile). The reference to 'mulattos' here is to differentiate them from the 'black masses'. Also, whilst it is against the spirit of the thesis to use a vocabulary that differentiates people on the basis of their skin colour, or the degree of 'paleness', Caribbean societies were constructed and organised according to such 'rules'. Giraud (1989) explains this very well in 'Les masques de la couleur' in Autrement 'Antilles', No. 41, pp. 88-95.

[68]Prior to its independence, Haiti was known as Saint Domingue.

achieve equality with the whites (Fredj, 1989). The white islanders who did not

believe in universal suffrage[69] stayed clear of politics, giving the 'mulattos' and black

middle classes an unprecedented opportunity to carve themselves out an active role in

politics. 'Mulattos' and black middles classes made the most of their political power

and played an active role in the creation of *départementalisation* in 1946 through their

constant pressure on the Metropolitan government for equal rights for the islanders.

Deville and Georges (1996: 62) explain that the dominant current throughout the

Third Republic is the claim for *départementalisation*. However, whilst propositions

and projects are defined and redefined, the two World Wars and the especially the

context of the second world have been seen to have greatly accelerated the cause of

départementalisation.[70]

The Third Republic would thus constitute the beginning of the French 'assimilation

policy' (Greenwood & Hamber, 1987: 69), and the legitimisation of colonialism.

Assimilation & *Départementalisation*

The integration of the French Caribbean colonies to the mainland is the ultimate

outcome of years of French assimilation policies. The origins of *départementalisation*

lie in a combination of repeated demands from Antilleans,[71] seeking in French

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[69]They were still very much against any form of republicanism and resented the Metropolitan economic and political control of the islands, which they still regarded as their domain.

[70]Already after the Great War the idea of having paid with blood was very much present among French Caribbeans. Deville and Georges (1996: 62) point out that feelings of patriotism had developed in the islands, for the price of the war turned the Metropole from an abstraction into a reality:

[71]'Antilleans' can be used as a substitute for 'French Caribbeans' but refers especially to the islanders of Martinique and Guadeloupe. In the context of the time, the 1940s, a few relatively powerful black

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citizenship an alternative to being at the mercy of the *béké*,[72] and France's need to compromise due to the international trend towards decolonisation at the time (Hintjens, 1994). Pressure on former colonisers to give up the acquisitions of the previous centuries, articulated, for example, at the Bogotá conference of 1945, mounted after the end of the second World War. Influenced both by right wing opinion and the resistance position, adopted by the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF), that the nation state should be the originator of this kind of change, parliament unanimously agreed on a policy of *départmentalisation*. (Hintjens, 1991: 40). Their reasons for doing so were far from entirely generous.

Faced with the possible loss of its colonies in the aftermath of the Bogotá conference in 1945 (Hintjens, 1991:40), and a feared annexation by the US (Deville & Georges, 1996: 62),[73] the Caribbean proposal of complete integration to the 'Mother Country' (Haynes, 1990) in the form of *départmentalisation* was to be the French answer to decolonisation (Giraud, 1991: 241). So, although the proposition was initiated by three Antillean Left wing deputies in 1946 who saw in this change of status a mere logical progression from the abolition of slavery in 1848 (Hintjens, 1991:40), France had much to gain: *départmentalisation* was to provide a legitimate cover for the assimilation process, in place since the Third Republic.

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writers and activists (such as Aimé Césaire) were pressing for their inclusion in the French Metropole rather than remaining colonial territories. Aimé Césaire was also *député de la Martinique*, member of the PCF, hoping to extend the social reforms begun in Metropolitan France to the islands through *départementalisation*.

[72]Powerful white settlers, also referred to as 'les grands blancs'.

[73]French Caribbean islanders of the time feared that the Metropole would let go of its colonies as its contribution towards the cost of the war. The Metropole was seen as more favourable to black people than the US (Deville & Georges, 1996: 62).

The fear of US annexation also stretched to the French Caribbean. The pro-assimilationist Left in Martinique saw in *départementalisation* stability and security and great relief in republicanism after the oppressive Vichy years (Guerin, 1956; Deville & Georges, 1996).[74] The French Caribbean Left (especially in Martinique) saw assimilation to the French Metropole as preferable to the islands becoming a US dependency. Such an attachment to the French Metropole was not new and Giraud (1991: 240) argues that the granting of the status of French department to the colonies could have been done a lot sooner. Giraud explains that there had indeed been a growing attachment to the French state since the 19th century starting with the coloured middle-classes, but quickly reaching the masses.

Antilleans saw in republican principles their way out of servitude. Although the idea behind *départementalisation* can be traced back to the French Revolution and the first abolition of slavery in 1794 (Hintjens, 1991), Haynes (1990) situates the actual desire on the part of the (essentially mulattos and black middle class) islanders for total assimilation in the form of departmental status in 1874. From then on, regular requests were made to France asking for the complete integration of the French Caribbean.

The French state had cultivated the islanders' attachment to republican principles through public education. Giraud (1991) points out the level of manipulation involved in France's efforts to keep its 'dependencies dependable' through the creation of a 'brown middle class' favourable to French republican ideas.

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[74]The Vichy years in the French Caribbean were experienced as a regression, a return to a racist regime.

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With this objective it was essential to reinforce the indigenous coloured pro-French middle-class with whom the masses could identify, whose social position and life-style would represent the ideal they desired for their children. This was achieved by means of widespread public education along with the promulgation of an assimilationist ideology, which presented the maintenance of the relationship with France as a guarantee of progress (Giraud, 1991: 239).

So, France was no longer so much the oppressor, but the saviour: the coloured middle-class needed protection from the oppression of the *békés'* rule in the colonies (Giraud, 1991). A new picture of France emerged, painted in the true colours of republicanism, and for a population that had experienced so few rights, so little justice, the republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity were just simply too irresistible an attraction. Little did they know of France's real agenda: in embracing French republican principles, the islanders were in effect embracing another form of colonisation through widespread public education.

Changing the status of its Caribbean colonies can thus mainly be seen as an act of self-interest. *Départementalisation* was a compromise: appearing to put something back into the old colonies, and keeping the islanders happy with their newly acquired rights, meant that Metropolitan France had a newly found keen and docile black population at its service. French Caribbean islanders were indeed used for particular jobs, and as the section on organised migration below demonstrates, they were lured into the belief of greater opportunities on mainland France, encouraging emigration.

Post-Departmental Status: citizenship at what cost?

Although *départementalisation* was easily achieved on a politico-administrative level, there was some considerable delay for the new departments to experience its effect on a social and economic level. This translated practically in delays in the introduction of the minimum wage (SMIC) until 1965 and of unemployment benefit until 1971 (Bastien, 1989a).

However, the departmental status of the French Caribbean has brought with it many enviable and practical changes in comparison with the rest of the Caribbean (Bastien, 1989a; Hintjens, 1991). The French departments enjoy full social security benefits, direct budgetary support from the Metropole, protection and French law enforcement (Greenwood & Hamber, 1987: 70). *Départementalisation* has also meant more investments in the islands in the form of modernisation of infrastructures, and existing health facilities, as well as the creation of new hospitals, and educational provisions (Bastien, 1989a).

It has been demonstrated that the exploitative nature of the relations between the French Caribbean and the Metropole have stretched over a long period of time from slavery to the 1946 law granting the populations of the old colonies citizenship status. The pursuit of assimilation translated into great manipulation on the part of the French state, and explains to some extent the invisibility and ambivalence of the contemporary Caribbean society which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Organised migration or the institutionalisation of racism

As well as playing an important part in the assimilation process, education also promoted migration, which in turn reinforced the assimilation process. Pro-French attitudes and associations between France and social advancement resulted initially from educational campaigns. However, considerations of France as a land of opportunities and as a 'guarantee of progress' (Giraud, 1991: 239), have not only helped to maintain the existing power relations between France and its Antillean colonies, but have also contributed to what Condon (1994) calls a 'migration ideology'. By 'migration ideology' she refers to the constructed association between migration (to the Metropole) and social advancement. This 'migration ideology' was to be instrumental in the acceleration of the assimilation process. Migration had already been established as the way to freedom and opportunities by slaves who had escaped to the remotest areas of the islands and by freed slaves' land claims.

However, it is undeniable that the French state took advantage of this way of thinking. It played an active role in reinforcing the above association so that migrating to mainland France would be associated with increased standards of living and the provision of greater opportunities in life (Condon, 1994). Exchanges between the islands and mainland France accelerated after *départementalisation*, and recruitment for low-skilled workers in the islands started at the end of the 1950s. Later on, in 1961, the active intervention of the French state translated into the creation of the BUMIDOM[75] so as to organise emigration to mainland France.

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[75]Bureau migration département d'outre-mer.

In analysing BUMIDOM recruitment campaigns (Condon, 1994) as well as testimonies from Antilleans living on the mainland (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1985; Pineau and Abraham, 1998) 'thanks to' BUMIDOM's interventions, one has again to acknowledge the successful efforts of the French state to present its ability to disguise the satisfaction of its own aims as 'god-sent gifts':

> Le BUMIDOM, je peux dire que ça a changé ma vie. Je sais pas ce que je serai devenue si j'avais pas osé la traversée. (...) On avait tous eu ce même mouvement de quitter le pays. (...) on en parlait comme d'un chemin sauveur ('Julétane' in Pineau and Abraham, 1998: 112-113).

Despite their status of French citizens, Caribbean people were allocated low-skilled jobs in the Metropole. Furthermore, French Caribbean women were usually 'trained' to become 'good servants' to French homes, or work as cleaners in hospitals, re-inforcing the old colonial relations of service providers to the 'whites'.

> On avait des grands rêves, tu sais... Comme devenir infirmière, secrétaire, standardiste, caissière dans un grand magasin, coiffeuse, institutrice... Des filles sortaient de là désanchantées quand elles se retrouvaient bonnes à tout faire ou filles de salle dans les hôpitaux. (...) Ce que je ne voulais pas faire en Guadeloupe, je me suis retrouvée à le faire en France. Et bien contente! Servante... Bonne, quoi! ('Julétane' in Pineau and Abraham, 1998: 112-113).

Organised emigration from the islands to the Metropole constitutes another very important part of French Caribbean history. It has had profound effects on French Caribbean communities in the islands but also in the Metropole. It has been determinant in propagating the association between the Metropole and 'progress' and opportunities, propagating and contributing to an 'ideology of migration' mentioned earlier (Condon, 1994). For the majority of French Caribbean immigrants their

dreams were short-lived once in the Metropole; emigration for these populations did not bring better opportunities, but in fact brought up other issues - the subject of the next section - such as the marginalisation of women in certain types of jobs coupled with racist discrimination that further complicated their ongoing battle to provide for their families.

Organised migration was a definite Metropolitan strategy that was to benefit the French state. The demographic growth in the islands was of great concern to the French state, especially in view of the lack of work in the islands. It is thus to remedy a potential crisis that may lead to social and political unrest in the islands on one hand, as well as to provide a much needed labour force on the mainland that emigration was organised. It was also hoped that this would lead to the greater integration (though at the time assimilation was more the idea) of the islanders into the French nation. Organised migration by BUMIDOM was much more directed at the black working class. It is principally that group, already marginalised, that was targeted by the campaigns of French government of the time. Focusing on single young working class people was thus seen as a way of bringing the birth rates down in the islands as well as providing these young emigrants (French, of course) with jobs in a Metropole badly needing low paid unskilled workers.

Within an assimilationist framework, the issue of 'ethical integration' - that is more consideration for the populations that are being displaced - was not the order. Whilst French Caribbean islanders were 'trained' to become 'good French citizens' as part of their work training, Metropolitans were not 'trained' to become good hosts. This is not to suggest that the 'training' the islanders received during the BUMIDOM years

would have been acceptable providing the Metropolitans were to undergo similar treatment. It is however legitimate enough to think that a better (and less judgmental) knowledge of the 'other' (Metropolitan for the islanders, and French Caribbean for the Metropolitan) could have led to a more integrated French society. As it is, the displacement of black working class young people to the Metropole only led to the creation of an under-class. Indeed, the manipulation of the French state fitted and promoted racist colonial ideologies. The Caribbean populations were used, very much in the way other foreign immigrants were used, that is that far from being given opportunities, they were in the Metropole to serve and assist the Metropolitans. Although in contrast with other migrant populations French Caribbean migrants were more often allocated jobs in the public sector, and as such benefited from a little more employment security than other migrants working for the private sector. Emigration was not to challenge the old racist colonial representation of the 'other'. Being French did not seem to mean much in practice for French Caribbean immigrant workers were discriminated against in the same way as any other immigrant workers.

Whilst organised migration can be defined as racialised in that it not only fitted an old colonial racist framework, Condon demonstrated its gendered nature. The testimony of 'Julétane' (1998) above is a very good example of the racialised and gendered nature of emigration. Her dreamed of opportunities were already gendered for she thought of becoming a nurse or a hairdresser to quote a couple of jobs that are often associated with women. However, the jobs migrant Antillean women were 'trained' to do in the Metropole were much less satisfying and carried even less status. So whilst these jobs were gendered in that they were directed specifically at women, reflecting assumptions about women's roles, they were also racialised in that they

carried less status and reflected assumptions about the subordination or inferiority of black people. French Antilleans women were offered jobs as cleaners, auxilliary staff, servants. Whilst some were able to take advantage of their French status to study and managed to acquire qualifications, the general situation was bleak for French Caribbean women, especially if they were single mothers (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1985; Guerlet, 1993; Pineau & Abraham, 1998). The situation has not improved that much in more recent times (Anselin, 1991), and this is an issue that is further developed later on as well as in the next chapter.

2) French Caribbean women and gender relations in the French Caribbean islands

French Caribbean gender relations have generally been under-studied (Gautier, 1994), and there has been nothing comparable to the seminal publications of the works of Alibar and Lembeye-Boy (1981) on gender relations in the French Antilles (Maritinique and Guadeloupe). INSEE publications demonstrate that in many ways the condition of French Caribbean women living in the islands has greatly improved and that the changing status of French Caribbean women may lead to changing gender relations (INSEE, 1994, 1995, 1997). Whilst the French Caribbean islands may have many enviable qualities when compared with the rest of the Caribbean, French Caribbean women's status in the islands should be compared with that of French Metropolitan women.[76] Class is a very important factor, and Gautier (1994: 165)

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[76]Familles de Guadeloupe, INSEE 1997; Femmes de Guadeloupe, INSEE 1995; Femmes en Chiffres, Martinique, INSEE 1994; Antiane Eco, Revue économique des Antilles et de la Guyane, No 19, Vol. 1, INSEE 1992 (September). These studies are based on the 1990 survey.

suggests that although more studies are required on this question, middle-class gender relations in the islands are perhaps changing more rapidly, as well as young people's attitudes. Beauvue-Fougeyrollas (1985: 8) outlines the inter-relations of many important factors when considering the study of gender relations in the Caribbean:

> (...) la condition des femmes antillaises exige, pour être apréhendée, l'examen de trois dimensions: celle qui oppose les femmes aux hommes en général, celle qui oppose les colonies aux colonisateurs, enfin celle qui oppose les membres des classes exploitées aux membres des classes dominantes.

Although class would ideally need to be taken into consideration, the chapter is not able to make such distinctions, but concentrates on the comparison between French Caribbean women islanders and Metropolitan women in its consideration of 'race' relations. Nonetheless, whenever possible, distinctions between working-class and middle-class will be made in an attempt to prevent overgeneralisations.

It has been established that French Caribbean women are far from a homogeneous group. In fact, engaging with issues relating to French Caribbean women's experiences is further complicated by the fact that whilst they may share characteristics with other Caribbean women, their French status make them stand out. Furthermore, whilst emigration to the Metropole is internal, in that no state boundaries are crossed, French Caribbean women islanders and French Caribbean women migrants do not share the same experiences. Another complication lies in the relative absence of research on French Caribbean gender relations especially in mainland France. This is in marked contrast with the interest in gender relations among English speaking Caribbeannists (such as for example Momsen, 1993; Skelton)

It is perhaps more appropriate here to speak of 'an idea of French Caribbean gender relations', considering the lack of study in that area. This is not in order to simplify or to over-generalise. This section engages with the little literature and material available at the time and the principal debates around gender relations in the French Caribbean islands, as well as in the Metropole with regards to first and second generation migrants.

Matrifocality and Matriarchy.

Caribbean societies have often been referred to as matriarchal due to the centrality of women and the importance of grandmothers in the upbringing of children. Matriarchal family structures have generally been considered to be an important characteristic of Caribbean societies (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1985; INSEE, 1997; Mulot, 1998), and a direct consequence of slavery (Attias-Donfut & Lapierre, 1997: 11). Studies would also refer to the 'absent father' or 'multiple fathers' (Mulot, 1998) to describe the situation of women headed Caribbean households. This situation is not particular to the French Caribbean and can in fact be extended to the whole of the Caribbean. The nature of Caribbean relationships has generally been understood to have contributed to Caribbean female headed households:

> A côté du mariage, il existe des unions consensuelles avec résidence ou non sous le même toit. D'un côté on a le concubinage (...) De l'autre, quand il n'y a pas corésidence, on a des relations de "type ami". (INSEE, 1997: 5)

The 'absent father' (or the lack of interest in the upbringing of their children by the fathers) has been explained by the fact that in slavery times the black male had no claim or responsibility over his children or his 'partner' as they were considered to be the possession of their white master (Mulot, 1998: 35).

However one should not be lured into believing that images of Caribbean women as strong, independent and resourceful heads of households have meant that they were valued for these qualities by Caribbean societies. In fact, "the frequent male absence from the household does not prevent him from dominating it" (Gautier: 1994: 164).[77] The subordination of Caribbean women could also be explained by looking at the gender relations in the context of slavery and emancipation. Although there was no real sexual division of labour among slaves, slave women were nonetheless discriminated against and had no access to training whatsoever, excluding them from any possible supervisory roles in post-emancipation times (Hart, 1989).

During slavery and colonialism, the dominant culture of the West was imposed in the Caribbean, and subordinate cultures restrained. It can therefore be conjectured that Western patriarchal ideologies have infiltrated Caribbean society:

> Within the Caribbean regional diversity of ethnicity, class, language and religion there is an ideological unity of patriarchy, of female subordination and dependence. Yet there is also a vibrant living tradition of female economic autonomy, of female headed households and of family structures in which men are often marginal. So Caribbean gender-relations are a double paradox (...). The roots of this contemporary paradoxical situation lie in colonialism (Momsen, 1993: 1).

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[77]Author's own translation. Original reads: "L'absence fréquente de l'homme du foyer n'empêche (...) pas qu'il le domine".

Due to the lack of power of French Caribbean women, authors such as Mulot (1998) have preferred to use the term 'matrifocal' instead of 'matriarchal' in that the centrality of women is acknowledged without assuming the fact that they may dominate the private sphere (Gautier, 1994).

INSEE figures and reports seem to call into question what has been perceived and described as a traditional Caribbean family structure model, that is based on 'matrifocality' (1992, 1997). Indeed, according to INSEE findings, matrifocal family structures were no longer the norm in the mid-1970s. The nuclear family would in fact be the main model in the French Caribbean, but also in Jamaica, calling for a rethinking of the perceived traditional Caribbean model of 'matrifocality' (1997: 6).

> De tout temps, la femme seule avec enfants apparaît comme une caractéristique non marginale de forme familiale aux Antilles (...). Ce fait a souvent été exagéré au détriment de la réalité du couple. On a même présenté la famille antillaise comme tributaire d'une instabilité chronique des unions. (...) Malgré des formes plus variées, la grande majorité des unions étaient plutôt stables (Canel, 1992: 38).

However, whilst INSEE reports seem to suggest that 'matrifocality' is more marginal than traditional, the dominant representation of Caribbean family structure as matrifocal could be explained by the fact that it is an important minority. INSEE's figures show that the most common household is that of a couple with children both in Guadeloupe (33%) and in the Metropole (36%). However, 15% of Guadeloupean households are single parent families (against 6% in the Metropole in the early 1990s). Since only about 14% of single parents are men (INSEE, 1997: 16), it is reasonable to see female-headed households in the French Caribbean as an important characteristic of French Caribbean family structures, and serves to explain the

tendency to see in matrifocality the model of French Caribbean family structures.[78] Yet, this is disputed. Figures show that family structures are in fact mainly based around a couple. Indeed, 43% of Guadeloupean households are constituted of a couple with or without children, against 36% of 'complex households' [that is when a person is a member of the household without being a family member, or when two or more families live under the same roof (INSEE, 1997: 14)] or of single parent families. Delaporte (1992: 37) in fact re-inforces that fact by pointing out that "despite all of life's obstacles, almost six people out of ten still live as part of a couple at 60. Whatever the age, the couple remains a valued refuge".[79]

Testimonies of women collected by Beauvue-Fougeyrollas (1985) and Pineau and Abraham (1998) suggest that there are different sets of expectations between men and women in the French Caribbean. These 'misunderstandings' between men and women have been interpreted as explaining the numerous pregnancies of French Caribbean women by different fathers (Gautier, 1994). The grief and practical difficulties that have resulted from the search for a stable relationship suggest that what is considered to be the traditional French Caribbean family structure has not been something that was actively sought after by the women. In fact, studies based on national census material and published by INSEE suggest that on the whole, the preferred relationships for women have not really been that different from those of the West in their search for the ideal partner or husband, living under the same roof (INSEE, 1997; Mulot, 1998). Whilst this may be the case, and women's testimonies seem to

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[78] Antiane Eco has published numerous articles on the subject of single-parent families and matriarchy, notably on the fact that single-mothers constituted the majority of single parents in the French islands (No. 4, 1987; No. 28, 1995; No. 30, 1995; No. 34, 1997, No. 35, 1997).

[79] Author's own translation. Original reads: "Malgré tous les aléas de la vie, à 60 ans près de six personnes sur dix vivent toujours en couple. A tous les âges, le couple reste une valeur refuge".

confirm it, there must be a recognised element of tradition in French Caribbean society regarding the expected roles of women, for these are often brought up by female relatives warning them of maybe having to cope by themselves and not to ever really count on a man for anything (Pineau & Abraham, 1998). The experiences of their mothers 'falling in love' with one man and then another bring contradicting messages to the girls in the households. So whilst unions are preferred, especially among women, their experiences demonstrate nonetheless a certain matrifocality.

Discussing family structures within the context of the French Caribbean remains a difficult exercise for there is very little research on gender relations in the French islands. Using INSEE reports and figures can be indicative and show the outline of a debate around 'matrifocality' and matriarchy. However, whilst INSEE is able to quantify the numbers of households made up of single mothers or of couples with or without children, there is no possibility of finding out whether those unions last and for how long. Although INSEE's reports on family structures have attempted to measure changes in gender relations, the figures proposed cannot always be taken at face value. Indeed, the fact that unions and couples are more common than once thought does not suggest that family structures are any less 'matrifocal'. The raising of children and their education remain mostly the domain of mothers. Furthermore, there is no indication as to what could constitute a union or a couple. Women's testimonies seem to back up the fact that French Caribbean women have sought stable relationships and that repeated failures and abandonment left them wounded. This situation is one that has occurred enough among black middle-class French Caribbean women for it to become a characteristic of gender relations. In that sense, women have sought 'coupledom', however, unless more research was done in that area, there

is no way to know for sure whether the unions and couples described by INSEE were going to be lasting. It is possible that at the time of the survey there were more couples than single mothers, which would fit in with women's desire to find a stable partner. There is no way of knowing however whether the unions of today are still the same as those at the time of the survey, without a more in-depth study, perhaps based on life-stories to be able to map out changes in attitudes between men and women. Beauvue-Fougeyrollas (1985) drew on the life experiences of a few women and Condon (1994) also used in-depth interviews with women immigrants in Paris. However, as previously mentioned, such studies have been very scarce, especially with regards to gender relations in the French islands and among the French Antillean populations in mainland France.

So whether the questions proposed by the INSEE literature constitute a real issue in French Caribbean gender relations remains to be verified. Statistics and analysis based on INSEE material can nonetheless be informative, especially in the light of suggestions of changes in French Caribbean gender relations both in the islands and in the Metropole) by authors such as Beauvue-Fougeyrollas (1985), Gautier (1994) and Mulot (1998). For example, better access to contraception has led to a substantial drop in birth rates in the islands, which has been interpreted by Gautier (1994: 164) as another indication that French Caribbean women did not 'traditionally' want big families. Better access to contraception methods gave them the possibility to reappropriate their own bodies, giving them more agency in deciding whether they wanted a child or not.[80] Figures showing women becoming better qualified can further

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[80]It is important to expand and nuance the issue around multiple pregnancies, not always with the same partner. Gautier (1994: 164) points out that although French Caribbean women in the 1950s and 1960s had an average of about six children, this was not always something they desired or planned. Contraceptive methods were very much the man's domain (condoms or withdrawal method) and they

emphasise a desire for greater independence. Independence, however should not be seen as a 'new' or changing characteristics of French Caribbean women. In fact studies on women in the Caribbean in general demonstrate how these women have been defined as generally independent and resourceful -although in light of what has been mentioned above, essentially due to a relative lack of intervention by and support from the men.[81] Nonetheless, better access to education, better contraception methods and the 'explosion' of the tertiary sector are factors that have contributed to greater independence, or perhaps fed women's desire for more independence. All this can contribute to changes in gender relations.

Changes in gender relations in the islands?

French Caribbean households have changed. Since the 1970s, a drop in birth rate has brought Guadeloupean figures closer to those of Metropolitan women (INSEE, 1997). In the 1950s and 1960s, Guadeloupean women had close to six children (5.8 between 1960 and 1964), against 2.7 for Metropolitan women. By the mid-1990s, Guadeloupean women have an average of 2 children, whilst Metropolitan women's birth rate is 1.7 (INSEE, 1997: 19). The size of the average French Caribbean household has thus also diminished (INSEE, 1992).

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were not always inclined to use them. In fact, prior to widespread and better access to family planning facilities, French Caribbean women had used various herbs and potions (not always efficient and sometimes quite dangerous) to limit their pregnancies.

[81]Ellis, P. (1986) 'An Overview of Women in Caribbean Society' in Ellis, P. (ed.) Women of the Caribbean -London, New Jersey (US): Zed books Ltd, pp. 1-24.

Another changing characteristic is the role of the father in the household. According to Mulot (1998), there is a definitive change among the young generations in the way French Caribbean men see their roles as fathers. They appear to want to be more involved in the education of their children for example (ibid, 1998: 38). This may, therefore, suggest new negotiations between men and women, and may lead to the revalorisation of the roles of French Caribbean women and men. However, if women of the Caribbean are often the head of the household and tend to be in charge of the private sphere (whether or not a partner lives under the same roof), it does not mean she has power over her male partner or husband (whether present or absent) as mentioned above (Gautier, 1994). These 'new fathers' (Mulot, 1998: 38) may end up having even more control over the household than before.

Whilst single-parent families are still more important in Guadeloupe and Martinique, some of the causes are changing according to Canel's comments (1992) based on INSEE figures. Divorce rates appear to have increased, despite the decrease in marriage rates (Canel, 1992: 39). A portion of single-parent families is thus explained by divorces and separations, further emphasising the fact that single parent families cannot simply be explained by tradition (seen to be based on matriarchy).[82] As the majority of single parent families are constituted mainly of single women (not divorced or separated), the more recent national survey is going to determine whether

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[82]Although as explained the dominant family model revolves around a couple and children, single-mothers constitute a considerable minority. The reasons that might have led to single-motherhood may however be diverse. On one hand, there is a socially and culturally open attitude towards 'illegitimate children' issued from very diverse unions, whilst on the other hand, there is evidence of an increase in divorce and separation. This is what has led Jacques Cazenave (1997: 4) to speak of a 'créolisation' of the French Caribbean family:

> Certaines évolutions procèdent d'une modernisation semblable à celles que vivent les pays développés. D'autres, comme celles portant sur la diversité des formes d'unions, relèvent de particularités guadeloupéennes. Les unes et les autres s'entrecroisent en partie et contribuent à la poursuite d'une créolisation de la famille.

one can speak of a re-structuration of French Caribbean households by taking up the characteristics of the Metropole's family structures:

> La famille monoparentale est une forme familiale courante. Elle existe depuis longtemps aux Antilles-Guyane avec les mères célibataires. Elle change un petit peu de nature avec, à l'image de ce qui se produit en métropole, les séparations ou divorces de couples mariés (Canel, 1992:38).

Marriage in the French Caribbean has tended to be preferred among the middle-classes who have greater financial stability and better education (Delaporte, 1992: 36). Single mothers tend to come from a less privileged background and have sometimes had early pregnancies and little education. These single mothers constitute the majority of the single parent families and are exposed to greater insecurity, such as long term unemployment (Canel, 1992).

Whilst an improvement in women's conditions has been observed on the islands, it does not necessarily lead to the transformation of gender relations. French Caribbean women are far from being perceived as the equals of their male counterparts. Education is nonetheless crucial in increasing gender awareness and has been identified as a tool to greater independence. In fact, younger generations of French Caribbean women seem to demonstrate a will to establish themselves before setting up a home or starting a family. This trend needs further research but can be observed in a few testimonies gathered by Pineau and Abraham (1998). Greater access to family planning facilities have led French Caribbean women to reaffirm their desire for more independence (Gautier, 1994; INSEE, 1995). Gautier (1994) rightly points out that French Caribbean women were able to regain control over their bodies, no longer letting French Caribbean women be the victims of Caribbean masculinist idea

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of virility. Education and employment are regarded as the key to success (Arnauld, 1992: 47). The number of unqualified Martiniquan women has decreased from 64.3% in 1982 to 52.5% in 1990 (INSEE, 1994: 38). Among the total *bacheliers* (that is students who passed their *Baccalauréat*) the share of Martiniquan women has increased from 62.7% in 1988 to 69% in 1993, whilst that of Guadeloupean women has increased from 60.5% to 65.5% between 1987 and 1993 (INSEE, 1994: 36; INSEE, 1995: 38). These figures also demonstrate that more women are qualified to *Baccalauréat* level than men, reaffirming the fact that generally girls do better than boys at school from primary school to secondary and tertiary education (Arnauld, 1992: 47; Mulot, 1998: 37).

Gender relations, 'race' relations and employment

Whilst French Caribbean women have often been the main provider (especially with regard to the black working class) this status has not prevented their subordination. Some authors (such as Gautier, 1994; Beauvue-Fougeyrollas,1985; Mulot, 1998) have argued that French Caribbean women have begun to seek greater independence and financial security before considering a family. This has been reflected in some testimonies as well as in some figures collected by INSEE.

From the 1970s, French Caribbean women in the islands have reaffirmed their presence in the job market since their 'redundancy' provoked by the decline of the sugar industry. No longer are they looking for a mere additional income, which,

when considering the numbers of single mothers in the islands,[83] few could afford not to have a stable and reliable source of income. Since 1954, there has been a steady increase in the economically active female population: from 37.7% in 1954 to 45.5% in 1990, according to INSEE (1995).[84] French Caribbean women have in fact taken advantage of the explosion of the tertiary sector of employment, where they represent the biggest share. For example, according to INSEE figures (1994: 42), more than 9 Martiniquan women out of 10 work in the service sector.[85] They are under-represented in managerial positions. Although it would seem that there is thus a progression in favour of the women (Dinan-Antenor, 1992), there is a distinctive gap between French Caribbean women and Metropolitan women:

> (...) la place des cadres supérieurs dans l'ensemble des femmes au travail est moindre dans notre région. Elle n'est que de 5.7% en 1990 contre 8.5% pour les métropolitaines, soit un retard d'environ 8 ans (1992: 20).

French Caribbean women share similar issues with Metropolitan women, in that in both places, the service industry has become feminised, so that more women than men are employed in this sector.[86] This has been explained by a mixture of socialisation in

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[83]"50,000 women lived with their children but without their partner in the whole of the French Caribbean. 32, 500 of them lived alone with their children. The others may share the same roof with another member of the family " (Canel, 1992: 38).

[84]According to INSEE's definition, the economically active female population includes women in employment as well as women who have declared themselves unemployed and actively seeking employment at the time of the national survey of 1990 (INSEE, 1995: 43).

[85]It is important to stress that often 'service sector' implies a lower level of training and responsibility.

[86]Chapter Two mentions the work of Zaidman on *mixité* in schools. The book considers also the feminisation and masculinisation of *mixité* in employment, that is that some jobs will more often than not attract more women than men, and that others will attract more men than women. Zaidman, C. (1992) 'Mixité scolaire, mixité sociale?' in Baudaux, C. and Zaidman, C. (eds.) Égalité entre les sexes. Mixité et Démocratie -Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 76-88; Zaidman, C. (2000) 'Éducation et socialisation' in Hirata, H., Laborie, F., Le Doaré, H. and Senotier, D. (eds.) Dictionnaire Critique du Féminisme - Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 49-54.

the home (such as the sexual division of labour in the household) and education which lead girls to favour particular subjects, and thus career paths (Arnauld, 1992: 48):

> Ce qui se vit à l'école est très souvent sexué. L'orientation qui impose de faire des choix professionnels, intervient pendant l'adolescence. C'est sans doute l'âge où la stéréotypie des rôles sexuels est la plus forte. Pendant toute la période qui précède ce choix, les filles ont bien intégré cette vieille idée selon laquelle, les filles sont littéraires, les garçons, matheux.

Despite their comparative success at school, French Caribbean girls tend to be stuck in pre-determined feminised careers, notably within the service industry. Although French Caribbean women have fewer children than they did in the 1950s and 1960s, maternity remains important to them. The fact that maternity is still very much part and parcel of French Caribbean women's identity has led employers to prefer men over women in positions of responsibility, whilst women find it difficult to give up their primary role of carer (Arnauld, 1992: 49):

> (...) les entreprises ont du mal à accepter chez leurs cadres et chez toutes leurs employées, les congés de maternité comme les rhinopharyngites des enfants. Les enfants, bêtes noires des entreprises! Mais le handicap est surtout pour les femmes. Leur carrière stoppe souvent parce qu'elles sont enceintes ou qu'elles refusent une mutation pour cause de gestion familiale.

The very profound sexual division that exists in French Caribbean society and the specific gender roles that result from it place the working French Caribbean women in a difficult situation having to negotiate traditional Caribbean culture with new opportunities for independence and potential professional success. However, as previously stated, French Caribbean women represent a small proportion of people in managerial positions. Material success is not open to all; less advantaged women

have less chances of bettering themselves through education than middle-class or more privileged women.

Inequalities persist between men and women in the French Caribbean as well as the inequalities between richer and poorer women. If Metropolitan women also experience gender discrimination, the differences between men and women in the islands are greater. The few numbers of executive French Caribbean women in the islands could be explained by the fact that the service industry is a great consumer of low skilled employees. Therefore women are more often than not 'stuck' in low skill employment, more affected by unemployment, overly represented in part-time jobs, and have more insecured employment than men. Furthermore, not only are there more French Caribbean women than men who are unemployed, they also tend to be unemployed for longer, contributing to their increased social marginalisation (De Pastor, 1993). Whilst overall material conditions have improved, unemployment - averaging around 30% in both islands in 1993 (Bazely: 37), and precariousness - between 18 and 20% of French Caribbean households were defined as such in 1990, (Bazeley: 37) - cannot be ignored.

However, although French Caribbean women share similar concerns to those of women from the Metropole, the importance of those problems varies between the islands and the Metropole, and this is especially noticeable for the poorer women. Single parent families (mostly single-mothers) receive more than double the amount of benefits received by Metropolitan families (André, 1998). Taking into account that single-mothers constitute an important proportion of French Caribbean families, it is legitimate enough to suggest that an appreciable proportion of French Caribbean

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women live in more precariousness than their Metropolitan counterparts. These trends also extend to French Caribbean men: they do not compare well with Metropolitan men or even Metropolitan women (INSEE, 1997). In fact, INSEE figures demonstrate how certain job categories (i.e. managerial professions, executives) are generally under represented in Guadeloupe when comparing with the Metropole: only 5% of Guadeloupean main-earners have the status of manager or executive, against 9.4% for those of the Metropole (1997: 35).

Furthermore, whilst unemployment figures for Guadeloupean men between 25 and 49 are less (24.5%) than for Guadeloupean women of the same age group (32.6%), they are higher than those of Metropolitan women of the same age group (13.6%) according to a report by INSEE (1997: 31).[87] And two unemployed French Caribbean women out of three have been so for more than a year, against one out of three in the Metropole (INSEE, 1997: 30).

Part-time work for men tends to be more important in the islands than in the Metropole, and this especially in Guadeloupe where the job market is not as dynamic as that of Martinique. Whilst the proportion of French Caribbean women and Metropolitan women working part-time is reasonably close, even for Guadeloupean women (29% for Metropolitan women and 26% for Guadeloupean women), the main part-time occupation of these (Guadeloupean) women tend to be as cleaners or other insecure employment (Diman-Antenor, 1992: 21). Another important characteristic of unemployment and part-time work of the female population of the French islands is

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[87]INSEE figures for employment and unemployment are based on a 1996 survey-study.

their youth (INSEE, 1994); women between 15 and 39 in the French islands are the worst off.

The situation for the women of Guadeloupe and Martinique has improved in that they gained more independence through greater control over fertility and their economic independence has increased through education and more qualifications. A problem that remains is the gendering of education, employment and power. French Caribbean women are generally worse off than French Caribbean men in terms of access to employment and as in many other parts of the world, they are often paid less than men for the same employment (Gautier, 1994). Therefore, although social conditions have improved, the balance of power between the two sexes has not: women remain the poorest (INSEE, 1994). They are the worst affected by the employment crisis of the 1990s - insecure, part-time jobs and unemployment (Chardon, 1997, Mulot, 1998: 37).

There have been some transformations in the lives of people from the French Caribbean, however, these have had a different effect on different strata of society. Inequalities have grown between rich and poor, and the dependence of the island on mainland France (as it is on the European Union) is as important as ever (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1985: 6).[88]

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[88]However, a couple of French Guadeloupean women I met, Mme Hilaire and Mme Raqui stressed the fact that the French Caribbean islanders had benefited greatly from *départementalisation*, and could not sustain the standard of living they had if they were independent. Mme Raqui (Conseil Régional de la Guadeloupe) even made the point of suggesting that French Caribbean islanders were relying far too easily on transfers from both the Metropole and the European Community. As such, their situation was not disastrous.

3) French Caribbean populations in the Metropole

The number of people of French Caribbean origin living in the Metropole, and especially in the Paris region is such that Paris has been referred to as the 'Third island' (Anselin, 1990). Emigration from the islands still occurs, but not in the same volume as in the BUMIDOM years. When migration to the Metropole occurs it is for short periods, to study for example, it is no longer with the thought of staying permanently in the Metropole (Marie, 1999). In fact Claude-Valentin Marie (1999: 100) even states that for many young unemployed islanders, the thought of perhaps finding work in the Metropole is no longer enough of an incentive. If there is work in the Metropole, it does not necessarily mean that it is equally open to all. Single mothers however, are more likely to opt for migration, for finding employment is vital to the upbringing of their children (ibid, 1999). There is indeed a feminisation of French Caribbean migration: more women than men have moved since 1982 (Marie, 1996).

French Caribbean women living in the islands do not necessarily share the same concerns or problems as women who have settled in mainland France. Although French Caribbean men's and women's attitudes are changing in the islands, they have changed more rapidly among French Caribbean immigrants in Metropolitan France.[89]

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[89] Although French Caribbean people who have emigrated to mainland France are not and should not be seen as 'immigrants', they can nonetheless be referred to as 'immigrants' in so far as the emigration to the Metropole is more 'involved' than any other internal migration in France. Long distance flying may indeed give the impression of going to a different country. Furthermore, the statistics that are available can only account for first and second generation immigrants making the use of such statistics somewhat problematic. They can, however be used as indicators.

Assessing changes in attitudes and in living conditions of the French Caribbean communities in the Metropole is laden with obstacles. Chapter Three has already explained that the lack of a recognised black ethnicity, or 'Antillean' ethnicity means that these populations are not 'visible' as such in national surveys. Consequently, monitoring either gender or 'race' relations is rendered difficult. The only real ways of finding out is through the testimonies of the people themselves or in the case of 'race' relations through the studies undertaken by some anti-racist organisations such as *SOS-Racisme*.[90] Chapter Three explained that despite relative progress in terms of greater recognition of racial and ethnic discrimination by state officials, in reality people directly affected by such practices are not convinced by anti-racist laws and measures, defined by Hargreaves (2000) as 'half measures'. Convictions remain far too low for people to really believe in the effectiveness of such anti-discriminatory measures.

This section proposes to examine the conditions and concerns of French Caribbean women in the Metropole and demonstrates that not only can they be different from those of Guadeloupean or Martinican women, but also from those of Metropolitan women. In fact, this section demonstrates that in many ways black women of French Caribbean origin (that is, officially French) can share similar difficulties to other black women and black men (French or non-French) living in France.

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[90] In February 2000, Libération's front page reveals the new strategies of French anti-racist organisations: *le testing*. *SOS-racisme's* new approach in tackling discrimination illustrates the persistent problem of racist discrimination in France, especially in the work place. The 'pilot' study mentioned in the article serves to substantiate the claim that high levels of unemployment among populations of immigrant origin (or black populations in general, since French Caribbean black population are not really of immigrant origin) cannot simply be explained by a poor level of education. Kerloc'h, A. (2000) 'Des entreprises piégées par SOS-racisme' in Libération, Tuesday February 8, 2000.

<u>French Caribbean households in the Metropole</u>

French Caribbean single mothers continue to be important in the Metropole. Although the first few French Caribbean immigrants had more or less adopted French Metropolitan traditions in terms of marriage,[91] the extent of French Caribbean migration resulted in the creation of French Caribbean ghettoised communities in the Parisian suburbs, and in the survival of the traditions of the region of origin (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1991). Beauvue-Fougeyrollas' study in the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s demonstrated that both men's and women's attitudes were indeed very similar to that of French Caribbean islanders: men felt that women were either weak or stupid for believing promises of marriage and for not realising that they had more than one woman (1985: 66-67). Furthermore, the large majority of the men interviewed explained the fact that there were many French Caribbean single mothers because the women wanted the children in the first place or because they had a weak personality (1985: 97). Yet, as explained earlier, French Caribbean women did not traditionally desire big families: they had to put up with them. Motherhood is important in French Caribbean culture, but it does not have to mean numerous children with numerous fathers. So in this respect, the attitudes of men and women towards each other remained unchanged for the immigrants of the first generation. In addition, the changing family patterns associated with modern living started to emerge in Metropolitan France (divorces, re-marriages, single-mothers etc.), further contributing to French Caribbean single-motherhood. French Caribbean single

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[91]This trend contributed to the feeling among French Caribbean women that the men were more likely to marry once in the Metropole than if they had stayed in the islands. Many women thus decided to emigrate also in the hope of finding not only a job to provide for themselves and their children, but also a husband and father to their children. As Claudie Beauvue-Fougeyrollas (1991: 93) points out, their status as single-mothers was much more assumed than desired (as with much of the pregnancies).

mothers remain nonetheless different from Metropolitan single mothers, especially among the first generation who are much closer to their counterparts in the islands. According to Claude-Valentin Marie (1996), the proportion of French Caribbean single mothers was three times higher than the national French average. Furthermore French Caribbean women's status of single mother resulted less often from a divorce and they were less likely to recompose a new family (1996: 527).

What has changed, however, are the strategies of French Caribbean women faced with the *machisme* of French Caribbean men. On the islands, as previous outlined, women started in the 1970s and 1980s to become more assertive. So much so, that even the ones who felt 'lucky' for having a secure marriage, would ask for divorce. The change in the attitude of women was also very noticeable among those living in the Metropole, and perhaps developed more rapidly.

For Mme. Talange, the change in attitudes in the islands is due to the influence of French Caribbeans living in the Metropole and visiting the islands. That view was also shared by others, notably Mme. Caspar, Mme. Rosely and Mme. Hilaire. However, Mme. Caspar and Mme. Talange also mentioned that there were still important differences in French Caribbean gender relations between the Metropole and the islands. Both explained that they knew of some friends who had decided to return to live in Guadeloupe and whose marriages collapsed feeling the strain of different gender expectations:

> Je pense que le changement aux Antilles est dû aux allez-et-viens des Antillais d'ici. Mais y'a encore des différences…J'connais des ménages qui se sont cassés la figure quand ils sont retournés là-bas. Les autres [she referred to the French Caribbean men of the islands], ils se

moquaient bien (…) C'est pas pareil (…). Alors si on a l'habitude de certaines choses, et puis qu'un jour, eh ben, (…) ça dérange parce que les autres, là-bas ça les fait rire, (…) Qu'est-ce-que vous voulez, c'est la fin du ménage…Ou alors il faut revenir par ici (…) C'est pas pareil (…) Mais les femmes ne se laissent plus faire. Si ça ne va pas, alors elles demandent le divorce. Là-bas et ici. Pour ça, je crois bien que c'est pareil maintenant.

Although attitudes and expectations in the islands remain somewhat different from those among French Caribbean women in the Metropole, the fact that women would ask for a divorce demonstrates a certain change in attitudes on the part of women. Mme. Monfils explained that women were teaching men new rules, whilst Mme. Caspar and M. Caspar believed that men and women in the islands were becoming more equal, "a little like over here", said Mme. Caspar, but there were definitely some different expectations as well.

Gender relations among French Caribbean people living in the Metropole might be changing, probably influenced by those of the host community (Tribalat, 1995). However, among first and second-generation migrants, men are still portrayed by women as unfaithful and promiscuous.

To counter their own unsuccessful relationships, or those they witnessed, French Caribbean women decided either to prefer their own company or that of Metropolitan or African men:

> Deux de mes soeurs vivent en France à cause de la tyrannie de mon père. Elles ont épousé des métropolitans tellement la représentation de l'homme antillais est brisée dans leur esprit ('Lucile', 1998: 171).[92]

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[92]This testimony is part of many others in Pineau, G. & Abraham, M. (1998) Femmes des Antilles, Traces et Voix: Cent cinquante ans apres l'abolition de l'esclavage -Paris: Stock. See also that of 'Colette', p. 51.

Whilst single motherhood cannot be seen as easy, French Caribbean single mothers' difficulties have been exacerbated by the fact that they are away from 'home' and thus away from the support of sisters, mothers or grand-mothers. Furthermore, in addition to the practical difficulties of single-motherhood, they have had to endure the judgement of Metropolitans who could not understand children and absent fathers. Although single-parenting has become more normalised in French society, single-mothers are still much more marginalised in the Metropole than in the French Caribbean islands. Mme. Monfils felt alienated from white Metropolitan women. She explained that she felt judged for bringing her daughter up by herself.

Another important issue for French Caribbean households in Metropolitan France is that of the children born in the Metropole or those who emigrated from the islands at an early age. They indeed share many characteristics of other children of other immigrant origin, in that they have difficulties in relating to the country of their parents and experience difficulties in reconciling their different identities (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1991; Giraud, 1993; Marie, 1999):

> la place qui sera faite aux jeunes antillais est désormais indissociable de celle qui sera accordée aux jeunes étrangers ou d'origine étrangère. Que l'exclusion prédomine, et les originaires d'outre-mer en pâtiront. Que l'ambition de l'égalité l'emporte, et ils en bénéficieront. Quoiqu'il en soit de la relation (conflictuelle ou non) qu'ils entretiennent avec la "métropole", les Antillais *de* France doivent la penser dans un cadre d'échanges plus larges et plus complexes (Marie, 1999:105).

Their lack of qualifications (Galap, 1993b) coupled with discrimination result in many young French black people staying at home depending on their mother's income,[93] circumstances that can only increase the burden of French Caribbean women. Unemployment figures for young people of the second generation are very high (27.2%) and more comparable with those of foreign populations than with those of Metropolitans, respectively 26.6% and 16% (Marie; 1999: 100).[94]

Discrimination in the Metropole

As mentioned before, emigrating to the Metropole did not, for the majority of French Caribbean people, equate with promotion. At the onset of *départementalisation* only a small elite from the islands were to find fortune this way. The majority was to provide a cheap labour force (Marie, 1999). Nonetheless, as previously explained, success stories fed the myth or 'migration ideology', which the French state exploited (Condon, 1994). The least advantaged young men and women saw in this a huge opportunity to find work. For women the thought of a regular income was seen as a way to find stability in their relationships with the hope of marriage (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1985; 1991). If working in the Metropole was seen as a great opportunity, French Caribbean workers were treated as though they were immigrants in spite of their French status; they were lured and exploited. They came to the

[93]The fact that young French Caribbeans do not generally have high qualifications result from a mixture of choices made for them. On one hand teachers can make certain assumptions about pupils in helping them decide their educational path, whilst on the other hand, the living conditions at home may be such that teenagers decide for a more vocational path in order to help contribute to the family income.

[94]These figures are for 1990.

Metropole under false pretences to serve and assist their 'old masters'. As such, organised migration to Metropolitan France can be described as racialised, very much reminiscent of the old colonial relations, reinforcing and re-creating racist colonial ideologies. Whilst this alone does not explain the marginal situation of the French Caribbean communities living in the Metropole, it does demonstrate how racist ideologies (such as the association of blackness with servitude) were not challenged by organised migration. Even if migrating to the Metropole has given French Caribbean women an increased standard of living (by comparison with that of other poorer women in the islands who did not emigrate), they have not been able to pull themselves out of the lower strata of French society (Wallet, 1993).

The majority of French Caribbean migrants (especially second/third generation) has not been able to experience much vertical mobility. Education has also been the object of studies.[95] It has been argued that far from encouraging integration (in the sense of better exchanges between communities), education in France reinforced discrimination in a gendered and racialised manner: some educational paths have become feminised and racialised. Chapter Two mentions the gendered nature of the school system in France. When girls chose to do further studies, it is usually in the Humanities, whilst boys will go for Sciences and Business studies. In shorter studies, girls tend to go for service jobs (such as secretaries) and boys more technical jobs (such as IT or mechanics). Children of immigrant origin, or perceived as foreigners as in the case of the French Caribbean migrants are also directed towards paths with less status, such as *Lycées techniques*.

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[95]Galap, J. (1991) and Marie, C.-V. (1991) both contributed to the discussions concerning education and the socialisation of young French Caribbeans in the Metropole at the ANT conference *Les Originaires d'Outre-Mer en Ile de France,* Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, November 26th.

The gendered nature of organised migration also reinforced assumptions about women migrants or of immigrant origin. The jobs they were given predisposed them to a very limiting range of employment. There were very few opportunities for advancement and most saw 'salvation' in the public sector. Many French Caribbean women thus became employed in hospitals (the majority as auxiliary nurses, although some managed the status of nurse), and in the French equivalent of the Royal Mail (PTT).[96] French Caribbean women were thus thrown into highly gendered jobs but also highly racialised; these jobs were not seen as good enough for white French Metropolitans. Despite a generalised belief in France that French Caribbean people are well integrated in Metropolitan French society, this section shows that it is not the case. The pattern of employment set out by the BUMIDOM remains the same.

French Caribbean women's perceived status of 'immigrants' meant that they were given the same jobs as the other Spanish and Portuguese women immigrants, such as cleaners or servants (Beauvue-Fougeyrollas, 1985). Although thought to be 'well integrated', French Caribbean women experience discrimination on a daily basis. Unlike Spanish or Portuguese women, French Caribbean women are black, and being black means that some jobs are out of their reach (see Chapter Five):

> (...) l'hypothèse selon laquelle le phénotype, et notamment la couleur de la peau, est un signal pertinent qui induit la relation inter-culturelle est largement vérifiée. Du côté de la société de résidence, elle se traduit par des formes subtiles mais certaines de discrimination (...). La couleur de la peau fait que les Français de couleur, en l'ocurrence les Guadeloupéens et les Martiniquais, deviennent dans la réalité quotidienne des étrangers (Galap, 1993b: 52-53).

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[96]See French Caribbean women testimonies in Pineau, G. and Abraham, M. (1998) Femmes des Antilles Traces et Voix -Paris: Stock.

The studies of *SOS-racisme* and Galap (1993a) show that the reason given for not employing black people is still true ten years on, that is that employers are "not employing blacks for fear of losing some customers" (Marie, 1999: 100). This point has already been mentioned in Chapter Two, and was best illustrated by the interview with Mme Monfils, which strongly pointed to inequalities between whites and blacks. Chapter Five further develops the issue of discrimination against black people, demonstrating that French citizenship is not only racialised but also allows discrimination to take place, for as has been demonstrated, French citizenship is bound up with an implicitly racialised official republican discourse (Chapter Three).

4) Conclusion

Although discrimination affects both men and women, the consequences are nonetheless different. As mentioned earlier, French Caribbean women are still in an appreciable number single with children in the Metropole, and whilst the majority are employed, their jobs do not always provide them with security and stability. As Metropolitan women, they are generally confined to the service industry. However, unlike Metropolitan women, they are generally in lower paid activity. These factors, combined with the employment crisis of the 1990s and the many complex problems facing the children of these women, mean that the concerns of French Caribbean women do not always equate with those of Metropolitan women. This chapter therefore consolidates the arguments of Chapters Two and Three by clearly demonstrating that interests may be gendered, but that they are also racialised. French Caribbean women's experiences are very different from those of Metropolitan

women.   However this chapter has also pointed to the complexities of French Caribbean women's experiences by showing how French Caribbean women in the islands do not always relate to that of French Caribbean women living in the Metropole (or born in the Metropole from migrant parents).

This chapter has also demonstrated that there is, despite its non-formal recognition, a definite ethnicisation or 'racialisation' of French society in so far as French Caribbean people are not, in practice, recognised as French.   Nor are they really recognised as French Caribbean or Antillean.   Although the problem is not officially recognised, French Caribbean are discriminated against and are seen as 'blacks' just like any African or African-origin individual.   The informal recognition of 'race' and ethnicity in fact seem to contribute to the promotion of an underground discourse of discrimination.   It is indeed, as the following chapter demonstrates, the invisibility provided by the status of French citizen, that has permitted discrimination against French Caribbean people.   The following chapter further explores such a discourse of discrimination.

In the light of the fact that second and third generation French Caribbean people living in the Metropole tend to experience problems in identifying with their parents' or grandparents' culture, whilst sharing common issues with other young black people, there is a need to explore the possible development of an identity based on 'blackness'.   This is a relatively new area of research in France.   The next chapter explores that hypothesis and highlights the lack of research in gender and 'race' relations by mainstream French feminists, despite evidence of a few black French feminist activists.   The latter are still very much marginalised in academic research,

and there is no comparable work to that of Anglo-American black feminists or English-speaking black feminists in general.

Chapter 5:

Mapping, Critiquing, Enlarging: French Caribbean Women's Identities and Experiences

The previous chapter shows the racialisation of French citizenship through a historicised consideration of the place of the French Caribbean and its population in the Republic. The constructed dependence of the islands on the Metropole and the gendered and racialised organised migration in the 1960s have clearly demonstrated that the acquired status of French citizenship had done really little in changing old perceptions. In fact, the French official discourse reflected old colonial ideologies fifteen to twenty years after *départementalisation*. Whilst nowadays differences between the Metropole and the islands have considerably shrunk, the economic situation of the French Caribbean islands still reflects past colonial rule. The islands rely extremely heavily on European funds. Without the financial support that the status of French Department gives their islands, French Caribbeans widely believe that if they were to become independent, their islands would become as poor as the neighbouring independent Caribbean islands. This explains why some movements for independence in the islands wish for independence with financial support from the Metropole for a given period of time. This chapter builds on the previous one in that it shows the problems (especially acute for the French Caribbeans living in the Metropole) resulting from years of assimilation policies. Furthermore, as the previous chapter shows, there are considerable differences between the apparent needs and concerns of French Caribbean women living in the islands and those living in the

Metropole. Gender relations among women in the islands and in the Metropole remain considerably different.

This chapter builds on Chapters Two, Three and Four to show that despite a rich Caribbean literature, French Caribbean theories and issues remain marginalised.

1) (In)visibility: What it means to be both French and black.

Although the French Caribbean can be seen as sharing many concerns with other French regions, and as such can unite with them against the oppression of their cultural heritage (through for example the re-valorisation of regional languages)[97], there is a case to be made that the French Caribbean is not perceived as French in the same way as Brittany for example, either by the French Metropolitan population or the French islanders:[98]

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[97]The issue of regional languages and regional identity in France has come to a head again with the European Charter on regional languages. Signed on 7 May 1999 by the French Government, the charter has since then brought up debates bound up with French national unity, the principle of indivisibility and the 'plural universal' and become a highly charged political issue (references to these debates can be found in Libération, July 1999). It was not, however, ratified by the French president Jacque Chirac (Libération, November 17 1999).

[98]In the previous chapter the extent to which the islands were treated differently by the French state is outlined; whether through exploitation or manipulation (i.e. BUMIDON). Benefits were also different in the islands and in the Metropole: despite *départementalisation*, complete equality between the Metropole and the islands in terms of benefits has only been resolved in the second half of the 1990s. Whilst requests were made for equality between the Metropole and the islands, there were also demands for greater regionalisation and the right to difference, notably in the 1980s. This particular paradox of what people desire can be explained in light of the previous chapter's historicised consideration of the relationship between the French Caribbean islands and the Metropole. Indeed, years of assimilation and economic dependency on the Metropole can explain the paradoxical desire for greater independence on the one hand and greater integration into the French economic context on the other.

> (...) s'il y a un domaine où, en France, le jacobinisme uniformateur s'en donne à coeur joie, c'est bien celui que recouvre le principe de *l'égalité* des conditions entre régions (...). L'égalité de principe apparaît à leurs [ressortissants locaux] yeux comme étant *à deux vitesses*, en leur défaveur, et la solidarité nationale comme une tartuferie (Souquet-Basiège, 1999: 93, 96).

In the light of the fact that their 'Frenchness' is not generally acknowledged in everyday living by the Metropolitans, and that they often fall victim to discriminatory practices on a par with the experiences of black African immigrants or French people of immigrant origins, the French Caribbean cannot simply be seen as just another part of France. This is not only a feeling that appears to be shared by the French Caribbean communities in Paris,[99] but has also recently (though not in so many words) been acknowledged in the French press as a feeling shared by (white) French Metropolitans through the observations of their attitude towards the French Caribbean and its inhabitants, or descendants living in the Metropole.[100]

Invisibility as absences and exclusions

In French schools, although the geography of France is part of a compulsory programme, the DOMs are not included. The media news coverage is another example of where the absence of the French Caribbean can be noted. French book shops also seem to categorise the DOMs as a separate country, not as a French

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[99]July 1999 field work in Paris and interviews (especially with Rosely).]

[100]Feler, A. 'Champions du monde et Français', Libération, July 12, 1999; Gavi, P. 'Quand la télé lave trop blanc', Nouvel Observateur (October 1999) points out the same problem, but with regard to the absence of 'visible minorities' from the television.

department; they seem to have a distinct and very small section including everything from INSEE documents (documents based on national surveys) to Creole cuisine. Furthermore, there is a feeling among the French Caribbean community that their French Caribbean identity and culture are not being recognised; a consequence of the fear of too much cultural division which would detract from the nation's indivisibility. As part of France and as French citizens, the French Caribbean and its population have not tended to be formally acknowledged as belonging to a French Caribbean community as such:

> (...) la société française n'accepte pas la différence (...). Même les notions de communautés, de peuples fussent-elles composantes de la nation, sont refusées. (...) au quotidien, la différence, on ne l'accepte pas (Galap, 1991: 45).

The issue of the representation of the Antillean communities therefore, whether in the French Caribbean or in the Metropole, has never really been called into question. Because of their citizenship status, they are not 'visible' as such in national surveys, and this is particularly pertinent for the third generation onwards living in Metropolitan France. It has to be stressed that there is no such thing as a black category in France, for such a category would be considered racist, reinforcing physiological differences through racial categorisation (Werner & Laurent, 2000: 140).[101] However, although it could be argued that 'colour blindness' is a positive step in eradicating differences based on phenotype, it also renders French Caribbean migrant's children 'invisible' in national surveys and may result in hiding discriminatory trends. Furthermore, although censuses can distinguish between

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[101]Cf. Spire, A. & Merllie, D. (1999) 'La question des origines dans les statistiques en France. Les enjeux d'une controverse' in Le Mouvement Social, No. 188, September, pp. 119-130.

regions and departments, there are no ways of distinguishing between white and black French Caribbean islanders. So even in the comparison of the populations of two different geographical places (such as the comparison between Metropolitan and French Caribbean women in the previous chapter) there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration. For example, in the case of French Caribbean women living in the islands, the greater poverty of black women islanders can be determined by the fact that the poorer women are generally single mothers with low income who have never married. It can legitimately be inferred that the insight into black French Caribbean women's traditional nuptial behaviour and general understanding of 'race' relations in the French islands (see previous chapter) enable a sketch, however incomplete and imperfect, of differences among French Caribbean women.

Whether as French inhabitants or as Caribbean populations, French islanders tend to be 'forgotten', and as such are not included in the daily activities and concerns of French Metropolitan society. Furthermore, the assumption of their rights can leave them in the shadows. Metropolitans will not deny that French Caribbean islanders are French citizens on a par with any other French citizens, and as such will have the same rights as any other French Metropolitans. However, the possibility that these populations (islanders as well as French Caribbeans and their children living in the Metropole) may fall victim to discrimination or that they do not generally have the same chances as anyone else in France are generally seen as non-issues by Metropolitans. So, French Caribbean issues (high unemployment in the islands reflecting a very specific economic crisis, identity crisis among French Caribbean origin young people in the Metropole, and general unequal opportunities between

Metropolitan and French Caribbean - including French Caribbean origin - populations) are kept 'well hidden' from Metropolitan French society.[102]

Imagined Geographies and Geographies of Exclusion

One way to understand the paradoxical situation of the French Caribbean islanders, that is the lack of acknowledgement of their French status in practice, is to refer to a geography based model of identity construction. Stuart Hall (1995: 182) proposes Said's concept of 'imagined geographies' to explain the idea that everyone attaches particular meanings to a specific place or space. These meanings result from socialisation processes (both at home and in the public sphere - i.e. school, media), and usually carry dominant ideologies, which, in the case of France are based on particular interpretations of French republican principles of unity and indivisibility that exclude cultural differences. The dominant 'imagined geography' of France is one that has definite borders. The French refer to their country as 'The Hexagon' for the contour of the country's borders fit neatly into that particular geometrical figure. The French Caribbean islands, on the other hand do not fit into any hexagonal figure, let alone the continental one referring to the Metropole. Probably by force of habit, Metropolitans have excluded the French Caribbean islands from their 'imagined geographies' of France.[103] Generally speaking, 'France' refers to the Metropole, and

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[102]It can be argued that such issues are ignored, seen as relatively unimportant. The French media can in fact be seen as guilty of specifically ignoring such issues, and perpetuating the invisibility of the French Caribbean, its islanders and migrants to the Metropole in French society.

[103]There is no way of knowing whether the exclusion of the French Caribbean issues from French popular and official discourses about French identity is a conscious, deliberate act. However it can be argued that this exclusion reflects the dominant (white) discourse. In this case, 'whiteness' could be seen as a pre-requisite for inclusion. French citizenship would not be enough.

'French' to the white Metropolitans. The meaning attached to 'Frenchness' is racialised: "Frenchness" is suggestive of 'whiteness'.[104] This is however highly exclusive and propagates dominant ideologies of exclusion, whose consequences are not mere absences, but are also very damaging in the marginalisation of French Caribbean communities.

Whilst the French Caribbean islands and their populations appear of no concern to the Metropolitan general public, the non-inclusion of French Caribbean populations in Metropolitans' imagined geography of France has been hugely challenged by over 30 years of immigration (see previous chapter). These days, French Caribbean people can no longer be excluded on the basis of 'out of sight, out of mind'. Their presence in Metropolitan towns, and essentially in the Paris region could not be ignored. Some of what happened has already been described in the previous chapter, and is thus only going to be briefly referred to for the sake and illustration of the argument.

No longer are these populations 'invisible', but their 'visibility' is not in the form of an acknowledgement of either their "Frenchness" (in terms of their equal French status) nor their 'Caribbeanness' (in terms of some of their cultural difference); it is only an acknowledgement of their 'blackness'. Testimonies of first generations migrants, as well as those of the second and third generation demonstrate that the only difference that seems to be acknowledged is based on skin colour and forms the basis of their exclusion. The fact that French Caribbean emigration to the Metropole was

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[104]There are different strands of 'whiteness' for it is not a homogeneous group. Class, gender and sexuality influence positioning. Similarly, 'blackness' is not a homogeneous category either. The following section of the chapter investigates for instance the relative absences of black women from French Caribbean theories of difference and from general French feminist theories. On the issue of the different perceptions of 'whiteness', see Jackson P. (1998) 'Constructions of "whiteness" in the geographical imagination' in Area, 30. 2, pp. 99-100.

essentially constituted of a young working-class, meant that it was a population of young black people that arrived in the Metropole. And 'blackness' has not been inclusive: their skin colour has meant that they have become visible, not however as an acknowledgement of belonging, but rather as outsiders.

French Caribbean people somehow tend to be either forgotten by French society, or are seen as 'blacks' and/or foreigners:

> On nous met tous dans le même sac: les Africains, les Antillais, c'est pareil (Rosely, 1999).[105]

The 'imagined geography' of French Metropolitans is therefore highly racialised: the Antillean is black and black people are associated with Africa, which leads to the normalised dominant logic that all black people are the same. This is in fact verified by a few of Jean Galap's studies on the importance and relevance of phenotype and skin colour in French society:[106]

> Au regard des Européens, et en l'occurence des Français, [les Africains noirs, les Haïtiens, (...) les Afro-Guadeloupéens et Martiniquais] sont tous des Noirs (1993a: 41).

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[105]See Appendix A.

[106]Galap J. is very well known for his work on French Caribbean immigrants in France. He has written extensively on the issue of skin colour (see bibliography), which in the context of republican ideals is something of a first. His work however has not penetrated many fields of academic research. Indeed, he tends to be published in Anthropological and Psychological journals (Cf. 'Ethnicité antillaise: de l'émigration à la deuxième génération' in Cahiers d'anthropologie et biométrie humaine, 1985, No. 3-4, Vol. 3) or in particular French Caribbean literature, with the exception of a few special issues on the French Caribbean by journals of other disciplines (such as for example the important issue of Migrants-Formation, September 1993, No. 94). Similar arguments can be applied to another well-known writer on the French Caribbean, Claude-Valentin Marie (see bibliography for specific references to his work). Both writers tend to be absent from general literature on 'race' and multicultural issues in France.

The 'imagined geography' of France is thus clearly non-black in the eyes of French Metropolitans, it is only inclusive of white people. 'Blackness' is reduced to a single 'other', no matter how culturally diverse the populations of that group may be. French Caribbean communities have thus been reduced to the same common denominator as any other black person living in the Metropole: skin colour is a determinant factor of exclusion (see also the work of Beriss, 2000: 25ff). Insiders constitute therefore one uniform, unified and indivisible group, whilst outsiders - no matter what their cultural differences are - fall into another group. Furthermore although North-Africans may be (technically) considered to be 'white', they are usually referred to as 'Maghrebin' or 'Arab' (in the best scenario), emphasising their foreign origin status and a difference that justifies their exclusion from French Metropolitans' 'imagined geography'. In effect they add to the heterogeneity of the marginalised group of 'outsiders'.

The particularity of the French Caribbean communities appears to revolve around a complex and contradictory situation, which can be argued to originate from the impossibility of reconciling dominant French republican and universal ideologies with cultural differences; the principles of unity and indivisibility having been interpreted as meaning 'sameness'. On one hand, French republican principles stipulate the eradication of differences, and on the other, there is a tendency to define the French Caribbean community according to racial criteria. Their French citizenship status ignores their differences, whether geographical or cultural. Nonetheless, their colour renders them 'visible', not as Antillean, but as 'blacks'.[107] Tthey are being denied an identity that is both Caribbean *and* French:

French-speaking to a very large extent, yet culturally distinct in other ways and still marked by exclusionary memories of the colonial period, these minorities defy the political logic of *francophonie* by being residents and in many cases citizens of France while appearing to many among the majority population to belong elsewhere (Hargreaves & McKinney, 1997: 4).

The racialisation of our 'imagined geographies' has profound effects on the excluded, or outsiders. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, and as briefly mentioned above, the reality of French Caribbean immigrants and their children has, on the whole been determined by Metropolitans' rejections of them. The previous chapter mentioned the condition of French Caribbean women migrants and how, despite their French status, they were competing for jobs with immigrant women and women of immigrant origins (such as Spanish or Portuguese women); they were not competing in the same league as Metropolitan women. Although general and overall conditions may have improved (Parcedo, 1993), exclusionary practices still occur and result in further marginalising French Caribbean communities in the Metropole.

The marginalisation of these communities results in the racialisation of spaces. Privileged spaces are mainly white, which explains the fact that French Caribbeans seem invisible in French society. As mentioned above, their literature is mainly found in specialised bookstores and through specialised editors. Their absence extends also

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[107]Although there are white French Caribbean people or of French Caribbean descent - the békés, French Caribbean or Antillean tend to be associated with 'black'. This is true of the attitude of the white Metropolitans, but also of the black Antilleans themselves: a white French Caribbean priest (Pierre Lacroix) in Paris baffled more than a few newcomers to his church. The Caspar family I met (see Appendix A) explained that after being told that Pierre Lacroix was a French Caribbean priest, they expected a black priest. Speaking to him on the phone myself, I wrongly assumed that he was indeed black. These assumptions are interesting and could become the object of further study for they seem to suggest that 'whites' become 'blacks' and that culture, geography and history are therefore as important, if not more so, than skin colour in the understanding of how inclusion and exclusion are constructed.

to the media and school curriculum. The recognition of their difference as 'blacks' translates, in practical terms, in their exclusion from certain jobs, and from more sought after suburbs. A study by Galap (1993a) demonstrates clearly that black people are much more likely to be refused a job than a white Metropolitan or a white Portuguese.[108] Furthermore, the same study concluded similar findings in terms of the search for rented accommodation. Some French Caribbean women have 'excused' Metropolitans' less than welcoming nature in the 1960s and 1970s by the fact that Metropolitans 'were not used to seeing black people'. Whether or not this was excusable in the first place is arguable. However, this situation no longer applied at the end of the 1990s and at the beginning of a new century.[109] The very clear feeling of being discriminated against among the women I met was reinforced by a few articles in the French press.[110]

The overall message is of French Caribbean people being excluded and of the 'ghettoisation' of black people whatever their origin. Some black women resented being kept in lower status jobs and experienced the racialisation of space throughout their career. For example, for black French actors jobs are few and far between, because they are told the majority of viewers are white, and producers cater for the majority who need to be able to identify with whatever happens on screen:

> Tant qu'elle aspire à être une femme de ménage, une Black ou une
> Beur ne dérange personne. Mais une magistrate noire, une analyste

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[108]In France it is common-place to attach one's picture on the front page of one's CV.

[109]Testimony of 'Julétane' collected by Pineau, G. and Abraham, M. in Femmes Antillaises traces et voix: cent cinquante ans après l'abolition de l'esclavage -Paris: Stock: 1998, p. 113.

[110]Some articles have already been mentioned (see footnotes 90 and 100); Elle magazine, March 27 2000.

financière trop basanée, vous n'y pensez pas! (Werner & Laurent, 2000: 141)

The recent pilot 'study' of *SOS-Racisme* (briefly mentioned in Chapter Four) further demonstrates how much discrimination still occurs and that in the current economic crisis being black amounts to exclusion and marginalisation:

> (...) les associations antiracistes ont pris le taureau par les cornes, en mettant en place l'ingénieux système des "testings". Un employeur est soupçonné de discrimination? Un jeune, puis deux, puis trois, puis trente vont envoyer leur CV sous deux noms différents. Un nom arabe ou africain et un nom français. Comme par hasard les CV français sont retenus et pas les autres. Le nombre constitue un début de preuve et permet d'entamer une procédure judiciaire. (Werner & Laurent, 2000: 142)

Some employers in France are concerned about losing customers if they employ 'visible minorities' (Gavi, 1999), whether French nationals or not, for the issue does not necessarily lie in national membership or citizenship; in social interactions, colour does matter. The problem is that any chance of social integration is barred by a generally accepted understanding that the majority of Metropolitans associate black with criminality and foreign populations (Galap, 1991). Although these issues have been explored by Anglo-American academics, and have even filtered through institutions such as schools, universities and even the police force, they are still relatively taboo in France. Racism is discussed, more and more recognised and punished but studies show that there are still huge disparities between the number of complaints and the number of prosecutions.[111] References to physical differences such as skin colour remain more problematic. Chapter Three drew attention to that particular dilemma in its consideration of the rather ambiguous multiculturalism

debate in France. Indeed, anti-racism must operate in a country that presents itself as the defender of human-rights and equality. The assumed rights of all French citizens translate in practical terms into the propagation of dominant racist practices, which remain largely unchallenged. This is clearly demonstrated in studies on the education of second and third generation French Caribbean migrant children.[112]

The children of French Caribbean migrants share a similar 'identity crisis' with young people of immigrant origin. They cannot always relate to their parents' or grand-parents' ways, yet cannot always identify with Metropolitans for unlike the latter, they are forever the object of racist discrimination. Some of them have found ways of cultivating their difference in taking on board their parent's cultural past, whilst others cannot relate to an identity that appears out of reach, or that may be refused to them by young French Caribbean islanders:

> (...) le choc des cultures, celle de là-bas [des Antilles] et celle d'ici [de la Métropole] dans l'immigration est quelque chose que l'enfant doit affronter directement. (...) [La] volonté des enfants venant de là-bas d'affirmer leur antillanité (...) en parlant bien créole [s'oppose] aux petits d'ici [les enfants d'immigrants antillais] qui ne le comprennent pas ou qui le parlent avec un accent qui fait qu'on se moque d'eux. Donc par la même, vous voyez bien que loin de faire communauté, le choc et le contact entre ceux d'ici et ceux de la-bas peut aboutir parfois à des conflits entre les deux ou bien parfois à des connivences avec un autre, qui va être soit le petit Maghrébin, ou le petit Français, et l'empêcher de se sentir cousin de celui qui, au regard des autres, paraît si proche de lui. (Maximin, 1991: 65)

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[111]Hargreaves A. (2000) 'Half measures: Antidiscrimination Policy in France' in French Politics, Culture and Society, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 83-101.

[112]Cf. Giraud M. (1993) 'Des élèves en quête de reconnaissance. Les jeunes originaires des DOM à l'école de la Métropole' in Migrants-Formation No. 94, Septembre, pp. 116-140; Galap J. (1993b) 'Les Antillais, la citoyenneté et l'école: les conditions de l'intégration' in Migrants-Formation No. 94, Septembre, pp141-160; Maximin, D. (1991) Rapporteur de l'atelier 'Ecole et Education des Enfants' for the study-day organised by ANT "Les originairs d'outre-mer en île de France", Paris, Citée des Sciences et de l'Industrie, November 26th, pp. 62-69.

As explained above, everyday interactions rarely acknowledge their French status. Instead, the reflection they often have of themselves through the 'other's gaze' is as a black person or as a foreigner, not necessarily as an Antillean as Maximin (1991) suggests above. Indeed, if the young French Caribbean is not able to hold on to a French Caribbean identity, or simply does not seem to feel close to French Caribbean islanders (despite his/her origins and phenotype), he or she may find some closeness with other young black people. And this, not because of sharing a far away place of origin (Africa), but because they feel that as 'blacks' they share similar issues with other black people of other countries (the United States, for example). The coping strategies of second and third generation French Caribbeans are thus highly complex, and although very individualised, they cannot be excluded from an exploration of French Caribbean identity, which is the object of the second section of the chapter.

Citizenship in France has been constructed around an assimilationist ideology, exclusive of any differences. In the case of the French Caribbean community, their citizenship status has not really turned them into "Frenchmen" (and Frenchwomen), due to the exclusionary practices of the (white) French Metropolitan community. They have not become part of the 'imagined geography' of French Metropolitans, and this, despite the fact that French Caribbean people have been French citizens for over fifty years.

It can be argued that the exclusionary practices on which citizenship was founded have not disappeared: the racialised nature of the universal is perhaps too deeply entrenched in France's republican tradition for 'outsiders' ever to be considered 'French'; cultural differences and/or colour, detract from the homogeneous white

republican unity. This also extends to perceived outsiders; that is a certain rejection of members of the national community and citizens in their own right, as is the case with the French Caribbean and many other 'visible minorities' (often of North African and/or black African immigrant origin), to use Philippe Gavi's words (1999). Everyday experiences, as demonstrated above, paint a very different picture from that of guaranteed equality for all French citizens.

There have been times when being 'French' was very much sought after.[113] However, French colonial and assimilationist traditions have also met with much criticism and resistance from black French Caribbean writers and politicians. The very influential Martinican Aimé Césaire,[114] for example sought to challenge the French republican tradition and has tried to promote a French Caribbean identity and culture distinct from that of Metropolitan France. Ground-breaking work in French Caribbean literature around questions of *Antillanité* and *Créolité* also serves to demonstrate the centrality of cultural concerns among French Caribbean intellectuals, whose theories of difference are explored in the following section.[115]

The promotion of a French Caribbean identity was also very much the concern of the people I met in Paris in the summer of 1999. Numerous French Caribbean

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[113]I refer here to arguments presented in the previous chapter when through politics of assimilation, 'anything French' was associated with 'development' and 'progress'. Also, the *départementalisation* of 1946 had been proposed by the French Caribbean left wing to the French government.

[114]A French Caribbean writer and poet especially recognised for his contribution to the *Négritude* literature with *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, first published in 1939 in the revue <u>Volontés</u>, Paris. He has also played an active role in *départementalisation* and campaigned for the right to be different (*le droit à la différence*).

[115]As the name of Aimé Césaire has been associated with the *Négritude* current in French Caribbean literature, Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau have respectively been associated with *Antillanité* and *Créolité*. Cf. Glissand, E. <u>Le discours antillais</u> -Paris: Seuil, 1991; Bernabé, J., Chamoiseau, P. & Confiant, R. <u>Eloge de la créolité</u> -Paris: Gallimard, 1989. *Créolité* can be seen as the newest Antillean school of thought, wanting to break away from a westernized universalism, but also from *négritude*: "Ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques, nous nous proclamons Créoles" (Barnabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, 1989:13).

organisations in the Paris region are another indication of the desire to establish some differentiated mark on the Parisian landscape. However, whether there is a need to recognise a French Caribbean ethnicity or a black ethnicity remains to be seen. French Caribbean communities in the Metropole are trying to make themselves more 'visible' both as French *and* Caribbean, not as 'blacks'. However, more and more young black people are distancing themselves from their parents to a point that they sometimes become estranged from each other (Maximin, 1991: 63-64). Single-mothers also lose their authority in a country where they tend to be more marginal, and alone (see previous chapter). These 'young blacks' thus look elsewhere for identification. The 'American blacks' are perhaps closer to their experiences than other black Antilleans in the islands. In fact Parcedo (1993) has raised the possibility of talking of the Americanisation of the French suburbs.

French Caribbean identity is highly complex as it encompasses different geographical places, the islands and the Metropole, but it is also discussed in different spaces. The contribution of black French Caribbean intellectuals who seem to concentrate on a very geographically distinct French Caribbean identity is very important, but on the other hand there seems to be an absence of the theorising of French Caribbean identity or Blackness by black French Metropolitans.[116] Furthermore, issues discussed by black French Caribbean writers may not necessarily be priorities for the islanders themselves. It is through interactions that identities are constructed. In the case of the French Caribbean islands, the most important issue results from the relation between

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[116]French Caribbean islanders tend to refer to their counterparts living in the Metropole as *Négropolitans*, that is black and Metropolitan, suggesting that the islanders have themselves a very definite 'imagined geography' of the French Caribbean, and what it means to belong. The migrants are thus excluded from two distinct geographies. A way out may thus be the construction of a third space, one that second and third generations may have started.

the islands and the Metropole in purely economic terms: how can the island diminish their dependence on the Metropole? The majority of the islanders are not in favour of independence on economic grounds alone. None of them cherish the thought of falling into poverty and starvation, which are commonly held fears if there was independence. Whilst 'blackness' is not really theorised in French academic disciplines, I argue that there is a growing recognition of a black identity not only among the black youth of Parisian suburbs, but also among black French artists. In the aftermath of *parité*, such demands are pertinent and may even be made more visible by the wide media interest provoked by *parité* debates in the second half of the 1990s.

The fact that years of assimilation policies crowned by the *départementalisation* of 1946 did not render the population of the former colonies fully 'French' should not only be seen as something that was done to the French Caribbean people. It was also something they engaged with, actively seeking an intersection between 'insider' and 'outsider' status, or as Hargreaves and McKinney have proposed "a hybrid third space that allows for the emergence of new cultural forms" (1997: 4). That space is a highly problematised and contested one, as briefly indicated above. It demonstrates the ambiguous relationship between the Metropole and its old colonies as a space that has successively been associated with *Négritude, Antillanité* and *Créolité* (see next section) demonstrating a desire to break away on the one hand, and the apparent impossibility of doing so on the other:

> Signe d'un échec relatif de l'acculturation, la créolisation imprègne l'ensemble des systèmes d'attitudes et façonne l'identité collective (Réno, 1994: 17).

That space is however also challenged by the creation of a new population in the Metropole: the French Caribbean of migrant origin. The second and third generations may need to find another 'hybrid space', one that they may share with other blacks of immigrant origin. If the French Caribbean can be seen as the 'other Other', the second and third generations are yet 'another other Other'.

2) Geographies of Antillean Theories of Difference

This section explores what in effect are the consequences, the legacies of the exploitative nature of Franco-Caribbean relations; how for instance it has resulted in what can be called an 'Antillean crisis', reflected in Antillean politics and social tensions, not necessarily between white Metropolitan people and black French Caribbean people, but also among 'coloured' French Caribbean people. Physical characteristics are still very much present in Caribbean society and reflected in its cultural manifestations (language and art).

This section also explores the resistance in the French Caribbean to French assimilationist policies and the rather ambiguous politico-cultural debates this has brought up. Indeed if *départementalisation* achieved political assimilation, socio-cultural assimilation on the other hand remains to be seen. This section thus concentrates on the debates bound up with French Antillean identity, from *Négritude* to *Créolité* and which will be further developed in the following section of this chapter in pointing out the importance of the Antillean attachment to republican

principles; a situation that can sometimes appear paradoxical, and which is best illustrated by party policies on the question of independence of the DOMs.

Although French Caribbean identity remains to be defined, it is in literature that it has been mostly discussed, and where the debate remains. *Négritude, Antillanité* and *Créolité* are widely accepted points of reference in the development of an Antillean consciousness. The three currents have in common the revalorisation of the Antillean people and culture and the denunciation of a simplistic 'Eurocentrism'.

Although most often presented as a linear progression,[117] it does not have to be so, for there is still little consensus among French Caribbean writers as to what constitutes an Antillean identity or how and around what it should be developed. The three currents are nonetheless presented in a linear fashion before discussion of Antillean identity and its apparent inability to distance itself from that of Metropolitan France.

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[117]Madeleine Cottenet-Hage's introduction of <u>Penser la créolité</u> (Paris: Karthala, 1995: 11) a book that engages with the notion of *Créolité* as developed by the three co-authors of <u>Eloge de la créolité</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), Bernabé, Chamoiseau et Confiant, sees *Créolité* as drawing on the work of Glissant (1981). She also quotes directly from <u>Eloge</u> to show how the three co-authors saw their work as a continuation of that of Césaire:

> (...) les théoriciens de la créolité se proclamaient encore "à jamais fils d'Aimé Césaire". C'est, écrivaient-ils, "la Négritude césairienne qui nous a ouvert le passage vers l'ici d'une Antillanité désormais postulable". Restait à définir l'antillanité. L'*Eloge de la créolité* (1989) s'y employait. Manifeste collectif, il cristallisait en la prolongeant une réflexion qu'Edouard Glissant avait entreprise plusieurs années auparavant dans son *Discours antillais* (1981).

Other authors such as Giraud (1997) and Aldrich (1995) also seem to engage with *Négritude, Antillanité* and *Créolité* in a linear progression.

<u>Négritude</u>

The literary and philosophical current of *Négritude* tends to be placed between the two World Wars, when poems and essays with a profound political engagement started to flourish and when both 'unknown' black writers and recognised great French intellectuals/philosophers (such as Sartre) brought up issues around 'race', colonialism and exploitation. The work of Jean Price-Mars dedicated to the revival of cultural practices such as voodoo and to the exorcism of the shame associated with Haitians' African roots has been designated as the real beginning of the movement (Hoffmann, 1995; Corzani *et al*, 1998). That the 'black awakening' movement started in Haiti is perhaps not coincidental, considering Haiti's history of rebellion and independence. The 'Harlem Renaissance' in the 1920s and 1930s contributed further to the development of *Négritude*, especially in its universal and global vision of 'blackness'.

Négritude in French Caribbean literature has essentially been associated with the early work of Aimé Césaire and,[118] although criticised on various fronts, it has not been rejected by other Antillean writers and theorists. If nothing else, *Négritude* is considered by Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant (1989, 1993) as a very important stage in the development of a French Caribbean consciousness.

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[118]*Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* was first published in 1939. This collection of poems is often seen as one of the most important contributions to French Caribbean *Négritude* literature. Césaire's later work concentrated much more with denouncing colonialism and Eurocentrism than with the worry of bringing dignity to a unified 'black people'. <u>Discours sur le colonialisme</u> (first edition: Paris, Réclame, 1950).

The French Caribbean literary contribution to *Négritude* was to attempt to create a re-valorised pre-slavery age for the French colonised islands through Africa and African culture and the acceptance of 'blackness' not with shame, but with pride. *Négritude* created a point of reference for the black Antilleans, despised both by the 'whites' and the mulattos.

The movement also provided a voice for many black French writers and an opportunity to break away from the white French ideals and values built on the back of black African slaves, the only other model they knew:

> L'Assimilation, à travers ses pompes et ses oeuvres d'Europe, s'acharnait à peindre notre vécu aux couleurs de l'Ailleurs. La Négritude s'imposait alors comme volonté têtue de résistance tout uniment appliquée à domicilier notre identité dans une culture niée, déniée et reniée (Bernabé *et al.*, 1989, 1997: 18).

As briefly mentioned above, the idea of *Négritude* was criticised for replacing one universal (white) with another (black), and thus merely creating an alternative 'mystical place' (Bernabé *et al.*, 1989, 1997; Giraud, 1997: 144). The geographical, cultural and temporal remoteness of the continent of Africa for the Antillean blacks was also emphasised by Fanon:

> In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unrecognised Negro civilization. I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and my future (Fanon, quoted by Aldrich, 1995: 111).[119]

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[119]Frantz Fanon (1986: 226) <u>Black Skin, White Masks</u> -London: Pluto (originally published in French in 1952).

Furthermore, although a reconciliation with their 'blackness' was important, *Négritude* does not take account of the cultural plurality of the French islands, since it over-concentrates on the African origins of the French Caribbean society. In fact, Giraud (1997) argues that in many ways the demands and the hopes of the Antillean blacks were misplaced:

> Ainsi la visée d'identité qui est celle du courant négriste de la Guadeloupe et de la Martinique de l'époque est à l'évidence, inadéquate aux réalités dont elle se réclame (...) car les sociétés antillaises sont fondamentalement "multiraciales", largement pluriculturelles, puisque constituées d'apports venus de quatre continents. Alors qu'une spécificité antillaise était, pour la première fois, revendiquée, elle était au même moment ratée (1997:145).

Aldrich (1995: 111) points out the fact that in many ways *Négritude* is very difficult to define, especially since it encompasses the writings and the thoughts of different black writers. Césaire's trajectory, although not going back on *Négritude*, concentrated further on the issue of colonialism, and as such, for Aldrich, Césaire's interpretation of *Négritude* can be defined as geographical and historical.

Burton (1994) makes a point of differentiating the construction of Antillean theories of difference in the two main islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Indeed, much of the debate has been localised and developed by writers from Martinique. And the very fact that Guadeloupe did not have personalities comparable with that of Aimé Césaire, or Edouard Glissant, Burton argues, means that Guadeloupean identity construction has been comparably simpler than that developed by Martiniquan writers (1994: 137). Furthermore, whilst it has been argued that Césaire's *Négritude* became somewhat influenced by *Antillanité*, and that Césaire's writings moved away from the

conceptualisation of 'blackness' (Aldrich, 1995), theories of difference in Guadeloupe appear to remain concerned with the past, very much tied up with Africa:

> (...) la Négritude et l'Africanité sont les composantes essentielles de la "Guadeloupéanité" (...). Au moment où la plupart des gauchistes martiniquais commençaient à se distancier par rapport à la manière "négritudisante" de penser l'identité nationale, c'était vers un mélange de négritude, de Black Power et de gauchisme à la française que se retournaient, dans leur lutte contre le départementalisme et le "social communisme" du PCF, les indépendantistes guadeloupéens (Burton, 1994: 138).

Many Antillean writers (Glissant, 1997; Bernabé *et al*, 1989, 1997) have nonetheless argued that for all its faults, *Négritude* was possibly a necessary step in exorcising centuries of servitude and humiliation endured during slavery and colonialism. However, whilst *Négritude* was mainly concerned with the French Caribbean's past in terms of African origins and with a universalist conceptualisation of 'blackness', the next two currents, *Antillanité* and *Créolité,* are very much turned towards the future and take account of the ethnic diversity of the French islands, but also of their specificity:

> Aujourd'hui l'Antillais ne renie plus la part africaine de son être; il n'a plus, par réaction à la prôner comme exclusive. Il faut qu'il la *reconnaisse.* (...) Il n'est plus contraint de rejeter par tactique les composantes occidentales, aujourd'hui encore aliénantes, dont il sait qu'il peut choisir entre elles. (...) Il conçoit que la synthèse n'est pas l'opération d'abâtardissement qu'on lui disait, mais pratique féconde par quoi les composantes s'enrichissent. Il est *devenu* antillais (Glissant, 1997: 25-26).

Antillanité

Antillanité is a literary and socio-philosophical current that has been much associated with the work of Edouard Glissant (1981, 1997) characterised by a move away from the universalist approach of *Négritude*, concentrating rather on the specificity of the French Caribbean islands and people. Nonetheless, if the concept was much developed in the 1980s and 1990s with the work of Edouard Glissant,[120] Burton (1994: 133) emphasises the influence of René Menil in his writings on the specificity of the French Caribbean islands as early as 1964. *Antillanité* has been a way of refocusing on the specificity of the French Caribbean islands; its geography, its history and its cultural practices. Like *Négritude, Antillanité* is also about promoting a counter-culture, but sees in the diversity of the French Caribbean richness and inspiration.

The French model was made redundant. *Départementalisation* was supposed to be about political assimilation only; post-departmentalisation showed that what was in fact happening was a cultural absorption too. The role of the French state in trying to create 'black French people' has been established in the first section of the chapter. The socio-political context was determinant: the French Caribbean islanders felt let down by *départementalisation*, as many inequalities between the Metropole and the islands remained for many years. The exploitation of the BUMIDOM years did not go unnoticed, and whilst the French state wanted to transform the islanders into 'good black French men and women' (see Juletane), French society rejected them as such and saw them, and treated them, as foreigners.

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[120]Edouard Glissant, 1981, Le Discours antillais -Paris: Le Seuil (re-edition 1997 -Paris:Gallimard); 1990, Poétique de la Relation -Paris: Gallimard.

Even if French Caribbean *Négritude* did not manage to divorce itself completely from the French assimilationist and universalist ideologies (Burton, 1994), its main force was originally ardently anti-assimilationist, looking for an alternative model to identify with. But its African-centred model was redundant for *Antillanité*, as Africa was yet another mystical place: many French Caribbean people had never been to Africa, and could not relate to that continent. *Antillanité* was to create and appreciate an existing Antillean reality, instead of the two previous models of French and African, white and black identity. *Antillanité* moved away from 'blackness awakening', though not completely condemning it, and was a step in the recognition of the multicultural and multi-ethnic particularities of the French Caribbean.

The concept of difference developed by advocates of *Antillanité* (such as Glissant, but also Giraud) is very different from that developed by advocates of *Négritude*. Glissant sees the difference and the specificity of the French Caribbean people in their diversity. Unlike the obsession with 'blackness', *Antillanité* recognises the mixing and intertwining of many different cultures:

> Là où la Négritude se montre obsédée de "pureté", voire de "purismes", l'Antillanité fait du métissage, entendu dans un sens culturel, un principe constitutif suprêmement positif. La créolisation elle-même consitue un "métissage sans limites", un combinatoire de matériels culturels divers en renouvellement et en transformation perpétuels (Burton, 1994: 135).

Antillanité was thus developed as an alternative to the French assimilationist model which placed the islands in a situation of permanent dependence vis-à-vis the Metropole (see previous chapter). It was also a move away from the reductionist universal model proposed by *Négritude*. Glissant saw in the concept of *Antillanité* the

opportunity to concentrate on the islands themselves and write about their specificity that lies essentially in their diversity. Nonetheless, he also sketched a political project, opening out towards the English and Spanish speaking islands, who share a similar *Créole* culture (Burton, 1994); the creation of a Caribbean federation. For Glissant and other *Antillanité* advocates, the multi-cultural characteristics of the French Caribbean constitute its richness and its future, and encourage a multidimensional process of identity construction (Glissant, 1991, 1997).

The idea of focusing on the development of French Caribbean identities without looking outside the Caribbean islands for ones roots (whether French, African or other) has been a great contribution to French Caribbean literature in both French and *Créole*. The importance of the *Créole* language had already been emphasised by Glissant (1997) and has been further explored by the theorists of *Créolité*, mainly Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant (1993). The importance of the *Créole* language as well as the desire for a synthesised and more stable Antillean identity (rather than one that remains ambiguous) have led these theorists to prefer the term *Créolité* to *Antillanité*. Although it is tempting to see in *Créolité* a progression of the ideas established by Glissant (such as the recognition of the multicultural characteristics of the French islands),[121] the three authors have been subject to many criticisms;[122] the debate is therefore far from closed.

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[121]It is in fact very much the three authors' belief that their ideas owe much to Glissant, and one finds many references to his work in *Eloge*:

> C'est la Négritude Césarienne qui nous a ouvert le passage vers l'ici d'une Antillanité désormais postulable et elle-même en marche vers un autre degré d'authencité qui restait à nommer (Bernabé et al, 1993: 18).

> Avec Edouard Glissant nous refusâmes de nous enfermer dans la Négritude, épelant l'Antillanité (...). Le projet n'était pas seulement d'abandonner les hypnoses d'Europe et d'Afrique. Il fallait aussi garder en éveil la claire conscience des apports de l'une et de l'autre (Bernabé et al, 1993: 22).

<u>Créolité</u>

Créolité is believed by the three theorists mentioned earlier to come out of the same mould as *Négritude* and *Antillanité*. French Caribbean *Négritude* was an important step, "a baptism, the primal act of our restored dignity. We are forever Césaire's sons" (Bernabé *et al*, 1993: 80) In the footsteps of *Antillanité* they denounce the problems of universalism and condemn Eurocentrism. In the same spirit they insist on the importance of French Caribbean diversity. The opening of their book, <u>Eloge de la créolité</u>, is quite clear:

> Ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques, nous nous proclamons Créoles (Bernabé et al, 1993: 13).

Whilst for Glissant the *Créole* language is important as it is part and parcel of French Caribbean culture and history, for Bernabé *et al*, being *Créole*-speaking seems to define the idea of belonging (Burton, 1994), providing a non-racialised conceptualisation of French Caribbean multicultural society:

> Pour la Créolité, la clef de voûte de l'identité antillaise n'est pas la race, mais le langage; être Antillais, c'est être créolophone, et vice versa (1994:141).

This definition of what constitutes an 'Antillean' has the merit of being open and inclusive; it encompasses not only Indian minorities, but also the *békés* who have always seen themselves as *Créoles* (Souquet-Basiège, 1999). Furthermore, whilst Glissant's vision tended to be more of a regional one (limited to the geography of the

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[122]For example the book <u>Penser la Créolité</u> (Paris: Karthala, 1995) edited by Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage.

Caribbean in general), the one that comes out of *Créolité* is more global (Aldrich, 1995): looking to achieve various forms of solidarity not only with other Antillean cultures (similar to Glissant's vision of a Caribbean federation), but also with other non Antillean Creole cultures (such as African Creoleness, Asian Creoleness etc.).[123]

As briefly mentioned above, advocates of *Créolité* were not received with the enthusiasm that a solution to the perceived problem of Antillean identity might have expected. The search for a synthesis, an end to the Antillean quest is in fact one of the very criticisms thrown at *Créolité*. For Mazama (1995: 91), for example, the very desire for a synthesis is not far from the universalism of Césaire:

> En fait, le projet de l'Eloge de la Créolité est de mener la quête identitaire à son terme, celui d'une synthèse, dernière étape dialectique de la reconciliation, symbolisée par l'émergence de l'"Etre harmonieux", pas tellement différent en fait de l'homme universel de la négritude.

Glissant (1991) also has reservations about *Créolité* and prefers the term *créolisation*, a concept that takes account of the continuous process of Antillean identity construction (Vergès, 1995; Burton, 1994). This is a concept that he uses comparably with the image of the multiple root (rhizome),[124] emphasising multiplicity and progression, rather than the idea of an identity based on a single root (*Négritude*), or around a synthesis (*Créolité*):

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[123]'Creoleness' is the accepted translation of 'Créolité' provided by M. Taleb-Khyar in the bilingual edition of Bernabé et all, Eloge de la Créolité/In Praise of Creoleness -Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

[124]Aldrich (1995: 119) points out that the images of 'root' and 'rhizome' were in fact borrowed from Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, contemporary French philosophers.

> (...) la "créolite" dans son principe, régresserait vers des négritudes, des
> francités, des latinités, toutes généralisantes - plus au moins
> innocemment (Glissant, 1991: 103).

In *Créolité*, one finds elements of the two previous currents, as well as many references to them or the authors themselves, the similarities having been outlined earlier on. Nonetheless, many authors argue that *Créolité* is closer to *Négritude* or *Francité* than to Glissant's *Antillanité* (Giraud, 1997; Mazama, 1995). In its search for 'authenticity' (Bernabé *et al*, 1993: 18) Mazama (1995) argues that the universalism of *Négritude* is found in *Créolité*, alongside many Eurocentrisms. One of her main arguments is based on the concept of 'development' used by the writers of *Eloge*. She argues that their idea of 'development' is closely related to that of the Western world (in so far as the term 'development' is bound up with a colonial discourse) and therefore argues that *Créolité* is no less than a clear persistence of *Francité*:

> (...) malgré des déclarations de principe contre le pseudo-universalisme
> de l'Occident, et la nécessité de s'en écarter, le discours des auteurs ne
> s'en inscrit pas moins dans une matrice intellectuelle/culturelle
> fondamentalement occidentale. Le résultat est inévitable: incapable de
> se libérer du carcan Européen, l'Eloge ne nous livre qu'un rêve mal
> rêvé de libération (1995:87-88).

It seems that in their conceptualisation of theories around difference, French Caribbean writers have sought to fight against Western universalism. Césaire replaced the universalism of the 'white man' with a universalism of the 'black man', whilst Glissant condemned any forms of universality in favour of diversity. Although seen by a few (such as Aldrich, 1995) as having much potential, *Créolité* failed to combat both universalism, in its search for an 'authentic Antillean identity', and Eurocentrism as demonstrated by Mazama (1995). Perhaps Glissant's concept of

créolisation is the one that departs the most from a Western universal, and one that ought to be included in any exploration into the meaning of the multicultural, the universal and the particular.

Burton (1994: 149) makes the very valid and interesting point that most French Caribbean writers seem to be concerned with condemning the universal. Indeed, for Glissant, for example, universalism and totalitarianism come from similar moulds. This is why he insists on *créolisation*, rather than *Créolité*. Burton sympathises with the beliefs of Guadeloupean philosopher Dahomay (1989) that not all universal values should necessarily be rejected even if they originated in France or other Western countries. This is especially true in the case of universal human rights.

Furthermore, Maryse Condé (1995) points out the fact that most French Caribbean writers spent some parts of their lives being educated in the Metropole, and yet they insist on developing theories within the geographical boundaries of the French Caribbean: what about the Antilleans living in the Metropole? What about the second and third generations living in the Metropole? French islanders refer to them as *Négropolitains*, a contraction of *négro* and *métropolitains*. As previously mentioned, there has not been much writing on the development of an identity that is inclusive of this population. Antillean identity construction seems to be closed to the French Caribbean people living in the Metropole. As such it is a reversal of the very process it critiques by setting up exclusivity within its attempt at inclusivity.

It can be argued that this insistence on developing an Antillean identity completely separate from French influence is too contrived. Although both *Antillanité* and

Créolité acknowledge the multicultural aspects of Antillean society and culture, neither of them takes into account the migration experience, a constant in French Caribbean history. Whether or not we can talk of a French Caribbean diaspora, the constant flow of people between the European continent and the islands should not be forgotten. The main concern of the authors in trying to develop new ways of thinking their difference in exclusion of Metropolitan influences, may lead them to write about a place that no longer exists. The search for authenticity by *Créolité* advocates may remain fictional, or merely "un rêve mal rêvé" (Mazama, 1995: 88) or may result in "exoticism and folklorisation" in the face of increasing urbanisation and change (Aldrich, 1995: 120).

There is an important Antillean community living in the Metropole, one that has not completely broken ties with the islands.[125]   There are many French Caribbean organisations in Paris working towards 'keeping alive' the Antillean culture through art, music and festivals, but also through sport. These are often aimed at young people for whom it is particularly difficult to find a model to identify with and who experience tension between their own 'Frenchness' and 'creoleness' (Galap, 1991, 1993b). Parents also seem to encourage their children to spend the summer holidays with relatives in the islands. For them it appears essential that their children have an idea of where they come from. A few magazines such as Antilla, La Tribune des Antilles, Alizés and Antiane keep the Antilleans of the Metropole in touch with the socio-political and cultural life of the islands as well as providing a forum for discussion.[126]

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[125]Exact figures are almost impossible to come by due to the very particular French rules with regard to 'ethnic categories' in national or official census.

Should French Caribbean writers (including intellectuals, social theorists) not take into account other realities facing the contemporary Antillean community, whether in the French Antilles, or in the Metropole? The realities described in the work of the authors of *Négritude*, *Antillanité* and *Créolité* seem to be either in the past or in the future, not really in the present, making them perhaps out of reach of the masses. Glissant (1997: 731) is very much aware of the difference between the 'wish' ('le souhait') and the reality, pointing out that new conceptualisations of difference may perhaps be great French Caribbean literary and cultural contributions, but there may be a long wait before such intellectual debates ever reach the masses:

> Les intellectuels se connaissent et, peu à peu, se rencontrent. Mais les peuples antillais ne sont pas en état de fréquenter vraiment les oeuvres que leurs fils échappés du filet créent dans ce sens. La passion des intellectuels devient action transformante quand elle est relayée par la volonté des peuples (Glissant, 1997: 731).

The difficulty of determining the contours of Antillean identity in the contemporary situation is exacerbated by the fact that the only common denominator of this multi-ethnic population has been the experience of exploitative relations with the 'Mother Country', namely slavery, indentured labour and colonialism. As Giraud (1991) points out, there were no real possibilities of yearning after whatever preceded colonial rule. Although *Négritude* tried to revalorise the meaning of the black man or 'blackness' through the re-appropriation of African culture (Aldrich, 1995), it failed to encompass the particularity of the French Caribbean situation.

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[126] Antiane is a magazine edited by INSEE (national body of survey), and as such is a useful source for determining trends in various aspects of the French Caribbean socio-economical life. Alizé however is a magazine edited by an Antillean priest Pierre Lacroix who lives in Paris and who is responsible for much of the development of the Parisian French Caribbean community. (published by APEFAG).

> Liberation could not signify a return to a tradition and a pre-colonial order which could be dug up from beneath the layers of colonialism; it could only mean the achievement of equality within the French national system, finally rid of the trimmings of colonialism (Giraud, 1991: 240).

In effect, the only possibility to break away from an identity associated with oppression and suffering was to embrace the republican ideals of equality and liberty. The universality that the three French Caribbean schools of thoughts sought to criticise and to eradicate from their vision of a French Caribbean identity, is often still present in their discourses (more so in *Négritude* and *Créolité* than in *Antillanité*). It can in fact be argued, that the assimilationist bond between the Antilles and the Metropole is so strong that a complete break from the Metropole is not possible. Furthermore Burton (1994) argues that the 'officialisation' of many points of French Caribbean resistance through their absorption into French left-wing policies of the 1980s - such as *régionalisation* politics has somehow weakened them:

> Non seulement la Négritude est ainsi devenue une "revendication de la différence officialisée" (...), mais le concept de l'Antillanité a aussi été résorbé, en forme modifiée, dans le discours dominant, son insistance sur l'hétérogénéité de l'identité antillaise s'harmonisant parfaitement avec la promotion assimilationniste-régionaliste d'une soi-disant "France-créole" (1994:148).

'Existing' without the influence of France seems almost impossible; not only in terms of identity, as demonstrated above, but also in socio-economic terms. This is not only a feeling shared by the people I met during the course of my research. It is also a legitimate enough claim based on the position of French Caribbean party politics with regards to the complete independence of the French islands. A desire for total independence does not represent the dominant opinion for the French Caribbean people of the Antilles or in the Metropole. Furthermore, even the pro-independence

parties demand that there is a continuation of grants from the Metropole after the independence of the islands, by way of reparation for years of exploitation. The undermining of the French Caribbean economy through the establishment of a non-productive economic culture was also argued to be a way of keeping the islands dependent (Giraud, 1991), explaining why it is generally believed that the islands could not survive by themselves.

Burton (1994) agues that unless the French Caribbean were to become completely separated from mainland France, a strong, independent French Caribbean identity would not be achievable, for even regional policies which allow for cultural differences, remain framed by a French assimilationist and universalist model. It is however appropriate at this point to note, as Burton does, that although there is an understandable questioning of French universal values by French Caribbean scholars, these should not simply and systematically be rejected on the ground that they are French, that is, part of a racist and exclusionary republican model, and as such not applicable to the French Caribbean context. Universalist human rights are very important, and are applicable anywhere, despite their Western framework.

A new 'blackness'?

The geography of the meaning of being 'Antillean' needs to be explored, as there seems to be a growing demand for the recognition of a black identity in the Metropole, whereas in the islands theories of difference remain centred on *Antillanité* or *Créolité.*

In the previous section, the particularly difficult positioning of the children of French Caribbean migrants was explored. They either feel rejected from a French Caribbean identity *per se*, or decide to reject it themselves. Whilst closer to the Metropolitans' ways, the daily discrimination they encounter make it difficult for them to reconcile their 'Frenchness' with their 'blackness'. If the positioning of French Caribbean islanders and first generation immigrants in the Metropole is unresolved and ambiguous, issues facing second and third generations remain to be explored. Whilst authors such as Galap or Marie have identified problems that may be facing this 'new population', and have hinted at the challenge it poses to ideas of French Caribbean identity, this area remains nonetheless under-researched.[127] This section is thus concerned with the relative lack of interest of French Caribbean theorists such as Césaire, Glissant, and *Créolité* advocates for the populations of French Caribbean origin living on the 'third island' (Anselin, 199). Could the growing recognition of a black identity among young people lead to a renewed interest in 'blackness'? If indeed coalitions based on skin colour are being established, is this a step backward in the direction of *Négritude*, or a step forward, a re-invention of 'blackness'? It is around these questions that the following section is organised.

The rejection of young people of French Caribbean origin on the basis of their skin colour has led them to re-appropriate their 'blackness'. From a factor of exclusion, 'blackness' appears to have become a factor of inclusion, revalorising the meaning of being black: "L'exclusion par la couleur appelle en retour la valorisation de la couleur" (Galap, 1991: 43).

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[127]Cf. The papers of Jean Galap and Claude Valentin-Marie for the day conference organised by ANT "Les Originaires d'Outre-Mer en Ile de France", Cité des Sciences et de L'Industrie, November 26 1991.

The adoption of a black identity by the second and third generations has however been met with great reservations and a certain fear of the Americanisation of French suburbs. Porcedo (1993) gives a good account of the extent of media-hysteria at the beginning of the 1990s over this issue. It was clear that black was associated with suburbia and crime. It has been established that 'Frenchness' was exclusive of 'blackness', which translates in practice in the marginalisation of black people from French society and in terms of spatiality, their 'ghettoisation' in French suburbia. The construction of a 'unified and indivisible French whiteness' and the culture of exclusion that it infers has thus led to the creation of an urban culture in the suburbs. The association between French *banlieues* and US black inner-cities was all too easy, contributing to the further alienation of the French black people.

More recently, however, black French artists, with the support of some anti-racist grassroot organisations (such as *Collectif Egalité*) have begun a small campaign based on the absence of black people from French TV and French cinema. They are asking for more varied roles which would lead to more black actors on screens. Katherine Kat-Jean, casting director explains:

> Sur une centaine de comédiens dont je m'occupe, six sont des femmes noires ou métisses. C'est simple: il n'y a pas de rôle (...) on propose des rôles de prostituée, d'infirmière, de femme de ménage ou de délinquante de banlieue. Une commissaire, un médecin ou une magistrate? "Impossible." Logique commerciale: pour faire de l'audience, il faut que le public (majoritairement blanc) puisse s'identifier. (...) Le noir est enfermé dans sa "noirceur", on ne pense tout simplement pas qu'il puisse jouer autre chose.[128]

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[128]Cf. Werner, D. & Laurent, C. "Témoignages sur une France raciste" in Elle, March 27, 2000, p. 140.

Blackness as a new form of challenge to republican principles.

Calling for greater equality and better representation of black people in the media promotes the idea of a black identity and black ethnicity, concepts that are theoretically unacceptable under French law (Chapter Three). As such, small grassroots associations are starting to challenge the invisibility of French black people in Metropolitans' 'imagined geography' of the French nation. Calling for a recognised black identity is not necessarily calling for a separate identity, not for the creation of black communities, it is could be a way of bringing 'blackness' out of the margins of Metropolitans' 'imagined geography' of France, and thus lead to the greater integration of the French black people. That is a genuine creation of the greater France which republicanism assumes to exist, but racism refuses to allow to exist.

Requests for greater 'visibility' may be seen as a way of emphasising differences (and in this case differences based on particular phenotypes), a very 'sore point' in French politics. Yet, in order for French black people to enjoy 'invisibility' in the same way as French white people, they need to be 'normalised' in French society, that is accepted as 'French' not as 'black outsiders'. 'Invisibility' can be very advantageous, and is indeed something that many a foreigner may have wished for at some point of his/her life in a host country: wanting to be the same, not to draw attention to him/herself, preventing his/her vulnerability. It is, in many ways, something white people enjoy in societies such as France where they are in the majority. The invisibility of the French Caribbean people, as it has been discussed, has not been constructed in the same manner, for it is as a result of exclusion that they became invisible, not because of their inclusion. This movement towards greater integration

and equality in French society is thus directly challenging the exclusion of French black people. Rendering more 'visible' the black population of France is necessary argues Calixthe Beyala, founder of the association *Collectif Egalité* in an interview with Philippe Gavi (1999) for the magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*. She is especially making reference to the relative absence of black people on the screen and wants more diverse roles for them. She states that she feels ashamed, as a Republican, in having to lead this battle, but feels that it is important for everyone, not simply for the (in)'visible minorities'. She hopes that black children may no longer grow up attaching negative meanings to being 'just black in France' (as opposed to 'from St Lucia' as her own daughter used to say to her friends). White French children too may grow up to be more inclusive of black people, perhaps to the extent that colour may no longer matter as much.[129]

The campaign of the French black artists gained support from some anti-racist associations, enabling their plea to be heard. In fact that plea was reiterated at the 2000 César ceremony in France when Calixthe Beyala came on stage to ask the cinema industry (represented in the audience) to make an effort to include more black actors. Whilst this was an important event, it did not get much coverage: the public did not feel concerned. It is clear therefore that the marginalisation of black people in France is well hidden. This makes that small campaign all the more important and it remains to be seen whether French black artists manage to find more support from other anti-racist organisations, thus giving their plea more weight.

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[129]Calixthe Beyala's daughter used to associate being black with being a criminal, justifying her lies to her friends that she was from St Lucia: "j'ai honte, c'est pas bien d'être des Noirs français. On est des brigands". Cf. Gavi P. "Cachez ces gens de couleur que nous ne saurions voir; Quand la télé lave trop blanc" in <u>Le Nouvel Observateur</u>, October 14-20, 2000.

There does seem to be a movement currently towards greater collaboration among black French people. Young French Caribbean people have found more in common with other young people from immigrant backgrounds, and notably with other young black people. The plea of black artists in France also point towards the need for greater solidarity among black people. A black identity may thus be emerging in Metropolitan France. However, solidarity among black people in France does not mean a re-emergence of the old concept of *Négritude*. Indeed, whilst young black people have been identifying somewhat with images of US blacks, and notably with the culture around rap music, this would not appear to signify the establishment of a 'black universal'. A 'black coalition' is contributing to a feeling of standardisation across the black communities in France. Whilst they do not seem concerned with Africa, the country of origin, they are looking outwards towards America. Nonetheless, French black communities are also looking inwards. Their 'Frenchness' is unquestionable, but 'Frenchness' needs to be more inclusive. In the light of recent events it seems that the question is not so much to construct a black identity as such, but rather to fight for greater integration of black communities in France. This integration is not based on further 'diluting' differences, but for these to no longer be a basis of discrimination. 'Frenchness' needs to be more inclusive. Metropolitans' 'imagined geography' of France needs to be stretched: it needs to include the French Caribbean islanders as well as those populations that despite being French have been excluded.

3) French Caribbean women at the intersection of two spheres of exclusion.

The gendered nature of French Caribbean identity

Although French Caribbean black writers have fought for greater visibility in the acknowledgement of their difference, this has been done without French Caribbean women writers. Whilst French Caribbean theorists have sought to challenge French assimilationist policies in their re-thinking of 'Caribbeanness',[130] the contribution of French Caribbean women writers (Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart and Gisèle Pineau to name but a few), tends to be relatively overlooked in writings on French Caribbean identity issues.[131] As such, these theorists have contributed to the construction of a one-sided masculine counter-culture (Arnold, 1995). French Caribbean identity construction constitutes a privileged space from which women are largely excluded.

Arnold (1995) gives a good account of the exclusion and marginalisation of French Caribbean women in the construction of French Caribbean identity. He also provides

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[130] The main French Caribbean theories of difference have re-examined the positioning of the French Caribbean people in terms of the Metropole, Africa and the islands. Whilst *Négritude* was a return to Africa in its re-valorisation of the black person, the two following currents were more concerned with the development of a much more localised identity, focusing on the islands themselves. As such, it is possible to argue that Glissant and the créolistes have been investigating the meaning of being Caribbean, looking to establish a certain 'Caribbeanness' (whether through *Antillanité* or through *Créolité*) to counteract the aftermath of the well established French assimilationist policies.

[131] Arnold A. (1995) points out that Condé and Schwarz-Bart did get a mention in Lettres créoles published by Chamoiseau and Confiant in 1991. Arnold argues nonetheless that this was more of an afterthought than a deliberate attempt to integrate another vision of *Créolité*, namely a feminine one:

> (...) the pages of praise for Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart strike us as a tactical necessity on the part of the authors, not a necessary outgrowth of their theory. After all when the women authors outsell you by such a margin, you have to give them some space in the history of the literature, even if you aren't too sure what to do with them" (1995: 35)

a detailed demonstration of the extent of the masculinist nature of French Caribbean culture throughout the writings of Césaire, Glissant and the *créolistes*, arguing that these theorists have actively promoted the silencing of French Caribbean women, as well as the male perception of French Caribbean women's roles as mothers and carers. If their writings differ from one another, they have united in the challenging of French assimilationist policies as well as in their promotion of an inherently unbalanced masculine vision of French Caribbean society.[132] This has resulted in a certain marginalisation of French Caribbean women writers:

> The *créolité* movement has inherited from its antecedents, *antillanité* and *négritude*, a sharply gendered identity. Like them, it is not only masculine but masculinist. Like them, it permits only male talents to emerge within the movement, to carry its seal of approval. And like them, it pushes literature written by women into the background (Arnold, 1995: 21).

In Section One of the chapter the model of 'imagined geography' was used to illustrate the exclusion of French Caribbean communities in French society. It has been established that the absence of French Caribbean communities from Metropolitans' very definite ideas of the meanings attached to 'Frenchness' excluded Antilleans, on the basis that French people are white, not black, making them 'invisible' in Metropolitan French society. It has also been argued earlier that this invisibility was racialised in that black French Caribbean people's invisibility results from exclusion, whilst invisibility as anonymity was enjoyed by the white majority on the basis of inclusion. In the light of the masculine and masculinist nature of French Caribbean identity, it can be argued that invisibility is also gendered. Indeed, as

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[132]Cf. the role of Frantz Fanon's writings in the silencing of women. Fanon, F. (1971) 'La femme de couleur et le blanc' in Peau noire, masques blancs, pp. 33-50 -Paris: Seuil.

explained above, French Caribbean black theorists have promoted the subordination of French Caribbean women. Whilst a handful of black French Caribbean male writers have gained notoriety in that their name is used in association with each school of French Caribbean theory, French Caribbean black women writers are not seen in the same league intellectually or politically. As such French Caribbean women writers experience greater invisibility than do male writers, which in fact extends to the rest of the French Caribbean black female population since their views (indirectly through women writings) are not as 'worthy' as those of the men.[133] The greater invisibility of French Caribbean black women in French society does not result exactly from the same process as that one discussed earlier with reference to the exclusion of French Caribbean people from French Metropolitans' 'imagined geographies'. Indeed, in this case the invisibility of black women results from a combination of exclusion (to the same degree as for the men) and distortion that eventually results in their exclusion. French Caribbean black women are absent form Metropolitans' 'imagined geography' of France, but not from that of French Caribbean black men. The opposite expectations of men and women in terms of what they expect from each other result in the marginalisation of women.

French Caribbean women's writing has been described by Arnold (1995:21) as being part of a less theorised vision of French Caribbean identity construction. French Caribbean women writers have indeed generally been kept out of debates and

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[133]It seems rather paradoxical that whilst French Caribbean women writers sell more texts than French Caribbean male theorists, their contribution remain marginalised in French Caribbean literature. Although successful writers these women remain invisible in French Caribbean theoretical debates, an invisibility that extends to French Caribbean women in general. In a sense, French Caribbean writers are being heard, since they do sell so many books. The question is, who buys them? Who hears them? French Caribbean male theorists appear not to, and as the next section shows, nor do French feminists. They may be reaching women who have even less power than they have, namely French Caribbean women in the islands and in the Metropole. In that sense, selling more books than French Caribbean male theorists does not challenge the power relations at play.

discussions on the idea of a French Caribbean identity, for their vision was very different from that of the well established French Caribbean black (male) theorists. French Caribbean women have largely found a voice through literature. A few French Caribbean women writers such as Condé and Schwarz-Bart can no longer be ignored. Many remain relatively unknown.[134] Despite their more marginalised position, French Caribbean women writers have nonetheless contributed to the development of a different version of French Caribbean identity (Praeger, 1996; Lamiot, 1995, 1996). The one-sided inherently masculine vision of French Caribbean black theorists is challenged by feminine writings:

> en vérité, Maryse Condé, dans son œuvre théorique et fictionnelle, dialogue avec ses aînés masculins, et, plus d'une fois, les réfutent. (Praeger, 1996: 207)

The image of the caring French Caribbean mother has especially been re-written. Gautier (1995) explains that whilst in some writings the woman heroine has no children, in others the mother demonstrates little caring towards her children, if not none at all.[135] The opposite expectations of men and women in terms of what they expect from each other in a relationship also constitute an important aspect of French Caribbean women writers' themes:

> Les héroines de Condé enfantent mais elles n'aiment pas leurs enfants, parce qu'elles n'ont de passion que pour un homme qui n'est pas toujours le père et dont le départ les consument, ou elles en aiment un

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[134]Gautier, A. (1994) 'Guadeloupéennes et Martiniquaises' in Burton, R. & Réno, F. (eds.) Les Antilles-Guyane au rendez-vous de l'Europe: le grand tournant? -Paris: Economica, especially pp. 173-175.

[135]Gautier, A. (1994) mentions for example Condé's Pays mêlé -Paris: Hatier, 1985 and La Traversée de la Mangrove -Paris: Mercure de France, 1989.

seul parmi une nombreuse descendance, fruit d'étreintes furtives et
sans joie (Gautier, 1994: 174).

Chapter Four challenges the received understanding of the matrifocal nature of the
'traditional French Caribbean household'. It has indeed been established that both 'in
tradition' and in the contemporary situation, French Caribbean women have preferred
to be part of a couple, and that generally speaking, couples constituted the most
common households.[136] Single-motherhood is definitely not something that has
traditionally been pursued by these women, whose preoccupations lay much more in
finding the appropriate man. The deceptions and suffering that this quest often
brought to French Caribbean women thus find a voice in French Caribbean women's
writings. The testimony of 'Suzanne' in Pineau, G. & Abraham, M. (1998) is one that
illustrates very well the suffering endured by French Caribbean women's search for
the 'right man' and the feeling that only a man would made them happy:

> J'ai tout le temps été deçue. Ça rime à rien. Tu ouvres ton coeur et ton
> porte-monnaie. Tu écoutes les belles promesses. Et puis tu donnes ton
> corps pour faire un enfant de l'amour. Et puis, plus rien. Du jour au
> lendemain, on te traite comme du caca-chien. Tu pleures et tu te
> retrouves sans homme, avec un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq enfants. (...)
> J'espère qu[e les gens qui liront mon histoire] verront bien que je
> cherchais rien d'autre que le bonheur avec un mari. Et que le bonheur
> c'est un rêve trop grand pour les filles de ma condition (p. 149, p. 151).

Pineau also illustrates the difficulties French Caribbean women have had to face in
the islands in L'espérance-macadam (1996a) and for those who migrated to mainland
France in L'Exil selon Julia (1996b) and Un papillon dans la cité (1992).
Relationships are central to her writings and L'espérance-macadam shows clearly

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[136]Whilst this does seem to be verified by various figures, and a few testimonies (for example: Pineau,
G. & Abraham, M. (1998) and Gautier A. (1994) on the changing nature of French Caribbean women),
there is no way of verifying how long those relationships last, and thus whether they fit a more
westernised vision of the 'modern couple'.

how the quest for happiness through love and children largely ends in poverty and abuse. The novel thus shows women battling against nature and their dreams filled with men, love and children as the fruit of their love. The harsh reality these women then have to face is recounted by Eliette:

> Des hommes les prenaient, de la même façon qu'ils avalaient le rhum, grignant dans le plaisir brûlant. Et puis les jetaient, pleines. Et la ronde des ventres-calebasses commençait. Avec l'espoir au bout de chaque portée. L'espoir que celui-ci, qui fourrait le fer chaud dans leur corps, resterait épris, enflammé, généreux, au moins le quart d'une éternité. Quand elles cherchaient la paix, qu'elles voulaient plus voir le portrait d'un homme, y avait déjà quatre-cinq enfants dans leurs pieds. Ventres et cartables vides. Patience des misérables et mâchoires contractées au guichet des Allocations familiales. (Pineau, 1996a: 14-15)

Still, Eliette feels cheated by life. She has learnt a great deal but has not managed to give meaning to her life. Despite it all she profoundly regrets that she never had children, taking the reader through her different relationships, each time hoping that this time, she would be lucky:

> Renélien et Hector m'avaient promis une famille. Et j'attendais, le ventre et les mains vides. J'ai attendu combien d'années... Regardé passer ma vie charriée comme grosses roches et petites feuilles dans la rivière du pont des Nèfles. Espéré l'embellie d'un autre ciel. (Pineau, 1996a: 11)

> Des pensées me venaient à la file et je me disais "Mon Dieu! pourquoi tu m'as envoyée sur cette terre? Dans ma vie, j'ai pas été mieux qu'une fleur sans parfum ni promesse de fruit, et à présent que je suis toute rassise et que l'heure approche où tu vas me retirer de ce monde, mon esprit ne se pose nul côté". (Pineau, 1996a: 64)

Pineau clearly demonstrates the complexity of human nature with its desire and contradiction. Eliette in a sense should have learnt better than to go over the past regretting the children she has never had, especially considering the poverty and great

unhappiness she has witnessed among those women 'lucky' enough to have been 'blessed' with children. Despite her observation and wisdom, Eliette has never been able to live her life to the full. In that sense L'espérance-macadam illustrates French Caribbean women's painful quest for happiness through love in all its contradictions.

Gender relations are largely absent from debates around *Négritude*, *Antillanité* and *Créolité*, silencing women's voices. Yet, through their novels French Caribbean women writers have brought concrete and complex issues out of the shadows. The centrality of French Caribbean women's quest for love in French Caribbean culture cannot be downplayed for has had a dramatic impact on French Caribbean society, and on French Caribbean women, as demonstrated above and in the statistical evidence shown in Chapter Four. French Caribbean women writers have also tackled 'race' relations in their writings, exploring at times the difficult relations between white French Metropolitans and black French 'Négropolitans', as in L'Exil selon Julia by Pineau (1996b), or considering the issue of 'race' relations through mixed marriages (or cross-cultural relationships) as in Condé's La vie scélérate (1987):

> Il ne fallait fréquenter ni les Blancs ni les Mulâtres. Les Blancs étant les ennemis naturels et les mulâtres d'odieux bâtards ayant hérité de l'arrogance de leurs pères et oublié qu'ils sortaient de ventres de négresses. (Condé, 1987: 13)

The complex interaction of gender and 'race' relations are beautifully illustrated in Pineau and Condé's novels, but totally absent from the well established French Caribbean masculinist theories of difference. Lamiot (1996: 78-81) clearly agrees with the fact that French Caribbean women writers have considerably enriched discussions based on French Caribbean identity and culture. Identity and culture are

not merely abstract concepts. Such concepts would not exist if it were not for human relations. Abstract theories are thus brought to life in French Caribbean women's novels. Lamiot (1996: 81) sees Condé's novels as effective propaganda because of Condé's exeptional understanding of human nature:

> les textes des romans depuis *Hérémakhon* jusqu'à *La Colonie du nouveau monde*, invitent à la reconnaissance de la nécessité inévitable d'une prise de conscience de l'espèce humaine. Les héros y font, bon gré, mal gré, l'apprentissage de la dimension inéluctablement politique de leur existence. (...) Il ne s'agit plus tant de se demander si et comment ses romans sont engagés en un sens sartrien (...), mais plutôt de chercher comment ils parviennent à procurer le sentiment qu'ils agissent, sont eux-mêmes ce passage à l'acte que les écrits de propagande ne font que recommander. (Lamiot, 1996: 78)

Humanist vision of French Caribbean identity

Penser la créolité, edited by two women, Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, includes many contributions by women writers on the issue of *Créolité*.[137] The book engages therefore with the views of the French Caribbean *créolistes*, providing a critical reading of *Créolité*. The fact that Penser la créolité is edited by two women and that the opening chapter is that of James Arnold (1995) 'The gendering of créolité', could be read as a deliberate attempt by the two editors to carve a place for women in French Caribbean theoretical discourse. Condé's status as a well established writer enables her to give credibility and weight to projects such as the one of Penser la créolité. French Caribbean women writers had already been contributing to debates on 'Caribbeanness' before the publishing of that more obvious

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[137]Not all women writers in that book are French Caribbean or black. They do nonetheless provide an interesting exploration of the concept of *Créolité* as developped by Banabé *et al*.

theoretical critique of French Caribbean identity. In <u>Penser la créolité</u> many references to the work of Maryse Condé can indeed be found with regards to French Caribbean identity.[138]

Maryse Condé's work reflects a humanist perspective on the world, for she rejects the need to root French Caribbeanness in any way, opting for openness and multiplicity (Arauja, 1996: 10). As such she has challenged ideas of French Caribbean identity (especially from *Négritude* to *Créolité*) as well as considering French Caribbean gender relations. She provided a different outlook on French Caribbean theory of difference, for it is through the lives of her characters that French Caribbean identity is approached and re-negotiated. In that sense, as mentioned above, French Caribbean identity in Condé's novels is no longer an abstract concept, but becomes much more alive as Condé's stories unfold.

Through two of her novels (*Hérémakhonon* and *Une saison à Rihata*) Condé shows quite clearly the remotness of *Negritude*, showing how Africa cannot fill the gap in French Caribbean people's sense of where they come from and of who they are. Indeed, in *Hérémakhonon* and *Une saison à Rihata* Condé recounts the respective encounter of two French Caribbean women with Africa, which leaves them more alienated and empty than prior to their arrival. Africa cannot be a replacement home for the alienated islanders (Shelton, 1990: 351). Africa is not a home to go back to, nor is Metropolitan France. Although Condé has rejected *Négritude*, she has not

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[138] Balutansky, K. (1995) 'Créolité in question: Caliban in Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove'*, pp. 101-112; Sourieau, M-A. (1995) '*La vie Scélérate* de Maryse Condé: Métissage narratif et héritage métis', pp. 113-124; Lamiot, C. (1995) 'Maryse Condé, la république des corps, pp. 275-288; Condé, M. (1995) 'Chercher nos vérités', pp. 305-310, in Condé, M. and Cottenet-Hage, M. (eds.) <u>Penser la créolité</u> -Paris: Karthala.

broken her tie with Africa as was once thought. Africa remains an important part of French Caribbean history and culture, just as mainland France (Cottenet-Hage, 1996: 163). It is essentially the essentialism in *Négritude* and *Créolité* that Condé has criticised. She also acknowledges 'blackness' for her writings have also been centred around black US communities and concerned with white/black relations in the US, notably in Moi,Tituba, sorcière noire de Salem (1986). Whilst she rejects *Négritude* in her novels, she is also quite critical of *Créolité* (Condé. 1995: 310):

> L'écrivain antillais n'est plus natif-natal et donc n'est plus créole au sens où on l'entendait au XVIIIe siècle..et dans l'*Eloge de la créolité*. N'y-a-t-il pas des versions multiples de l'antillanité? Des acceptations nouvelles de la créolité?[139]

In her concern for plurality Condé rejects the idea of authentic creole culture, for she does not consider culture to be in any way fixed (Cottenet-Hage, 1996). Condé sees *Créolité* as over rigid and as such as uncharacteristic of French Caribbean culture and French Caribbean people's experiences:

> Ils (Chamoiseau, Confiant and Barnabé) semblent penser qu'il y a sous les décombres un "soi" antillais pur, sans mélange, comme si les deux termes "pur" et "antillais" ne formaient pas un paradoxe. (...) Condé, quoique moins "théorisante" que Chamoiseau, Confiant et Barnabé se montre plus sensible qu'eux au contexte intellectuel et idéologique de l'époque, plus consciente du questionnement que l'on fait subir à la notion de "sujet". Selon Condé, ce que les femmes noires, du moins celles qui écrivent, expriment est très différent de ce qu'expriment les hommes. (Cottenet-Hage, 1996: 209)

As mentioned above, Condé's rejection of *Négritude* and *Créolité* has largely been on the grounds of rigidity and essentialism. In her writings she explores French

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[139]Condé, M. 'Chercher nos vérités' in Condé, M & Cottenet-Hage, M. (eds.) Penser la créolité -Paris: Karthala, 1995.

Caribbean identity, but she does so through the lives of individuals, with their own sets of problems, desires and in their own context. As such, she further demonstrates the need to go beyond the rigidity of categorisation. Whilst she engages with gender relations and 'race' relations, she does not feel she can speak on behalf of the oppressed for it could lead to gross over-generalisation (Hewitt, 1996: 55):

> Ce qu'il y a peut-être de plus salutaire dans la façon qu'ont les récits de Maryse Condé de critiquer les oppositions concernant sexe, politique et race, c'est qu'ils maintiennent ces termes *en action*: aucun cliché n'est épargné, aucune position ne se fige en une vérité univoque. On trouve dans ses œuvres de multiples vérités, toutes partiales et toutes temporaires.

As such Condé engages with the multicultural and the plural. She could be seen to share Touraine's conceptualisation of the subject, or maybe even that of Yuval-Davis, both outlined in Chapter Three. Plurality is central to Condé's work. She not only recognises the need to understand our differences, she also encourages diversity. Greater diversity might be a way forward in stamping out binary opposition such as man-woman, black-white, rich-poor etc. According to Hewitt (1996), Lamiot (1996), Cottenet-Hage (1996), Pfaff and Praeger (1996), Condé's work illustrates the complexity of human nature and as such is very nuanced. She is nonetheless very political in that she does not stand for injustice of any sort, as explained by Hewitt, (1996: 55):

> si Maryse Condé montre bien qu'il n'y a pas d'essence noire, blanche ou féminine, elle montre également que les préjugés qui nourrissent les stéréotypes perpétuent les injustices, les inégalités, le racisme et le sexisme.

Far from not engaging with French Caribbean identity and culture, it has been demonstrated that French Caribbean women writers have not only engaged with

French Caribbean theories of difference (and most particularly Condé), but French Caribbean women writers have also extended the debate, making it more inclusive of gender and 'race' relations.

However, the problem that faces French Caribbean women writers does not stop with a masculinist vision of French Caribbean identity. Indeed, whilst these women are French, they are somehow absent from general French feminist writings. This in many ways relates to the first section of the chapter where the concepts of invisibility/visibility are introduced. As some French Caribbean women writers, such as Maryse Condé (1990)[140] and Gisèle Pineau (1995)[141] have described themselves as both feminist and French Caribbean, their absence from mainstream French feminist literature needs to be explained.

French feminism, 'race' and Whiteness

There are a few women's organisations in the islands with a feminist agenda. These are however relatively small and apparently unknown by French Metropolitan feminists. Whether there is a lack of adequate funding preventing them from gaining more recognition in the Metropole, or whether Metropolitan feminists do not feel concerned by French Caribbean women islanders, it is impossible for me to know. These issues have to be explored. Whilst going to the French Caribbean islands was

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[140]Cf. the interview of Maryse Condé with Ghila Benesty-Stroka in Identités Nationales -Montréal: Les Editions de la pleine lune.

[141]Pineau, G. (1995) 'Ecrire en tant que Noire' in Condé, M. & Cottenet-Hage, M. (eds.) Penser la créolité -Paris: Karthala, pp. 289-296.

not a possibility, I tried to contact the French Ministry of Women's Rights regarding women organisations in the islands, but received no reply. My hypothesis that French Caribbean gender issues were marginalised, even in the context of *parité*, was nonetheless verified by a woman working for the *Conseil Regional of Guadeloupe* at the *Comparing 'Colonialisms' in the Caribbean in the 21st Century* conference in London (April 6, 2000).[142] Furthermore, whilst I am aware that French Caribbean women's organisations exist in the islands, the point is that they are not visible enough. The situation is very similar in the Metropole where French Caribbean organisations, whilst quite numerous, do not seem to count any French Caribbean *women's* organisations among them, are not always well known, and many are much more orientated towards young people.[143]

It is nonetheless legitimate to think that gender relations are of concern to French Caribbean women, since they have bought in such numbers the books of Maryse

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[142]Mme. Raqui Rose-Lee (see Appendix A) confirmed that there seem to be very little in the way of gender relations based studies by French Caribbean researchers. Besides a handful of studies by Metropolitan based researchers (such as for example Gautier, A., 1994; and Mulot, S., 1998), French Caribbean gender relations do not appear to be an area of concern.

[143]Mme. Martin, documentalist for the *Agence Nationale pour l'insertion et la promotion des Travailleurs d'outre mer* (ANT) was very helpful in giving me a list of French Caribbean organisations in the Paris region together with their main activities. Many phone numbers and addresses had however, either changed or indicated the organisation had folded. ANT replaced the BUMIDOM in the early 1980s, a move away from organised migration and much more towards a service to help the integration of French Caribbean communities. That status changed in the early 1990s in that no longer could they directly provide support for these communities. Its main role nowadays is to provide placements for young French Caribbean islanders desiring to train in the Metropole. The change is its status has resulted in much of their previous work being taken over by the organisations themselves and thus explains why the information on these organisations may be out of date. Mme Pau-Lagevin, director of ANT explains in her introduction of the day conference "Les Associations d'Originaires d'Outre-Mer Acteurs de la Solidarité", June 2, 1998:

> Depuis quelques années, [l'ANT] n'intervient plus guère pour la prise en charge directe des personnes éprouvant des difficultés ni pour exercer à l'égard des structures de droit commun la fonction qui était la sienne précédemment. Cette fonction dans la lutte contre l'exclusion (...) est donc revenue aux associations [...] mal connues, malgré leur travail de terrain. (p. 8; p. 9)

Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart.[144] Some French Caribbean women novelists, such as Condé (1990) and Pineau (1995), have never hidden their feminist agenda. This thus demonstrates that the lack of research in French Caribbean gender relations does not come from a lack of interest. Gender relations have been an issue in French Caribbean women's literature for quite some time. This perhaps also reflects the fact that French academic disciplines tend to be more distinct from one another than those from the UK or the US, where it is indeed more acceptable, and even sometimes actively encouraged to do inter-disciplinary research projects. In a similar light, Gisèle Pineau (1995) explains how important it is to write about the experiences of black French Caribbean people in the suburbs of the Metropole, for when she was a child she was only introduced to French Metropolitan white writers (the 'classics'), writings that she could not always relate to. In fact, Anglo-American black writers were of great inspiration to her. Writing as a *black* French person is thus important to her, as well as writing as a *black* French *woman* :

> Des Noirs [grands auteurs noirs americains] qui parlaient de leur condition de Noirs, le plus souvent confrontés à un monde de Blancs. Je me reconnaissais partout dans ces lignes-là, venues d'Afrique ou d'Amerique. (1995:291)

> Dire, fouiller, raconter encore et encore l'existence de ces femmes noires déchirées par les hommes, trompées, violées debout malgré tout, n'est ni vain ni obsolète. (1995: 292) (...) Les femmes de mes nouvelles et romans (...) ne sont pas des modèles de vertu, d'abnégation et de soumission. Certaines se rebellent, attendent l'homme ou vivent seules avec des souvenirs d'amour cachés. (1995: 293)

Despite their engagement with and their portrayal of other French women's condition, French Caribbean women writers have not been included in the literature of French

feminist theories. In fact their invisibility relates to that of black women in general as described in the words of Heidi Safia Mirza (1997: 4):

> The invisibility of black women speaks of the separate narrative constructions of race, gender and class: in a racial discourse, where the subject is male; in a gendered discourse, where the subject is white; and a class discourse, where race has no place. It is because of these ideological blind spots that black women occupy a most critical place.

Heidi Safia Mirza's words are indeed very relevant to the situation of the construction of French feminist theories that, whilst inclusive of class, are not really engaged with other social structures such as 'race'. Differences among French women were nonetheless pointed out by some (anti-*parité*) feminists during the *parité* campaign of the 1990s. However, there is no real articulation of gender and 'race' in French critical theories, not in the same way as it has been developed in the US and in the UK. Whilst contextualisation is important, the literature by French Caribbean women and their own positioning make it quite clear that the intersection gender/ 'race' is worth investigating, for Condé (1990: 191) does state herself her different standpoint as a black French Caribbean woman:

> Une féministe noire n'est pas une féministe blanche et la conception négro-africaine du couple est très différent de celle des Blancs.

Whether these French Caribbean black women writers constitute the beginning of a 'black French feminism' remains to be seen. Such a categorisation would be problematic in so far as a 'black category', or black ethnicity is not formally recognised. There would also be the question of definition: what constitutes black

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[144]I know that these books were popular among the French Caribbean women I met in Paris. It is quite possible that these books are as appealing to French Caribbean women living in the islands.

French feminism? Would it only be inclusive of French black women with a feminist agenda, risking further emphasis on biological differences? Such questions are in fact explored by Collins (1991) with regard to African-American women. She does acknowledge that being black and being a woman results in different experiences from those of white women, and that this may lead to different expectations and may or may not lead to the development of a separate consciousness. She does however rightly point out that black women do not all experience racism in the same way, for social status varies (1991: 24). There are therefore 'core themes' among black women writers, such as for example the 'struggle', which reflects their problematic positioning of belonging in a white world that forever tries to exclude them, attempts to construct a self-defined standpoint in the face of dominant ideologies that are forever trying to suppress more marginal or marginalised standpoints, as well as raising consciousness (Collins, 1991: 23-26). These issues are not all present in all black women's writings and should not constitute a rigid rule as to what should be included and what should not. Furthermore, she argues that black feminism should not be exclusive of other writers, whether male, female, white or black. It should encompass the works (and actions) of people contributing to "a self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualise a humanist vision of community" (Collins, 1991: 39).[145] In this way, the excluded can begin to build coalitions which can fight oppression and marginalisation.

Whilst there is little consensus as to what constitutes feminism, French feminism and black feminism, it is clear that there are many forms of feminism. It is however

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[145]Here, a humanist vision refers to the "wider struggle for human dignity and empowerment" (Collins, 1991: 37).

crucial that French feminists engage with French Caribbean women's writings and concerns. A black feminist agenda may be emerging, however, this is also spatialised in that the agenda of French Caribbean feminist islanders is in some ways different from that of French Caribbean feminists of the Metropole. For example Condé has essentially written on gender issues in the islands, but also on the relationships between the Metropole and the islands. She is indeed active in the promotion of independence in the Caribbean in her novels (1990: 193):

> Comme les questions de liberté et de révolte me préoccupent beaucoup, je me suis demandé que faire, dans un pays comme le nôtre, en Guadeloupe, pour accélérer l'indépendance, alors j'ai imaginé une Tituba marronne qui revient animer la révolte (...) je crois aussi qu'un jour les Antilles seront libres.[146]

Condé, despite her emigration to the US where she teaches, is still very much attached to the islands and their independence, and sees feminism as a much wider project similar to that described above by Collin (1991). Her views are not shared by all. Most islanders do not really welcome independence, for the economic position of the islands is not believed to be strong enough. Furthermore, as mentioned before, the children of French Caribbean immigrants do not all relate to the islands, and as such may not feel concerned by issues of independence. The existence of at least one anti-racist black women's organisation in France (MODEFEN)[147] demonstrates further the fact that not only can we speak of the establishment of coalitions among black people (as demonstrated earlier), but also among black women. In an issue of Hommes et Migrations in 1990, Philippe Dewitt interviewed Lydie Dooh-Bunya, the then

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[146]Cf. Condé M. Moi, Tituba, sorcière noire de Salem -Paris: Mercure de France, 1986.

[147]Mouvement pour la défense des droits de la femme noire.

president of the above organisation.[148]   She was of the opinion that there was a particular sexism experienced by black women, and that they all more or less shared experiences of racist discrimination.   For example, she denounced the stereotypical images used to describe black women in Metropolitan France.   Also, in the light of the particular conditions of the women migrants exposed in the previous chapter, one has to accept that racist discrimination renders these women increasingly vulnerable. In Metropolitan France, racist discrimination adds to their already somewhat precarious position and their lack of vertical mobility.   Dooh-Bunya also felt that whilst Metropolitan feminists had been able to support the fight against female genital mutilation, and as such did demonstrate a certain solidarity among women, their solidarity did not stretch to encompass other issues (such as racism) of particular concern to black women living in France:

> (...) nous pouvions avoir à leur poser d'autres questions qui concernent les femmes noires: le racisme dans le travail, le logement ou à l'école, lorsqu'on refuse nos enfants ou quand nos enfants sont assassinés (...). On peut regretter que toutes les femmes ne soient pas plus solidaires face à ces violations des droits, ou au moins ne le montrent pas plus par des actions diverses (Dooh-Bunya, 1990: 44).

Although this interview dates to over ten years ago, it seems that there has been little change.   French black women are still largely excluded from French feminist writings. French feminism can thus be defined as racialised.

Chapter Two demonstrates that feminists in France (such as Colette Guillaumin, 1998 and Rita Thalmann, 1998) and outside of France (such as Cathy Lloyd, 1998) have commented on the fact that feminism and anti-racism have many links (in fact going

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[148]Hommes et Migrations, No. 1131, April 1990, pp. 43-48.

as far back as the 18th century to Olympe de Gouges). Despite some important

contributions in the field of gender and 'race' by French feminists, and despite the

numerous discussions around *parité*, proportional representation and quotas, 'race'

remains marginal to French feminist research and theory. The very fact that *parité*

advocates promoted *parité* as something very different from quotas and proportional

representation closed the door to the inclusion of other social categories in the debate.

There remains an important desire to consider women as the principal social group, in

spite of French feminists' acknowledgement that different women do not experience

their subordination in the same way. A meeting of French feminists organised by

ANEF over these issues took place in June 1997. Whilst absences were commented

upon, there was no cohesion in the outcome of the conference. The Anglo-American

feminists were more than once qualified as the antithesis of the French republican

way (Pheterson, 1998; Kandel, 1998) which represented a refusal to go down the

'blind alley' of multiculturalism:

> Je précise tout de suite qu'en disant [que l'on ne "devient" jamais
> seulement, uniquement, exclusivement femme mais bien d'autres
> choses encore et que ces autres dimensions ou manières d'être ne se
> reduisent pas a l'identité de genre], je ne cherche en aucun cas à
> promouvoir un quelconque "multi-culturalisme féministe" qui
> prendrait en compte les "diversités ethniques" (comme on dit) des unes
> et des autres et les juxtaposait dans un hypocrite "respect des
> différence" (Kandel, 1998: 43).

The issue of cultural difference (the French prefer such a terminology, rather than

bringing attention to physical differences by using concepts of 'race' or ethnicity) and

the importance of universalism was also raised (Thalmann, 1998: 19-20) to warn

people of the dangers of 'cultural differentialism':

> (...) il appartient aux chercheuses féministes que nous sommes d'unir et d'intensifier nos efforts pour lier davantage la spécificité et l'universalisme afin d'éviter le piège que l'histoire du passé démontre abondamment. A savoir que tout enfermement dans la spécificité, dans l'accentuation des différences ouvre un boulevard aux mouvements nationalistes, populistes et racistes en tous genres dont la France ne se trouve pas moins menacée que d'autres pays dans un monde en crise.

The issue of equality/difference or universality/specificity remains a very important one in French feminist discourse. Not simply around sexual differences, but also around cultural and social differences. This section explores the issue of socio-cultural difference through the consideration of 'whiteness' among women within French and non-French feminist perspectives and proposes that whatever the problems French feminists may have with the consideration of a French "feminist multiculturalism" (Kandel, 1998: 43), the absence of 'whiteness' and 'blackness' from French feminist theory prevents French feminism from being completely ridden of racism for "not doing anything in a racist system implies complicity" (Pheterson, 1998: 63).[149]

This section explores why French feminists should engage with theories of 'whiteness' in a step closer to fully understanding existing racialised and gendered power relations. White French feminists have yet to really acknowledge the relatively advantageous positions they hold in French society as a result of the intersection of 'race' and gender.[150] Furthermore, as has been mentioned above, the lack of

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[149] It is important to note that whilst Gail Pheterson was present at the conference organised by ANEF around feminism, anti-racism and antisemiticism, her contribution reflected her trajectory. She was brought up in the US and then lived for fifteen years in the Netherlands before coming to France. Her very important contribution emphasises therefore the very distinctly French problem that constitutes the resistance to the development of a racialised feminism in France.

[150] White French feminists fail to recognise that it is the combination of both their gendered and racialised (whiteness) positions that allow them to construct the feminist discourse they have constructed.

engagement with black Feminist writings reinforces further the 'whiteness' of mainstream French feminism, and so the absence of French Caribbean feminists from French feminist discourse remains unnoticed. Their invisibility, both physical and theoretical from feminist gatherings and/or publications directly challenges the definition of French feminism as well as the belief by some French feminists that there is a distinct core feminist project (Quiminal, 1997), and that there should be enough flexibility to,"every now and then," consider 'race' and ethnicity:

> Peut-être que (...) nous nous sommes refusées jusqu'à présent a penser les évènements qui ne s'inscrivent pas directement [dans la pensée de la domination partiarcale]. Je n'y vois pas d'inconvénient pour ma part, à condition que cela *soit dit*. (...) qu'il y a parfois incompatibilité sinon conflit entre les unes et les autres et que nous avons alors à nous "schiser" suivant les lieux et les interlocuteurs (Kandel, 1998: 43).

Surely such a view would not provide an environment free enough from existing dominant ideologies. Whilst Kandel appears to make the point that feminists need to understand that gender relations alone do not determine our situation, as mentioned above, she is not prepared to discuss the possibility of a French "feminist multiculturalism" either. Gender relations cannot be successfully challenged if feminists are not sensitive enough to other socio-cultural dynamics. An important section of the population would remain subordinated for power would remain in the hands of a minority, whose dominant ideologies would persist.

Chapter Two outlines the *parité* debate and brought out some contentious points, notably the fact that whilst *parité* advocates promoted *parité* as the path to "real equality" between men and women, they refuse to consider the issue of power. Some French feminists, mentioned earlier, notably Trat and Varikas pointed out that *parité*

was not and could not resolve the issue of power between men and women, let alone other axes of exclusion. Acknowledging to some degree the fact that social interactions are indeed complex, *parité* advocates nonetheless kept to their argument. They indeed emphasised the fact that due to the very complexity of social interactions, it was not possible to consider every case of exclusion; legitimising their argument in pragmatism, and by extension, legitimising an exclusively white perspective. *Parité* advocates have thus based their claim on the fact that since one cannot look after everyone else's interests, one can but look after one's own. Whilst *parité* does not equate with feminism, many feminists have indeed backed it up, promoting yet again a feminism for white women only.

Black feminists in the US were instrumental in making white feminists understand that they were not located on the same axes of power. In France, whilst French Caribbean, African, North-African and other non-white feminists exist, there has been very little dialogue between white and black feminists on this issue. Yet, for women to be liberated and empowered, there needs to be an appreciation that we are all gendered, but also racialised; in other words, we are all located on different axes of power according to our sex and our phenotype or colour. Depending on what is more valued, the characteristics mentioned will determine our location according to mainly external reference points. The generally most valued position is that of the white, middle-class man. There could of course be other characteristics used to refine the most valuable point of reference such as heterosexual, or straight, wealthy or poor, physically able or not etc. Nonetheless for the purpose of the argument I will concentrate on gender and 'race' to demonstrate the shortcomings of the French feminist perspective. For equal opportunity to really exists, as promised and

guaranteed by the French constitution, power relations need to be acknowledged and understood, before they can be changed. French feminists have however been reluctant to consider their position as white women. Yet the work of Thalmann (1998) on feminism and antisemitism demonstrates that there is a platform for further debates and discussions on the issue of power between women of different ethnic origins. Furthermore Guillaumin, although not in so many words, also suggests that a colour-blind framework can trick feminists into being racist, without necessarily always realising it:

> L'arrogance raciste a une série de conséquences, dont d'aveugler les femmes vis-à-vis les unes des autres. Cette arrogance est l'expression d'un rapport de force où certains groupes sont à la merci d'autres groupes. Et les femmes appartiennent à ces groupes, à tous et à chacun de ces groupes. (...) Or l'arrogance raciste s'exprime précisément dans le déni du rapport de force lui-même et dans le déni des effets du rapport de force (Guillaumin, 1998: 11).

Whilst Guillaumin clearly recognises the relevance and importance of power relations that determine the opportunities of certain women, she does not explicitly recognise the importance of 'whiteness', nor does she explicitly place white French feminists within a racialised category. Furthermore, her lack of positionality brings her closer to Kandel's argument against a French "feminist multiculturalism":

> Il est tout à fait erroné, il me semble, de dire "en tant que femme ET en tant que x, z ou n". Car ce sont les relations de pouvoir entre groupes qui imposent l'idée d'une telle coupure. Un être humain est un, conscience et sujet pour lui-même. Il peut avoir à faire face à des situations conflictuelles ou complexes, mais c'est autre chose qu'une conscience multiple: lui-même est un sujet unique (Guillaumin, 1998: 13).

French feminists, the majority of whom are white, have not yet really been able to acknowledge their positioning, either in French society or in terms of their theorisation of gender relations. Whilst a few, named above, recognised the importance of power relations, it is legitimate to say that it has not been the tradition in French feminism to consider other axes of power outside patriarchal domination, to paraphrase Rita Thalmann and Liliane Kandel mentioned above. And this, despite the many links between the development of anti-racism and feminism. These feminists have nonetheless shied away from the idea of a universal sisterhood, especially as a result of their research on anti-Semitism and feminism and in response to *parité*. Nonetheless black feminist writings (notably French Caribbean) remain absent from their research and their discourse. 'Whiteness' as a racialised category, rather than as an "absence of colour" has not (yet?) filtered through to French feminism. Vron Ware (1992) and Chris Weedon (1999) call for the necessity of white women (and feminists) to understand the fact that not only do they benefit from racism but they also actively promote it:

> Viewed from a white perspective, the invisibility of whiteness as a racialized category in the Western world often makes it difficult for those white people who benefit from racism to realize their part in maintaining the status quo (Weedon, 1999: 154).

It is the invisibility of 'whiteness' as a racialised category that enables the promotion of racist ideologies, without women necessarily being aware of it. In many ways the absence of 'whiteness' from French feminist theory has allowed, and continues to do so, the promotion of a racist ideology. The exclusion and absence of other voices has indeed contributed to the development of a lopsided literature on feminism in France,

wrongly based on the assumptions that the concerns of all French women equate with the white French feminist focus on patriarchy (Pheterson ,1998: 63).

The importance of 'colour blindness' in France cannot be emphasised enough. Chapter One demonstrates how the republican principles of unity and indivisibility have shaped gender and 'race' relations in France. It has also pointed to many parallels between the construction of a gendered and racialised citizenship, parallels that are highlighted again in this chapter around the anti-racist and feminists movements in France. In anti-racist and feminist discourses similar themes are found, namely equality and difference. Whilst these issues have been raised by Anglo-American theorists in many different fields, and are not exclusively French as such, the issue of equality and difference has nonetheless resulted in a distinctly French model of exclusion; where racism is legitimised and protected by principles of *égalité* and equal citizenship, all echoed in feminist discourses.

4) Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate the invisibility of French Caribbean communities in French society, in French academic research, and most notably in French feminist theory. This conclusion is also evident from Chapter Three, and from other contemporary debates on integration and multiculturalism. The exclusion of French Caribbean issues reflects the republican belief in a civic society made up of abstract citizens who together comprises an organic, indivisible whole. This

discourse is itself exclusive in its effects and in the social practices which surround it. This chapter has explored this process of exclusion critically in three ways.

First, exclusion is a legacy of assimilationist policies (discussed briefly in Chapter One and more fully in Chapter Four). As such it reflects neo-colonial racist ideologies. The assumption that the only way to deal with difference is to absorb it into one whole is a problem in French republicanism which has been widely remarked on. But it has particular effects when related to particular groups. The particular effects with respect to French Caribbean women have been explored in some detail in the thesis as a whole. The central issue, however, is the failure to recognise difference rather than the question of how difference can be 'better' accommodated. It is the failure to construct a discourse in which differences receive genuine recognition *as differences* that is at issue here.

Secondly, and following from the above, this chapter has argued that whilst this invisibility exists, racial discrimination will continue to go unnoticed. As mentioned in Chapter Three the refusal to consider 'race' and ethnicity officially does not easily allow for research into discrimination, for example, in employment or housing. Whilst French Caribbean people are absent and invisible in official discourses, this chapter shows that in practice they are discriminated against on the basis of their visibility (skin colour). The experience of living as a black French citizen, which the thesis has recorded through a variety of detailed sources, thus suggests that despite stricter anti-racist laws, racism remains pervasive. There is a form of double penalty here, in that French Caribbean people are at once penalised through their invisibility

and penalised in being visible; for French Caribbean women this double penalty is multiplied further.

Finally, this chapter shows that whilst invisible from French social theory, and often still from multicultural theory, French Caribbean theorists and writers strongly challenge the racist hegemonic discourse. French Caribbean theories of difference, anthropological and socio-cultural research (notably by Galap and Marie), and the work of French Caribbean women writers, all demonstrate a rich and complex field of research into 'French Caribbeanness' and 'blackness'. Yet, French Caribbean work remains at the margins of French academic research. It appears as a narrow kind of book-keeping of the relations between the Metropole and its Caribbean islands, known to few and very little used in wider discussion, whilst in the Metrople, such history tends to be 'forgotten', assimilated into 'French (Metropolitan) history. How can we gain an adequate understanding of 'race' relations in such a context? French Caribbean women's work needs to be more easily available and distributed. This implies availability in libraries' catalogues, filed under specific research topics such as 'social science', 'feminist research', 'politics' (or why not as 'Caribbean studies'?) rather than being catalogued under African studies. The existence of French Caribbean writings therefore strongly challenges the assumed 'whiteness' of the Republic through the development of 'French Caribbeanness' and 'blackness' both in the Metropole and in the islands. Furthermore, whilst 'French Caribbeanness' and 'French blackness' provoke great cultural debates among French Caribbean theorists and writers, black French activists (for example the *Collectif Egalité*) in the Metropole have recently become more vocal in claiming that French people are racist

and that black French people do not enjoy the same opportunities as white French people.

The exploration of French Caribbean theories of difference (i.e. the discussion above of *Négritude, Antillanité* and *Créolité*) demonstrates the very strong ties that still exist between the Metropole and the French Caribbean islands. Even demands for greater recognition of a French black ethnicity by anti-racist activists (notably *Collectif Egalité*) is not one promoting divisions of any sort between black French Caribbean (as well as other black people) and white French or supporting any separatist movements in the French Caribbean islands. Demands for acknowledgement of a black French ethnicity is made in the name of a more complete future integration of black people into French society. The demand is for greater equality among all French citizens. They seek to look beyond cultural differences, and/or phenotypical differences, and seek to establish black French people as equal citizens with and not 'despite' their differences. But their claims are not taken seriously, as for example in television and the media or in the theatre. This chapter however also suggests that this argument could go beyond the relatively narrow worlds of arts and media to extend to black citizens in all contexts and in all circumstances.

This chapter points to French feminists' lack of engagement with the work of French Caribbean women writers, arguing that French feminist theory, despite its ambitions, fails to challenge the hegemonic racist discourse. This chapter further argues that racist ideology still lingers at the root of French feminist theory, not least in the form of the enduring power of republican mythology of impartiality on the French Left. Whiteness as it has been developed in Anglo-American research could prove a useful

conceptual tool to understand and tackle the racialisation of French feminist theory. As Weedon (1999) explains, it is only through an understanding and an acceptance of the social advantages that go with being white (and the corresponding implied disadvantages of being black) that white feminists will be able to enter a dialogue more fruitfully with black feminists and more adequately challenge 'race' relations.

Furthermore, not only are French Caribbean women ignored by French feminists; their work is also often ignored by French Caribbean male theorists and writers. This chapter thus argues that French Caribbean women are even more invisible than the French Caribbean community as a whole. Conceptions of *parité* therefore have little impact on their lives. This critique of the *parité* argument is one of the most important arguments in the thesis as a whole. Chapters Four and Five show how geographically, generationally and culturally diverse French Caribbean women's needs have been. French women from the islands do not encounter the same racist discrimination that French Caribbean women living in the Metropole experience for example. And French Caribbean women in different parts of France or of different ages have different experiences, as do those with and without children.

This chapter also strengthens the claim that in its legislative forms *parité* can be seen as colluding with racist discourses. This is because *parité* advocates ignored multiple power relations at play (see the detailed discussion in Chapter Two), never really considering the huge gaps separating French women of different backgrounds. By repeatedly refusing to consider 'race' relations, they (*parité* advocates) have tended to promote, advertise and legitimise racism. Even where they have considered some questions of 'race', they have not done so either in the context of a self-understanding

of their own 'whiteness' or through listening to or engaging with the work of Caribbean women themselves. Chris Weedon (1999: 155-156) herself, writing in an American context, labels as racist women and feminists who for one reason or another do not articulate a direct and explicit engagement with 'race' issues. This argument applies equally well to the subject of this study.

Chapter 6:

Conclusions

The thesis has argued that the debate on *parité* in France must be understood as part of an argument about social divisions and social solidarity in which 'race' and ethnicity figure as of equal importance. It has shown that when one asks this question in this way, inadequacies in the formulation of the concept of *parité* emerge clearly. The thesis explores the significance of the idea of multiculturalism and equality in France, and sets the understanding of *parité* in this context. This in turn suggests a critical reading of French feminist writing. That reading must be a cautious one: French feminist writing is broad and characterised by debates and divisions on a number of different dimensions, but it enables us to point to the inadequacy of much of that literature with respect to the experience of French Caribbean women in France. The interrogation of the enduring power of the republican tradition suggests one line of explanation to how this has arisen. But the thesis also suggests that there are other explanations within the French idea of citizenship and within ideas and experiences which are discussed amongst French feminist writers and activists. The thesis argues the 'inadequacy' of conceptions of equality, *parité* and multiculturalism. It does not seek to reject the ambitions, or the limited but important universal aspirations which lie behind the continuing struggle for these important goals, which can be of continuing importance to women where they can be achieved.

The thesis opened with a discussion of the question Alain Touraine (2000) poses: "how can we live together"? The underlying purpose of the study has been to explore

and critique those power relations in which French Caribbean women find themselves in a distinctive position of social and political disadvantage, and to seek to understand the significance of that disadvantage in terms of particular theories about the position of women in France. It has aimed to do so through a form of discourse analysis. At the same time and of equal significance in the thesis as a whole, feminist discourses (both written and spoken) and in particular the discourses advocated by feminists (including feminist activists) on 'race' and gender issues, seem to ignore or marginalize those women in particular. It is not simply the society at large which does so, and it seems particularly important in the light of the aspirations of feminist theories to enquire why this should be so. The situation and lived experience of French Caribbean women in France provide a crucial test here. Feminist writing has established a set of claims about inclusiveness and the integration of the individual in society, about the ways in which feminist thought helps to enable a greater subjectivity, and this suggests a sense of the criteria by which we might answer Touraine's question. The thesis seeks to critique, but not to reject, that broad and important body of work. But it does point to serious weaknesses in it. The failure to take account of the situation of a particular group of women in France is arguably serious in itself, but also contradicts the standards and forms of argument adopted by feminists themselves. Finding ways to develop community or mutuality is no doubt very fashionable in academic research both in France and in Anglophone debate, and in radical politics worldwide. This is very understandable in a more and more globalised world, and in a world where the more traditional concerns - class, employment, imperialism, consumerism - of 'left politics' have come under powerful critical scrutiny. Touraine points out that we already live together with our differences, and that we have often learned and adopted similar lifestyles

(food/clothes/material possessions). However, tensions between different socio-cultural groups remain and are often exacerbated by that very homogeneity. Inequalities and exclusions have not disappeared, and continue to be reproduced powerfully.

The failure of French feminist writing (especially that discussed in Chapters Two and Five) to find a way of thinking in an integrated way about gender, ethnicity, and the ways in which 'race' is constructed and reflected in discourse, is an important weakness. This goes beyond a failure to come to terms with the distinctive situation of French Caribbean women. It reflects ambiguities in the ways in which French feminisms (Allwood, 1998) have been negotiated and worked out in a republican tradition which is an important part of the problem. It also reflects weaknesses which arise from apparent contradictions in much feminist thought. But are these weaknesses fundamental failures? This thesis suggests that they get to fundamental problems; but not that they are fundamental failures which cannot be understood and worked through. The feminist tradition in France is rich and diverse. The ideas which have been inherited from Simone de Beauvoir, and which work through the literature which Allwood (1998) and others (for example Duchen, 1995) have explored are diverse, sometimes problematic, but potentially more inclusive than some of the practice of feminist thought might seem to admit. At the same time, French feminisms (reflected in the analysis in Chapter Three in particular) have special difficulties with ideas of multiculturalism which owe something to the republican context of the 'Left' in France, but also reflect, as that chapter shows, problems in the image of multiculturalism and its relatively unexplored nature. This thesis has sought to contribute to the search for explanations of why French feminisms have a difficulty

with multiculturalism, but it does not claim to have resolved that question, which is complex and culturally bounded as well as caught in specific power discourses.

It is possible to understand how this comes to operate in this way when one analyses the discourses which construct it and the power mechanisms which those discourses operate. But the weakness of feminist thought, the seduction back into the republican cave, which feminist writing in France has experienced, represents at best a failure of nerve and at worst a straightforward drive into the territory of racism. This is one of the main conclusions of the argument as a whole. French feminisms, no doubt unwittingly, but in significant ways, tend to construct Caribbean women's lives and experiences in ways which are - or tend towards - racist and non-inclusive (Ducoulombier, 2002). .

In this context, the thesis also raises the question of how we understand multiculturalism and how discourses of multiculturalism shape - perhaps sometimes unconsciously - the ways communities interact. Multicultural policies, affirmative action and anti-discriminatory laws have all been used to a stronger or lesser degree by various countries, including Australia, Canada, America, Sweden, and the UK, as well as France, in an attempt to resolve social problems. Multiculturalism is itself problematic, as Chapter Three suggests, but it also raises questions about how we see comparisons between social self-understandings of 'race' and gender. The thesis argues here that there is a fruitful dialogue to be had between Anglo-American and French political traditions. But it also suggests that while that dialogue is fruitful it is naïve and unhelpful simply to use the one as a criterion for assessing the other. The

thesis provokes a dialogue; but it does not claim that that dialogue in itself 'solves' problems which arise between Anglophone and Francophone discourses.

Parité in France was seen as a very particular strategy to remedy the extremely small number of women in political institutions. It is through a critique of *parité* that the issues of equality and difference have been approached in this thesis. This has also involved a fruitful comparison between French practice and experience and that in the UK and the US. French feminism, and French social thinking more broadly, fails to take up questions of anti-racism in the ways in which, for example, Yuval-Davis (1997a, 1998) suggests in her remarks on the value of a 'transversal politics'. Here, Touraine is interesting and important; but we should note how far he is also quite definitely unrepresentative of the main currents of thought, for he is closer to the Anglo-American literatures in raising these questions in the way he does. But his answers also lack precision; they fail to take account many of the gendered issues which the feminist writers put at the centre of their work; and they engage in universalising generalisations of a kind which the feminist literature treats with immense and justified caution.

This thesis has been particularly concerned with the exclusion of French Caribbean women writers from feminist discourses. This is initially a question of representation. But it does not stop at that point. For the failure to read French Caribbean women writers also neglects the opportunity to enrich existing thought and analysis. The exclusion of this group of authors and critics from the mainstream weakens the claims of many feminists to inclusivity. It calls into question the capacity of mainstream feminist argument, and *paritistes* in particular, to maintain the recognition of, and

respect for, difference which they claim to uphold. I have argued throughout the thesis that there are voices here that deserve to be heard, both because they are speaking and should not be silenced, and because what they have to say is in important ways original and striking. These voices come powerfully through the discussion in Chapters Four and Five, although they are a shaping force in the thesis as a whole. One of my main motives in approaching this topic was simply to let these voices speak, and I believe that the arguments in the first five chapters justify that position. It is worth reviewing how this argument has been developed more fully by referring to what each chapter has aimed to achieve. It stands as an important achievement of the thesis that the distinctive experience of these women is recognised as it has not been elsewhere. This includes a recognition of the distinctive patterns of subjugation which they record, and of their resistances and assertion of individuality and identity against those forces. Although the thesis is intended to focus on a critical reading of French feminist literature and argument, there is no intention here to suggest that it is French feminism which is the main source of the exclusion or repression of francophone Caribbean women in France, for clearly the other much more significant sources of domination are recognised, including patriarchy, male violence and economic and social marginalisation, as well as the other forces which exiles and migrants face.

1) Overview of principal objectives

In Chapter Two questions about the relative absence of 'race' relations from French feminist theory establish the direction of the thesis. Chapter Two investigates how

French feminists have on the whole tended to be concerned with sexual differences and inequalities between the two sexes rather than with differences among women, notably racialised differences, but also including other identity differences (jewishness and anti-semitism, among others). The lack of concern for racialised difference among advocates of *parité* is exposed, especially their claim that humanity is only really made of two very distinct sexual groups: women and men. The need to consider other socio-cultural differences in search for greater equality is demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five. These chapters show that French Caribbean women are experiencing their citizenship in very different ways to the ways other (white) Metropolitan French women do, in that once in the Metropole, their skin colour give them the status of outsiders. Furthermore, French Caribbean women are far from a homogeneous group, and these two chapters as well as Chapter Four outline that fact. Although the thesis does not engage with other social categories such as class, it tries to avoid the pitfalls of over generalising. French Caribbean women in the islands do not encounter racism in the way French Caribbean women living in the Metropole do. For the French Caribbean women I interviewed, *parité* was far less an issue than that of French Caribbean culture and identity and the desire for greater equality and recognition in the Metropole.

Chapter Three investigated attempts at multicultural policies in France and the problematic categorisation of French society into ethnic categories. The French debate on multiculturalism is characteristically very different, and on the whole much less developed, than it is in the US, Canada, Britain or Australia. But there is nonetheless a debate there which Chapter Three and subsequent discussion takes up. The conception of multiculturalism conflicts with ideas of universal citizenship and

republican identity, and there is some question of how possible it might be for republican institutions to recognise difference at all. But the picture which the chapter paints is not as simple as this, even though there remain powerful contradictions between ideas of inclusive multiculturalism, ideas of republican unity and ideas of multiculturalism based on the recognition of difference and the valuing of difference in itself. Chapter Three develops conceptions of difference from Chapter One and conceptions of diversity captured in the *parité* debate explored in Chapter Two. It thus extends the critique of *parité* from Chapter Two, and suggests that the French state has sought to adapt itself in the face of criticisms, recognising the importance of cultural differences while being unable to adapt very far to meet them. Never mind in terms of the conceptions of need identified here. For its critics, the implications of an acceptance of *parité* seemed to be wider quotas for ethnicity, as I have noted. But the implications of the discussions for multiculturalism and *parité* may have led many to shy away altogether from the idea of a greater recognition of multicultural difference, which was widely attacked. Debates on *parité* tended to resurrect debates on 'race' and identity much more broadly, especially in the late 1990s. The French state and the supporters of official discourses continued to find it impossible to recognise categories of black ethnicity or a distinctive black identity. Thus at the same time, *parité* and the multicultural debate tended to co-opt critical ideas but also to water them down in the process. Ultimately, *parité* has been preferred, perhaps as being more 'manageable' to a fuller acceptance of a more radical idea of multiculturalism. But the form of *parité* which this involved is a pale and very modest version of that which activists were seeking earlier in the 1990s.

Chapter Four takes up the idea that the relationship between the Metropole and the Caribbean communities has been constructed in a particular way, based historically and logically on a pattern of neo-colonial relationships and practices. This chapter elaborates how this process of construction has taken place, the discourses and power relations involved, and the long-term historical trajectory of their development. It contributes a sense of the deeply embedded character of the image of the Metropole-Caribbean relationship, and the key role of the French state as well as of important interest groups involved. Chapter Four shows the importance of the state in organising migration from the islands on a racialised and gendered basis, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, and suggests how this shapes the consequential self - and other - images in contemporary social relations. The state's role has been at once manipulative and exploitative (Giraud, 1991; 1997), with very significant implications for the construction of ideas of 'race', of 'whiteness' and of 'blackness', examined in Chapter Five. Chapter Four also demonstrates how the differences amongst French Caribbean women fail to be taken into account in the homogenising impact which ideas of *parité* have tended to have, especially in the context of a conception of citizenship which is itself gendered (Fraisse, 1994b, 1997; Lister, 1997). This was then further investigated in Chapter Five through an exploration of French Caribbean women writings, an analysis which pointed further towards the need to recognise differences among women.

Chapter Five develops and consolidates the arguments of the previous chapters through an examination of the invisibility of French Caribbean communities in French society, but also in French social theory. The chapter further examines the lack of consideration of French Caribbean theory and French Caribbean women's writings in

French feminist theory, arguing that such absences are revealing of the 'whiteness' of French feminism. And as *parité* is racist in its deliberate exclusion of ethnic minorities, Chapter Five demonstrates the extent to which French feminism can be seen to remain contained by a racist official republican discourse. As such Chapter Five questions the counter-hegemonic nature of the French feminist discourse and calls for greater cross-fertilisation between Anglo-American and French feminisms.

Another important contribution of Chapter Five is the consideration of French Caribbean fragmented identities. Through discussions of *Négritude, Antillanité* and *Créolité* Chapter Five demonstrates the complexity of French Caribbean discourses of difference, embedded in a wide variety of traditions. These explorations into French Caribbean identities bring out the tensions of trying to reconcile a colonial past rooted in 'Frenchness' with a desire to develop an identity reflecting the plurality of the islands. *Antillanité* and *Créolité* concentrated on the development of 'Caribbeanness', searching for an identity reflecting something other than the attachment to Metropolitan France, whilst *Négritude* sought a disembedded identity, ridden from association with colonialism and 'Frenchness'. Although French Caribbean discourses of difference are gendered (Arnold, 1995), a greater consideration of such discourses in French anti-racist and multicultural and feminist discourses could not but help the construction of a more inclusive French discourse of difference, developing a more inclusive forms of *mixité*.

This thesis calls for greater cross-fertilisation between discourses of difference, inclusive of Anglo-American and French Caribbean discourses in a bid for greater inclusiveness. Unlike multiculturalism, the concept of *mixité* was developed within a

French context and as such could make sense in the pursuit of a French discourse of difference, ridden of misconceptions as it has been the case with multiculturalism (Chapter Three). Bringing French Caribbean discourses of difference into the French context has been a crucial consideration of this thesis, for a French discourse of difference can only be conceivable if plurality is acknowledged in its most inclusive form.

Looking across the argument in the thesis as a whole, the case has been argued that Caribbean women living in France and in the French islands test both the theory of French feminism and the practice of republican citizenship in particular ways. Beyond these two critical arguments, can we say more about what their experience and their own social and artistic creations involve? Do they 'add up' to something more? Or are they only a basis for a critical response? Chapters One and Three have identified a number of arguments about this, and Chapters Four and Five have discussed the actual social practices experienced by individual women. The attempts to find labels for these experiences to capture the identities they form, through concepts of *Négritude, Antillanité, Créolité,* 'blackness' and so on, articulate some of the struggles involved. But they also demonstrate the divisions and uncertainties. A process of hybridisation is at work here, for, as the evidence in Chapter Four suggests, those women I talked to were increasingly no longer identifying directly with their islands and yet were not 'becoming French', either in their own eyes or to their French neighbours. But the process of hybridisation did not amount to the creation of clearly identifiable 'culture'. It involved more fragmented acts of resistance and of the assertion of the subject. But the form of hybridisation has not evolved to be either as self-conscious or as self-confident as writers such as Bhabba, anticipating the

emergence of a hybrid culture located on the boundaries of an innovative social space, would imagine. However one cannot (and must not) dismiss either the struggle or the culture of French Caribbean women in a search for authenticity through hybridity (see also advocates of *Créolité*). There is a small but significant literature, and a small but vigorous popular music with a certain influence on black and white music in Paris (such as Zouk music). But the women I talked to are living daily lives, not creating a high culture. And the culture they create in their lives is surely to be validated rather than marginalised or ignored.

The originality of the thesis lays in its consideration of French Caribbean women's experiences in the context of *parité*. The central argument is reflected in the structure of the thesis. Chapters Two, Four and Five constitute over half the body of the thesis and clearly demonstrate the invisibility and marginalisation of French Caribbean women in the French Caribbean islands as well as in French social theory. The absence of French Caribbean women (in the islands and in the Metropole) from French feminist concerns is illustrated in Chapter Five by the fact that French Caribbean women's writings and French Caribbean discourses of difference appear to constitute a separate body of work, one with very impermeable boundaries. Therefore the thesis claims that French feminist theory has not been able to break away from the exclusionary racist discourse suggested to define the official republican discourse.

In its original critique of *parité* the thesis calls for a greater consideration of socio-cultural differences in French feminist theory. It clearly shows that *parité* means different things to different women. The consideration of *parité* was also instrumental in challenging the counter hegemonic nature of the French feminist

discourse, for whilst *parité* was not supported by all French feminists, it was by a strong majority. The centrality of the critique of *parité* has been further demonstrated in its relation to debates over identity, integration and ideas of multiculturalism. Interviews with French Caribbean women brought up concerns over French Caribbean identity and what it means to be both French *and* black in French society. These interviews also revealed that *parité* was at worst of no consequence to them and at best an open door for the consideration of ethnic quotas.

Throughout the research and the writing of the thesis particular issues began to emerge. These are related to the overall topic of the thesis, but they also constitute specific points worth considering separately. Although sexual and racial differences are usually understood and examined in a socio-cultural context, this thesis has demonstrated that the physical characteristics that distinguish men from women and whites from non-whites are used as indicators of differentiation and exclusion. Acknowledging the body and physical differences appeared thus an important consideration. However, accepting our differences, physical, social and cultural, calls for greater tolerance and acceptance of the Other. The work of Butler, Laclau, Touraine and Yuval-Davies on these issues became increasingly important. And finally, questions of accountability became more pressing as the project evolved, especially in the context of *parité*. If *parité* is not the answer, then what could bring greater accountability to our democracies? How can the voices of the invisible be heard? These points deserve some attention.

2) Democracy & Tolerance

Wieviorka and Tourraine at the same time criticise and extend the multiculturalist debate, rejecting the more narrowly focused arguments of writers such as Kymlicka (1995, 1999) and pointing towards a more extensive and elaborate form of democracy which extends the principle of democratic accountability as a key ingredient. Yuval Davies (1997a, 1997b, 1998) equally explored the interface of multiculturalism and gender in order to reject an accepted idea of multiculuralism in order to promote an agenda of an enlarged and more inclusive form of democracy. Butler (1992, 1997, 2000), Laclau (2000) and Mouffe (1992a, 1992b) provide a basis for the development of a comparable argument. That is, that democracy as liberal representative democracy fails where significant groups are unrepresented or excluded in practice, and more inclusive political practices must start by listening to the excluded rather than by assuming that 'we' know what 'they' either want or need. The drive for a more inclusive democracy which informs their argument equally shapes the foundations of this thesis, and suggests how important the group of women studied are for a measure of the failure both of feminist ideas and of democratic practices, even if it is the case that they are few in number.

This raises a question of structure and agency: French Caribbean women are denied access to forms of power and forms of expression which take away their capacity for agency as a result of structural forms of domination. They cannot simply choose to act otherwise and then do so. But they do have a capacity for resistance and they do have some scope for agency. This does not arise simply or easily. It arises through struggle, but it also arises through consciousness. In the interviews, I have recorded

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that the women I spoke to were capable of a degree of reflexivity about their situation. It is not difficult to assert that they have particular needs and wants, and that they are able, at least some of the time, to find strategies to achieve some of those. None of this means that they are less the subject of forms of domination, but that they succeed in finding ways of resisting, of articulating a resistance and of sharing their resistance. Rather than generalise about this, I have often wanted to let these voices speak for themselves. Cathy Lloyd (1999) has argued that on the one hand the law against racism in France showed no sign of success and yet on the other black people appeared to be in some sense at least more recognised, more accepted, as the original imperial reasons for discrimination faded in majority consciousness (Lloyd, 1999: 49-50). This conjures up a picture, however, which this thesis seems also to point towards, one in which a hierarchy of discrimination emerges in which migrant peoples of different backgrounds and gender construct patterns of domination against each other. This picture appears to be born out by the experience of Caribbean women in France who, as a minority of minorities, are put lower in that hierarchy, and as women are placed below other women. It is for this reason that the possibility of a more open and democratic future for the women discussed in this thesis is so important: they appear to be the most marginalized of the marginalized in many respects, and therefore the most powerful touchstone of a failure of democracy as well as a failure of feminist approaches.

The concept of accountability was particularly evident at the international conference *Politics, Rights and Representation* (1999) in Chicago where theorists and activists discussed and compared ways of creating more accountability in the context of three

democracies: the US, France and South Africa.[151] Do identities, social categories

matter?; Can equality realistically be achieved, and if so, what would the social

categories be? Finally how can we assess the way changes happen (in terms of

greater equality)? Legislatures, courts, activism and NGOs were thus explored as

different means of seeking equality in the three different democracies. At the end of

the conference, 'accountability' seemed to be on everybody's mind. The presentation

of Thenjiwe Mtintso (1999), Deputy Secretary General of the African National

Congress was particularly striking.[152] She used herself as an example to illustrate the

problem of representivity and accountability. As an activist, she felt close to other

struggling black women in similar conditions. These days she had started to wonder

who she was representing, for her material situation had considerably improved with

her new status of Secretary General. She no longer felt she was able to represent the

same women as before and voice their needs, for no longer was she sharing those

needs. She also argued against the possibility of a universal sisterhood. Women

cannot simply represent other women. There are far too many differences between

white and black women for a generic sisterhood to be established. Furthermore, she

underlined that women from different places/cultures have different priorities:

> Whilst you white women bother with getting out of the kitchen, we (black
> South African women) are still concerned with getting a kitchen!
> (Thenjiwe Mtintso, 1999)

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[151] *Politics, Rights and Representation*, The University of Chicago, Center for Gender Studies, Illinois, October 14-17, 1999.

[152]Thenjiwe Mtintso (1999) 'Representivity: False Sisterhood or Women's Universal Interests (the South African Experience)'at the international *conference Politics, Rights and Representation*, The University of Chicago, Center for Gender Studies, Illinois, October 14-17.

This question is equally relevant to the position of French Caribbean women in France. It suggests that some of the debates in which French feminists have engaged is a luxury by comparison with the actual situation in which many women (and not just those of Caribbean origin) find themselves. It begs a question: who is accountable to whom, who represents whom, and on what grounds? Such questions did not get any concrete answers.

Parité in France was discussed at great length at the conference and the general idea was received with mixed feelings. As mentioned above, a few participants held the view that women could be represented by men.[153] The problem was that women tended to be seriously outnumbered in French political institutions. I have taken this issue up as a central argument in this thesis. The position I reached as a result of my research, recorded here, was that *parité* was highly problematic. This remains one of my major conclusions. I began as a supporter, but became increasingly sceptical. The discussion throughout the thesis tends to stress the inadequacy of *parité*, and Chapters Two and Three move from a consideration of *parité* to an advocacy of an enlarged form of *mixité*. They ask whether some French version of multiculturalism might be both a more appropriate conception intellectually and of more practical value. But *mixité* is itself vague and problematic, although it is at least capable of meeting the criteria of inclusiveness as well as that of representativeness, tests which *parité* fails. Thus the thesis succeeds in identifying weaknesses in existing discourses without necessarily succeeding in offering a replacement that I would claim to be completely satisfied with.

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[153]Karen Bird (1999) 'Gender Parity and the French Exception: the Integration of Universality and Difference'; Thenjiwe Mtintso (see note 160); Audrey Ducoulombier (1999) '*Parité*, 'Race' and Representation in French Politics.

3) Further work following from this study?

This begs a final question, one which theses conventionally raise in their conclusions. What future work might follow from this research? There are four main areas which suggest themselves. Firstly, the relationship between the French and Anglophone debates on the position of women in society, on difference, gender and identity and on the practical issues that follow from these debates for the most disadvantaged women can be further explored. In general terms, feminist literatures and feminist debates sit in separate and somewhat exclusive boxes on different sides of the Channel. It is not straightforward to bring them into conversation, not least because their histories and vocabularies are different. But the conversation is well worth pursuing, and it has begun in a number of places. Secondly, although the thesis has built a case based on empirical work, once we accept that there are always important differences in women's experiences it is important to do more to study the experience of French Caribbean women in France, and especially to explore the ways in which those who live outside Paris and most particularly in the French islands contrast with their sisters who live in the metropolis. Thirdly, the character of the emerging French discussion of multiculturalism is worth further study and further debate, especially the consideration of gender in relation to multicultural issues in France. Finally, the thesis has devoted much of its discussion to the critique of the debate on *parité*, and it has found much of that argument wanting for several theoretical and practical reasons. But there is a need for greater equality for women, a need which is grounded in common sense as much as in theory, and built out of the experience of different groups of women even allowing that they have different experiences and different forms and patterns of disadvantage and resistance. "Liberty, equality and mutuality"

is open to powerful criticisms, but none of them suggest that greater equality is not worth aiming for. Hopefully, it is through a dialogue about the inadequacies of the forms of equality and liberty which we currently aim for that we can discover more effective and more worthwhile forms.

Appendix A:

List of Interviews

<u>Mme Michèle Talange</u>: July 1999, Paris /2h interview.

Single in her early forties and has no children. She was originally born in Guadeloupe. History and Geography school teacher for the past 7 years (at time of interview).

She strongly believed in the possibility of combining different identities. She felt at ease with her 'caribbeanness' and her 'frenchness'. She was not particularly interested in *parité* and had not followed its development.

<u>Mme Rosely Monfils</u>: July 1999, Paris /3h 30 interview.

Single and in her early forties with a little girl of six. Rosely was born in Guadeloupe and immigrated to the Metropole when she was 18. She started work as a cleaning lady and has seeked a better standard of living ever since. Has been frustrated with the French administrative system which she has judged to be discriminatory against 'blacks'.

Her testimony reflected a difficult life, barred with racism. Had never heard of *parité* and had little time for it during our meeting. She did not believe in any form of

possible coalition between (white) Metropolitan French women and (black) French Caribbean women. In fact she confessed her suspicion of 'white women' (her words), although after the meeting she recognised the necessity to review her judgement of 'white women' as a group.

Mme Anne-Marie Angélique & Mme Marie-Michelle Hilaire: July 1999, Paris / 4h (unrecorded).

Anne-Marie is single, in her early thirties. She is born in Metropolitan France, has no distinctive accent and is *métissée*. Yet she sees herself as a French Caribbean woman, struggling against a white oppressor. She believes that her lack of promotion is a direct result of her colour and of her origins. My first contact with Anne-Marie became an hour-long interview, where *she* interviewed me (see Chapter one). For the second meeting, Anne-Marie brought a friend from Martinique: Marie-Michelle Hilaire.

Marie-Michelle Hilaire is single and in her early thirties. She is a social worker and a researcher in Martinique and has published her thesis based on the family life in Martinique.

Issues and questions of invisibility and discriminations were discussed as well as those related to the development of a French Caribbean identity. Neither seem to know much about *parité*. Anne-Marie saw little use in parité for the promotion of

greater fairness and justice towards French Caribbean people. She believed that the Metropole needed to come to terms with slavery and the fact that it did take place.

M. and Mme Caspar: July 1999, Paris / 5h interview.

M. and Mme Caspar have two children: a boy of 18 and a girl of 15. They are both *fonctionnaires* and believe that they could not have done any better with their lives. They felt contented and said that they were well 'integrated' in that they live a 'normal life'.

Questions of racism and of French Caribbean identity became the focus of the conversations. Neither had heard much about *parité*. Mme Caspar felt that it could not do much harm, but did not feel concerned. Both M. and Mme Caspar discussed racism and French Caribbean identity in relation to their two children. They were concerned for their future and hoped that they would find a place in French society that would enable them to live normal and fulfilling lives. Neither felt they had really experienced racism but knew people who had.

The complexity of identities were discussed in relation of the association black-French Caribbean, despite the existence of white French Caribbean people.

<u>Mme Pau Langevin</u>: August 1999, Paris/ 1h 30 (unrecorded) interview.

Mme Pau-Langevin is married and has children. She is *Directrice Générale de L'ANT* in Paris. Believed in the possibility of holding different identities. Had just returned from a summer spent in the French Caribbean visiting relatives.

The issue of plural identities and the problem of racism in Metropolitan France interest her. She was particularly interested in the potential of *parite*, especially in what it could mean for other minorities in France. Although she belonged to a pressure group supporting *parité*, she explained that they could not discuss the possible (and in her case hopeful) implication it could bring with it for fear of giving the 'enemies' some ammunitions (her words). She thus backed up the idea of ethnic quotas.

<u>Mme Raqui Rose-Lee</u>: April 2000, London /1/2h interview.

Mme Raqui Rose-Lee works for the *Conseil Régional de la Guadeloupe*. She came to London to attend a couple of conferences, *including Comparing 'Colonialisms' in the Caribbean in the 21ˢᵗ Century* at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, April 6. As there were very few discussions centred around the French Caribbean, we 'naturally' became engrossed in a discussion on the status of the French islands at the end of the conference. As mentioned in my acknowledgements, Mme Raqui was particularly helpful in giving me written feedback on my paper. She also confirmed the need for

further research on gender relations in the French Caribbean islands, agreeing that nothing had been done since the work of Beauvue-Fougeyrollas (1985, 1991).

What was particularly interesting in my conversation with Mme Raqui, was that she strongly believed that the French Caribbean was extremely fortunate, and to think anything different was 'foolish', 'naïve' or too cut off from reality.

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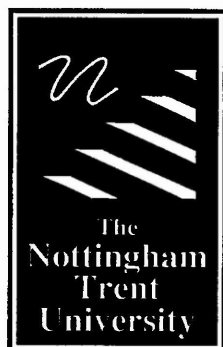
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