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Intergenerational transmissions in transnational families and national affiliations

Abstract:

This article explains and illustrates the method of family histories, reconstructed from crossed biographical interviews of different members of the same family. This methodology allows for the collection of fine and precious data in order to try to understand the complexity of the dynamics of intergenerational transmissions and the construction of national affiliations of immigrants' descendants. It shows how continuously shifting family relationships underlie creativity in parenting strategies. In addition, this approach can circumvent some specific barriers to the study of immigrant families, who often speak uneasily with researchers. This methodology helps us to avoid reification of static identities.

Key words: Family history, parenting, intergenerational transmission, migration paths, passing on, affiliation, crossed biographical interviews.

1 Introduction

Having followed several immigrant families in France and in other European countries over long periods as ethnographic observers and biographical-narrative interviewers, we specifically focused on how they try to find ways to fight the effects of stigmatization (or "discredit"). We discovered that most parents are continuously adapting their parenting styles and techniques to guide their children's development. Some of their children face a double bind: on the one hand, the host society asks them to "integrate", that means to enter labour markets and melt into the host country ways of life. On the other hand teachers, employers, the police and media keep considering them as "different". This tension is particularly significant in France, whereas it appears easier for immigrants to find their room in Germany (Pape 2012). But in both countries immigrant parents show tremendous creativity in trying to help their children, boys and girls differently, to cope with this double bind[1].

Immigrant parents who succeed in migrating from their country, an ex-colony, to the "colonising" European country have to face not only xenophobia but also

post-colonial prejudices on both labour and housing markets and in the contexts of both work and everyday life. Nevertheless the vast majority of migrants are carrying within themselves a *project for a better life:* for themselves, for their kin at home, and especially for their children, boys *and* girls; a project that orients, drives, and organizes all their *courses of action*. But in bringing up and educating their children, these parents become aware of the difficulty of the task.

Most of these families possess neither economic resources nor credentials but all try to varying degrees to pass down to their children "personal resources", which we call *subjective resources*[2]. One of the ways they do that is by explaining to their daughters and sons their family story, specifically why they have left their country of origin and have come to the host country they live in. Indeed the key element of this process of transmission from generation to generation is through the telling of family histories. As Robert Neuburger suggests, "Passing down successfully amounts to passing down the *ability* to pass down" (Neuburger 1997, p. 15). Family history, as told by parents to children, is a tool, conveying not only information about the past and tradition, but also about the need for change. And the power of these stories, as Toshiaki Kozakaï remarks, rests not on biological parenthood, but on *bonding* through the sharing of childhood years (Kozakaï 2000).

But this is a hard task. Some migrant parents seem to have difficulties in passing down their own life history to their children. This history will have been shaped by a twofold series of humiliating experiences. First, and common to everybody, irrespective of whether they were born in France, Germany or have emigrated, is the experience of having occupied the lowest posts in society. Second, and specific to immigrants, is the racism that they have experienced. Immigrant parents have often difficult family histories in relation to colonisation, wars… They are sometimes prone to silence when it comes to admitting what they have been through. But this silence is also a collective phenomenon in which the media play a large part. Indeed for example the media continue ignoring the history of French working class (immigrant being a significant part of this class), while enhancing the history of the French peasantry as part of national identity.

In our French-German seminar we have worked on this difficulty of passing on family history and we have linked this process *of transmission* to that of *socialisation* which is a conscious process carried out by agents who aim to inculcate into children and teenagers the norms of the host society. Peers from the host society play a crucial role in socialising migrant children. As Jean Piaget explains in his book "Jugement moral chez l'enfant" (The moral judgment of the child) (1392/2000), one cannot neglect the role of the child her or himself as an active participant in this process of self-socialisation. He or she adapts him or herself to the environment, but impinges also on it (and first of all, on his or her parents).

Socialisation cannot be reduced to schooling; it is an implicit impregnation. The moments within the family must contribute to giving meaning to the past and present lived experiences of parents and children here (host country) and there (country of origin). The success (or failure) of this process also depends on how family memory and history are connected, and how parents are able to legitimate in a dynamic way their own culture of origin avoiding contradictions and silences. But parents have to find partners (teachers, friends, neighbours, community leaders or family members) to avoid a "guerre des mémoires" (war of memories) (Blanchard/Veyrat-Masson 2008; Bhabha 1994/2007; Saïd 1979/1994). Colonisation and post-colonialism are indeed difficult subjects to deal with and are often the occa-

sion of such a "war" opposing different ways to understand and talk about past events, regarding the group of belonging. Each group tends to defend its memory and, considering the place or country they live in, some have more chances than the other to be able to have their (his)tory recognized as a legitimate one.

The situation is different in France and Germany. In Germany, because of its "defeat" in World War II, the "re-education" measures by the Allies, the public trials such as those in Nuremberg or the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt and ensuing public debates, it appears that self-critical reflexivity about national history seems to be more developed than in France. The sense of belonging of migrant children and their national affiliation depends on the dialogue between migrant parents and the host society. This dialogue, more or less easy to establish, depends itself on the history of the different countries. The room given to migrants and their own stories is also due to the political system and tradition in the host countries, more or less centralized. And, more specifically, it comes from the different national histories regarding migration and the different ways the national policies have been dealing with it. "While France has been marked by its integration model through assimilation, there still exists no clear integration policy in Germany (Simon 2005, Thränhardt 2009)" (Pape 2012, p. 430). We focus here on the French situation and its specificities that are enlightened thanks to a comparison with the situation in Germany; this comparison is a further result of our work during the seminar and of the discussion of the papers of our colleagues.

We will first present our methodology of reconstructing family histories by means of "entretiens croisés" (crossed interviews) of parents and children. Then we will present some case histories of transnational families, questioning the dynamics between intergenerational transmissions and national affiliations. For each case, we met and interviewed the two parents and, at least, one of the children (in most cases two). The interviews were biographical: they were following both the life course of the interviewee and the way he or she made links between the different events marking it. They lasted, in general, between one hour and a half and three hours. Some were repeated across time, once or twice.

In the first two cases we provide examples of migrants' descendants facing difficulties in the construction of their affiliation to a given nation, and we show how they tend to choose one main affiliation excluding the others. In the last two case studies we show how immigrant parents help their children to build various affiliations to *several* nations, by using specific strategies of bringing-up. The development of one or the other model has to do with the family's migration history and the meaning they gave to it.

2   The methodology of crossed biographical interviews

Before presenting our comments on the subtle processes involved in intergenerational transmission, it is important to discuss the methodology used to collect the data. We used a process of "récits croisés" (Delcroix, 1995), comparing and contrasting data generated through (biographical interviews) with different members of the same family. We also explain below how this method both provides a source

of rich information and also circumvents some of the specific difficulties commonly encountered in the study of migrant families.

2.1 Using life stories within the same family

To study the evolution of feelings of national affiliation of immigrants and their descendants, we have conducted a large number of biographical-narrative interviews in different fieldwork contexts. As Daniel Bertaux argues, the biographical approach allows researchers to study "a particular fragment of social and historical reality from an ethno-sociological perspective [...] focusing on the patterns of social relations [...] that characterize it" (Bertaux 1997, p. 7)[3]. Given that there are a number of social and cultural dimensions in any specific context (Schütz 1987), identifying the specific configuration of these dimensions requires a study of this case, with an inductive approach, to capture the social logics that it testifies. The stories collected deal with both practices, beliefs and representations, which are presented in a diachronic structure that gives them meaning and allows us to make connections between them. The objective is to encourage the narration of events, the description of the relations linking them and the explanation of the representations that social actors develop about those facts. The challenge is to understand potential causal pathways and to understand the meaning they have for individuals, reasoning in the framework of a comprehensive approach.

To investigate how feelings of national affiliation result from intergenerational transmissions of family migration history in immigrant families in France, we have developed this approach, following the method established by Catherine Delcroix: the reconstruction of family histories, drawn from life story interviews with several members of each family (Delcroix 2000; 2009; 2001/2013). The relevance of this methodology lies in the importance of the family as a "micro-environment of inter-subjective relations where [...] emotional, moral and "semantic" relations dominate, that is to say, generate meaning" (Bertaux 1997, p. 38)[4]. The family members are as "significant others", in the words of George Herbert Mead, particularly important.

In this article we have focused in particular on working-class families, originating from Maghreb or Sub-Saharan Africa, facing economic instability and discrimination. In order to reach a better understanding of the experiences of these families and their members, it was essential for us to hear their own intimate accounts of their lives. This is not easy to achieve and requires the building of a relationship of trust able to counteract the effects of stigmatizing discourses that can hinder the desire of these people to share their life story. It was then important to explain that we were not there to examine and judge them but to grasp and describe the efforts they were making to overcome their difficulties. Thus, we have reconstructed in-depth case studies of immigrant families, using an approach combining ethnographic and sociological methods. The ethnographic approach consists in spending as much time as possible with the families, in their everyday life activities or on outings and on holidays, to observe what they do and discuss what they think. The sociological approach seeks to identify different types of life paths and diverse profiles of families and to analyse the collective processes they are experiencing.

The objective of this method is to locate each of social actors within the framework of family time and historical time, investigating several generations. Meet-

ing parents and children, talking with them about their lives helps us to reconstruct the general history of the family and discover how each of its members has experienced and understood this shared history. But with each of them, we can also collect different information, which allows us to situate the family history in a wider temporality. Parent's stories offer an opportunity to make connections between past and present. Making them talk about their childhood can also be an occasion to know more about the generation of grandparents. The stories of their children provide links between the present and the future. We have access to their projects and how they are becoming adults by re-appropriating their family history.

Before highlighting the richness of data collected through this methodology, we will now describe why it is that this approach is particularly important to overcome difficulties faced in carrying out fieldwork with migrant families.

2.2 Specific difficulties in the study of immigrant families

As Ursula Apitzsch stated in our Franco-German seminar, ethnicity or rather ethnic affiliations, are in tension between potentially stigmatizing ascribed identity and self-claimed identity. She spoke of the difficult dialectic between both ethnicity as a form of often-unwelcome attribution by others and ethnicity as a form of a conscious self-definition of individuals within the social context of a community. She added that, paradoxically, the second process produces the tendency of transforming ethnic belonging into an inheritable social position. But how to study this "transformation" while the claim of an ethnic identity seen as "other" in European societies, is often devalued and causes "social sanctions" as for instance difficulty to find a job?

Indeed, immigrant families in France and Germany face a major discredit because of their geographical origin and their cultural practices. They carry "discrediting differences" which have a double effect: their visibility in the public sphere is subject to negative stereotypes or they are confined to invisibility. In both cases, their existence is not recognised, or is only recognised with difficulty. This discredit tends to make it more complex to know the actions of immigrants and their children, their plans, and their discourses, as soon as they seem to move away from the model to which they are expected to comply: a well "integrated" worker.

This phenomenon is particularly strong in France, because of its republican model that de-legitimises foreign origin and all practices and claims for recognition (Honneth 1992/2000). The discrediting discourse derives partly from the experience of colonisation that initially shaped the representations of colonised people that still weigh on their descendants. This is particularly true for Muslims. A good example of this would be the experience of Algerians who were offered French nationality only if they agreed to renounce Islam (Décret Crémieux 1870; Delcroix 2009).

This public and political discourse has a very tangible impact on the attitudes and discourses of migrants and their descendants. As a reaction, they tend to erase what is perceived in the host country as unacceptable differences in some everyday practises. In the way they present themselves, some seem to deliberately forget their foreign origin, or underestimate its importance. It was only after spending time with them that they began talking openly with us about it. Others, however, respond by "turning the stigma", as Erving Goffman said, claiming their identity in a positive way, as for example when Muslim women decide to wear the

veil, this practice being sometimes associated with an explicitly political discourse. In all cases, they have to deal with multiple identities, some of which are more or less stigmatizing (Lagier 2011).

In addition from the point of view of the host countries, the history of migrants often begins from when they crossed the border to settle here. However, before migrating, these individuals are first emigrants who left their country of origin, as recalled by Abdelmalek Sayad (1999). But everything regarding their past is largely undervalued and is not considered by the institutions of the host countries as a worthy story to be told. Thus, unlike the French and German families in their respective countries, migrant families are isolated to pass on their history and memory (Bertaux/Delcroix 2009). They are not supported by the institutions of the country of installation, especially the schools and the media, and are even discouraged from doing so on behalf of the idea that integration requires forgetting one's origin. It is, again, difficult to have access to their history and how it is passed on through generations.

But these difficulties should not be considered as curbing the study. Instead they are to be treated as being fully part of the study. To better understand the social logic that shapes migrant families' lives, the method of reconstructing family histories is particularly valuable. It gives indeed access to educational strategies implemented by parents, to the dynamics of intergenerational transmissions, to gender relations; and to the processes of collective and individual construction of feelings of affiliation to one or several nations. This is what we want to show in the following case studies.

3   Case studies: a multi-affiliation difficult to manage

Let us now see some examples, case studies, illustrating the efficiency of the method and its relevance to study national affiliations of the different members of transnational families. The first two case studies present situations where the migration paths and the transmission – or non-transmission – of family history lead to affiliations difficult to manage for the immigrants' descendants. They then tend to favour one specific (national) identification among all those they might recognize themselves in, as shown in the first case. Or they face difficulties in building their affiliation and identification, as shown in the second case.

3.1 When "forced migration" and discredit lead to choosing a unique affiliation: the Roinamze Family[5] history

The Roinamze family, of Togolese origin by the father and Ghanaian origin by the mother, has a special story. Parents came to live in France with their young children in the late 1970s to escape Togo after a military coup put an end to the republic. The father, Leon, had kinship-ties with a former member of the president's family who was murdered. When he learnt that he also was threatened, he decided to flee with his family to France – he had already stayed several times in this country before – to ask for the status of political refugee.

The two parents are very bonded to their country of origin and their African origins. The mother regularly goes and stays in Ghana – a country in which the family has no difficulties to travel to – and she brings her children there on holidays. When we met the family, she was in Ghana, where she was creating an orphanage; she has spent most of her time there in recent years. The older daughter has recently settled in Ghana; she works in a bank in Accra. The fact that the mother and the daughter live in Ghana demonstrates the strength of the links maintained with the country, even if the price is the distance between family members.

Leon, the father, is also very attached to his country, Togo, and he wishes to return there as soon as possible and regain a political position. Even if he lives far away, he is very involved in the political life of this country. He is a member, in France, of a Togolese opposition party. He said: *"I have carnal relations with Togo because I am very politically involved in Togo today, since I am a member of the French section of the Union of Forces for Change in Togo"*[6].

But the family is also closely connected to France, and some members are involved in local associative life in their neighbourhood. One of the girls is involved in an association for school tutoring, and Leon is elected to the city council. But the eyes of most members of the family are turned towards Africa, to Ghana and Togo in particular.

The migration trajectory of the parents was not immediately told to the children. Kofi, one of the five children in the family, a young 32 year-old man[7], explained that it is primarily his grandmother, living in Ghana, who made him aware of the history of his father and the danger he faced. Migration is presented as constrained to the political context. But, more broadly, the way parents have explained this trajectory and the way children have understood it as a *"tearing"* (Kofi), may result from the fact their migration meant a significant social downgrading for the family. The father and mother belong to the upper classes of their respective countries of origin. Their families are large landowners. Leon had a large transport company before being forced to emigrate. On arriving in France he worked as boilermaker and then as caretaker.

This "forced" and painful migration trajectory, leading to significant social downgrading, may explain the difficulty in developing a positive affiliation to the French nation. Most members of the family we have met wish to return to Togo or Ghana. But for the father, Leon, and for his son, Kofi – we both interviewed them extensively – ambitions are not the same. Leon wants to go to Togo to participate in the political life of his country. Kofi also wants to return but to carry on its "pan-African political struggle" beyond the Togolese context. If the father defines himself as Togolese, the son primarily defines himself as "Black". The more radical political involvement of Kofi can be understood as a reaction to the discredit and racism experienced in France. But for both, the migration history path, its consequences and its understanding by each of them, could have encouraged the fact that they define themselves by a *single affiliation*, national origin for the father and "racial" identity for the son.

In the Roinamze family, between Leon and Kofi in particular, what has been passed on is not only a relation to the country of origin or to the host country; it is also a relation to *political commitment*. The importance of politics comes from its place in the family history before migration, its essential role as a motivation to migrate, and from the fact that the father is very involved. Thus, if Kofi explains his involvement in radical pan-Africanism from the racism he has been victim of as a Black in France, it can also be understood as a form of affiliation to the line-

age of his father. If the commitments of Leon and Kofi are quite different, they also have much in common: both are "oriented" towards the country or region of origin, and both generate intense activities and identifications. About this, Leon said *"I even think that's what keeps me alive"*. And we find the same idea when Kofi told us *"My political struggle is the struggle of my life"*.

In the end, the intense political involvement certainly strengthens the tendency to affiliate to one nation or one origin for the defence of which they feel they must fight. But this impossible construction of a multi-affiliation is also due to the migration path and how the children understood it, and from the racism experienced in France. More generally, this case illustrates how intergenerational transmissions are made of continuity and discontinuity. Nothing is ever passed on unchanged through generations, without modification, without specific appropriation by descendants. The method of family history reconstruction through crossed biographical interviews allows us to capture these subtle processes by giving access to spheres of meaning construction of various protagonists.

3.2 A "closed family": the impact of being an orphan in the country of origin

The following second case is a typical example of a father categorically refusing to discuss his own experiences with his children. Mr Mohammed is the father of four children. He came from Algeria with his wife twenty years ago. He has just retired from working for a small servicing company that forms part of the French railways (SNCF). For Mr Mohammed, the most important task is to protect his children from the external world that he sees as threatening. His 16-year-old son describes their relation:

"My parents, my father, they don't trust me to go… even now to Wilson Square (the city centre). He has never been to the cinema with me, in fact, I have never been to the cinema at all. During the holidays I do nothing with my parents, with my father… My parents are worried about me."

Mr. Mohammed did not want to be interviewed and his wife explained his refusal in this way:

"My children don't go to their friend's house… The most important thing is to pay the rent first. My husband has just been forced to retire and I don't work. He leaves the house in the morning to go for walks and comes back in the evening… He hasn't had a close friend since he was married. He is a solitary person, like myself."

This inward-looking attitude came about as the result of several negative experiences, as Mrs Mohammed went on to describe:

"When we first came to France, the social worker wanted to send us back to Algeria. She said that the room we were living in was too small. But it was our choice to live in another country, although in coming here in France we are not free. In France, the authorities constantly check us. It is not easy for us… Wherever they go, my children are seen as foreigners. […] I sometimes feel that we have made a big mistake. You are Arabs, you are foreigners, you are immigrants… You go into an office and they make you aware of it all the time. Even my little girl of 6 understands. However, some things are better here than over there: freedom, free speech, and trustworthy persons; but we are still strangers… It is difficult for their father. He never says anything and he doesn't know Algeria (he came

to France at a very young age and never went back to Algeria). At the same time, he doesn't want to change his nationality and he could never live with other Algerians."

Behind the silence of this father is a personal history. As he told it to us, he never knew his own father. Moreover, as he is an orphan, he had no experience of a father-child relationship. In addition to that, he cannot count on the help of anybody in his country of origin to help him in any sense. Thus, he does not have an "ontological security" (Giddens 1991). Opposite to common sense, it is essential for parents to have relations based on *community belonging* to be able to open transnational spaces to their children. Mr Mohammed could not pass on to his children his life story, which according to his wife, was characterized by a great deal of courage in the face of adversity. His children do not know to which country they belong. Here we can see how the two processes of *family transmission* and national belonging are related.

4   Case studies: the opening of a range of possibilities

Unlike the previous cases, the following two case studies show the influence of the passing on of family migration history on the life courses of children, their career choices, their places of residence and how they feel they belong to *several* nations at once. These cases illustrate how intergenerational transmissions open a range of possibilities in the construction of life courses and the identification of children.

4.1 Intergenerational transmissions and the children's choice of a country to work and to live in: the Tahar Family case history

Among the numerous families of migrants from Maghreb that we studied is Mr Tahar, a migrant from Morocco, who has a specific strategy. He has five daughters and one son, who is the last child. He came to France with the project of getting his *baccalauréat* (Abitur in German) and continuing on as a university student. But for various reasons he could not do it, and he has been working for the last twenty years as a truck-driver.

   He has developed a particular style of parenting which we find quite imaginative: taking his children, one at a time, with him in his truck when the trip he has to do is only for a few hundred kilometres and back. This way he is able to develop a *personalised* relationship with *each* one of his children. All of them consider these trips with their father as privileged moments. *"We talk a lot"*, his elder daughter told us.

"He has been taking me to various French cities, and he has explained to me their history. He has been telling me about cities he has visited in Germany, Italy… It was so interesting. I developed a taste for foreign languages, and now I am studying to become an interpreter, with a focus on German; because, according to what my father says, Germany is a country I would like to live in".

Her younger sister told us how much she enjoyed the stories her father told her about the times he was growing up in Rabat. This is where she wants to live. She also took much interest in how her father was driving his truck: changing gears, checking that the engine and other parts function well, and taking good care of his truck…*"I watch when he puts on the handbrake. I would love to drive and get my licence".* Now, at 18 years-old, she knows exactly what she wants to do: to start an international trucking company in Morocco. Still at high school, she has chosen a commercial orientation. She has a passion for trucks and is presently getting her driving license for trucks. Even if her dream does not materialise – it was already the case for her father – this young lady already knows where she wants to go and is busy trying to get there. And it is the same for her elder sister.

A very important point is that this creative strategy has been elaborated together with the mother. The example of this man gave us a first hint about the relevance for children's self-representation, self-esteem, self-confidence and general psychic balance, of whether they knew or not the history of their parents – which is, in fact, their own pre-history. It was clear from what the two daughters explained that, because their father had told each of them, separately, in long informal conversations, who he was, and why he had migrated to France, they knew pretty well where they were and why they were born in France from Moroccan parents. It gives them a sense of continuity, a set of spatial and temporal markers; in short it helps them build their own identity.

This is only a specific example of a much more general attitude and practice which we have observed in many families: passing on to children the inner *subjective resources* they need to overcome the handicap they have from their ethnic and social background, so that, remaining in France or not, they will be able to fully exercise their status of citizen. Mr Tahar has opened the door to future options for his daughters. The elder two sisters do not have to choose between different national affiliations; they already live in *a transnational space* because their father has been able to give them an idea of the world through his own experiences of migration and work. He enables them to be open to but critical of various cultural and social worlds.

4.2 Multi-affiliation as an educational project: the Benarma Family case history

Wahid Benarma, the father, came as a young man to France in the late 1960s; he was unemployed in Algeria. He was hoping to return to school and find a better job than those he had had up to that point. But fairly quickly, he was forced to lower his ambitions. He said: "*I did odd jobs, only odd jobs*". He became a material handler and workman. He married in Algeria in the late 1970s and his wife Djamila came to live with him in France. Unfortunately he was victim of an industrial accident and Djamila had to take menial jobs to meet the needs of the home and allow their children to go to college.

Djamila and Wahid have two children: a daughter, Zineb, 20 years old and a son, Karim, 25 years old. Their parents strongly encouraged both of them to succeed in school and get a tertiary education. Both have appropriated this discourse on the importance of academic success, seen as a necessary prelude to the success-

ful career their parents hope for them. Djamila and Wahid passed on this project to their children by mobilising their past personal experiences. They explained that they did not have the opportunity to study in Algeria, and encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunity they have to be born in France and be able to get a proper education. Wahid even said: *"If I had been to school, I would have had a job, I would not even have had to come to France".*

After a Master degree in International Business, Karim became manager in a large international group in the oil sector. Zineb, meanwhile, goes to a school for tourism after having spent a year at university studying English. Karim explained the origins of his ambition:

"My personal motivation is my parents … That's what made me want to go ahead, seeing them sacrifice, so to say, for me and my sister. I have no right to disappoint them [...] whereas they gave me the chance to have a roof, good health, an education, something that millions of people have not yet in some countries"

The sacrifice of his parents that he refers to is twofold: on the one hand their migration to come to France and on the other hand the difficult jobs they have held in order to finance their children's studies.

Indeed, Djamila's choice to work while Wahid could no longer do so is directly related to her children. She said: *"I will continue to work for my children [until retirement] [...] I have much helped Karim [for studying] and again until now, I help Zineb. If I work now, it's mostly for my children".* The involvement of these parents is well understood by their children who contribute, by their own success, to the success of the whole family project to improve living conditions. Zineb told us about the trajectory of her family: *"It's true that we started a little at the bottom of the ladder because my parents came from Algeria, immigrant parents, we started from nothing and then gradually it rose through the ranks".*

But the Benarma family project is not merely about social success passed on between generations. It is also about attachment to different national affiliations considered as necessarily multiple. The choices of school and professional trajectories of the children show a real attraction for foreign countries, particularly those overseas. This cosmopolitism is a consequence of a conscious educational strategy of their parents: the Benarma parents tell their story to Zineb and Karim and give them very positive descriptions of their country of origin, Algeria, where they go on holiday, as well as of their home country, France, where they travel often together as a family. Wahid said for instance, that France is a country that has given him a "*second education*", which made him know his rights as a human being. Djamila said that the first day after her arrival in France, she already felt "*at home*". They also talk about the difficult colonial history between France and Algeria. Wahid said about independence: "*We went through hell*". But the colonial period is presented to children in a positive way about France, as if to preserve a "*good image"* of this country. The father explains that France is not responsible for colonialism but accuses Europeans in general and Spain in particular.

In return, the children feel that it is "a chance to be in France", even if it is not *"la vie en rose"* as Karim says. At the same time both are very closely linked to their parents' country of origin. Before getting a job offer in Dubai – where he has lived ever since – Karim wanted to take part in his company's creation of an affiliated branch in Algeria. Zineb, in turn, would like to develop tourism in Algeria. Both present themselves as *"citizens of the world",* with special bonds to France and Algeria.

As their life courses go, the Benarma parents have had to make compromises on their initial migration project and Wahid in particular on his professional project. In this case study, children have inherited these compromises and have appropriated them to follow the ambitions that accompanied the migration of their parents. Additionally, they also inherit a form of "multi-affiliation", with the parents saying that they are proud to be Algerian and happy to live in France, their children being French. They have gradually rebuilt their national affiliations and passed on to their children this reconstruction in process. Their children appropriate it in their choices of career and country of residence. Such dynamics highlight that what is passed on between generations is not a set of stabilised choices, practices or values but representations, history, ways to act, etc. *that are subject to change.* Using this idea, during the Franco-German seminar, we proposed using the term "transmissions of compromises" (Elsa Lagier) between parents and children. Passing on compromises and changes that parents experienced throughout their life course enables children to build affiliations to several nations at once.

5   Conclusion: Accessing educational strategies and intergenerational transmissions

To conclude, the reconstruction of family histories gives very good access to the point that the object of transmission, according to Pierre Legendre (1985/2004), is to pass on. Beyond the obvious tautological point of this statement lies the fact that it is the act of passing on something (anything) which is by itself the whole point, more than the content of what is passed on (be it land property, political commitment, or some particular attachment). In families with few or no resources, where there is no objective "capital" to pass on, there are still the non-tangible assets of moral values and love which, together with the family history, can give meaning to the current situation. This methodology helps us to avoid reification of static identities.

A method against the reification of representations and affiliations

In general, the biographical approach and the use of narrative as a method of inquiry encourage individuals to place their experiences in time, to refer to their past, and help locate the "turning points" in their life courses. Furthermore, through crossed interviews within a family, we have access to the planned action over several generations. This avoids any temptation to reify representations and affiliations since they are grasped in the long term and in their dynamics. Thus, for instance, it is not a question of studying identity but of studying identifications in their plurality and their evolutions. We thus obtain data on the development of feelings of national affiliation of migrant parents and their children, according to the initial migration project and its progressive reconstruction over life courses.

Studying the dynamics of intergenerational transmissions

Additionally, collecting life stories from parents and children allows an in-depth examination of educational strategies and dynamics of intergenerational trans-

missions. This is to reveal the parents' educational practices and how they organise themselves to try to give their children resources, values and principles. Reciprocally, it is to capture, in the children's discourses, what they retain from the education provided by parents and, more widely, from the family history as it is related.

Moreover, we have information on what is passed on or not, in the private sphere, in a different way for each child, depending on his/her sex, age, sibling position, etc. We then seek to compare the educational projects of the parents with what their children keep, how they build their own family memory, their values and how they make choices from the "palette" of affiliations that is, more or less consciously, offered to them.

Studying the individual and collective construction of feelings of affiliation

Finally, the method that we use provides not only information about feelings of affiliation – with their fluctuations – but also permits us to know how the family members interact with each other and to compare how these affiliations are explained or justified by the different family members. Thus, we can study both the weight of external factors and the personal experiences that take part in shaping these claimed affiliations and how they are individually constructed for each family member, based on the family heritage and the life courses and experiences of each person. In so doing, we are able to analyse the construction of national affiliations as these echo the individual life course and relate to each individual's place within the family, which should be considered a group that is central to the formation of identity and sense of belonging.

Notes

1   This paper is based on the results of several research projects conducted in France mainly and other European countries. Between 2005 and 2008, Catherine Delcroix and Elsa Lagier have worked together on researching participation of inhabitants to the public policy of urban renewal in two French cities: Dreux and Vernouillet, They met and interviewed 40 families living in deprived neighborhood, using the method of crossed biographical interviews presented in this paper. They chose families with similar living situations, and similar problems in terms of migration, work, resources and family life. Our aim was to identify the different types of life paths and diverse profiles of these city families.
    To compare with migrant families living in Germany they based their comparisons on the PHD results of Elise Pape (a member of our French-German seminar) on "Intergenerational transmission processes in families with Moroccan origins in France and Germany: "The pride to be oneself", 2012, Strasbourg, Francfort. She had reconstruct the history of 9 families living in France and in Germany. She had interviewed 40 members of these families (half in France and half in Germany).
2   By this Catherine Delcroix means first of all, moral strength, courage, resilience, patience, tenacity but also reflexivity, imagination, and communicative skills; a resource which is developed out of an intense reflexive process on one's own biographical experiences (Delcroix 2000; 2009).
3   Translation by the authors.
4   Translation by the authors.

5 All the names have been replaced by other names, respecting their significance in terms of cultural backgrounds.
6 All quotations from interviews are translated by the authors.
7 At the time we met and interviewed him. This is the same for all the ages given in the different case studies presented.

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