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Richard Alba

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# Bright vs. blurred boundaries: Second-generation assimilation and exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States

Richard Alba

## Abstract

In all immigration societies, a social distinction between immigrant and second generations, on the one hand, and natives, on the other, is imposed by the ethnic majority and becomes a sociologically complex fault line. Building on a comparison of second-generation Mexicans in the U.S., North Africans in France, and Turks in Germany, this article argues that the concepts associated with boundary processes offer the best opportunity to understand the ramifications of this distinction. The difference between bright boundaries, which involve no ambiguity about membership, and blurred ones, which do, is hypothesized to be associated with the prospects and processes of assimilation and exclusion. The institutionalization of boundaries is examined in the key domains of citizenship, religion, language, and race. The analysis leads to the specific conclusion that blurred boundaries generally characterize the situation of Mexicans in the U.S., with race the great, albeit not well understood, exception, while bright boundaries characterize the European context for Muslim groups.

**Keywords:** Assimilation; ethnic boundaries; race; religion; second generation; social exclusion.

Social boundaries have been understood as essential to ethnic phenomena since the pioneering investigations of the anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969). Nevertheless, relatively little work has been done to theorize their nature and the processes that affect them, even though it is apparent that both are critical to ethnic construction and change.

Several developments suggest that this is a propitious moment to refocus attention on ethnic boundaries. The first is associated with the streams of international migrants that have flowed into virtually all economically advanced societies since the 1950s (Massey *et al.* 1998). Immigration has led to the establishment of numerous new ethnic groups, such as Turks in Germany and Korean Americans in the United States. These groups have now produced an adult second generation, socialized in the receiving society and having the potential to challenge or cross boundaries that are more or less taken for granted in the case of its immigrant parents. The second development is the emergence of a literature that calls attention to the social constructedness of ethnic and racial distinctions (Nagel 1994; Omi and Winant 1994). It has produced a new understanding of the potential mutability of ethnic and even racial boundaries, epitomized by the so-called whiteness literature, which traces the processes by which disparaged European immigrant groups attained a white racial status in American society (Roediger 1991; Jacobson 1998). The third lies in the beginnings of a literature on boundaries (Zerubavel 1993; Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart 1995; Isajiw 1999, pp. 19–20; Juteau 1999; Zolberg and Long 1999; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002). It demonstrates that boundaries are not all alike and that boundary-related change cannot be conceptualized in terms of a single set of processes. Zolberg and Long (1999; see also Bauböck 1994) provide a conceptual starting point for any discussion of change, in distinguishing three types: boundary crossing, blurring, and shifting.

This article attempts to expand upon these new conceptions of boundaries and the changes involving them through an examination of the circumstances under which the second-generation members of an immigrant minority can achieve parity of life chances with their peers in the ethnic majority or, oppositely, face exclusion from the societal mainstream. In the usual case, the attainment of parity of this sort is understood as a form of assimilation<sup>1</sup> (e.g., Hirschman 1983), although it is also possible, as Portes and his collaborators have argued (Wilson and Portes 1980; Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Manning 1986; also Waldinger 1996), to reach parity of socio-economic life chances by participation in ethnically controlled subeconomies. I will concentrate here on the assimilation route to parity. There may also be assimilation to a minority status, as Portes and Zhou (1993; also Gans 1992) have argued by means of the concept of 'segmented assimilation'. The current article is motivated by the desire to find a conceptual framework that will apply beyond U.S. society, where these models of incorporation have been formulated, and illuminate why one rather than the other form occurs.

The argument I will make is that the processes involved depend crucially on the precise nature of the ethnic boundary. Some

boundaries are 'bright' – the distinction involved is unambiguous, so that individuals know at all times which side of the boundary they are on. Others are 'blurry', involving zones of self-presentation and social representation that allow for ambiguous locations with respect to the boundary. The nature of the minority-majority boundary depends on the way in which it has been institutionalized in different domains, some of them correlated with an ethnic distinction rather than constitutive of the distinction itself. In turn, the nature of the boundary affects fundamentally the processes by which individuals gain access to the opportunities afforded the majority.

To illustrate this argument, I will compare the situations of one immigrant minority in each of three societies: Maghrebins, i.e., Muslim North Africans, in France,<sup>2</sup> Turks in Germany, and Mexicans in the U.S. The histories of the three groups in relation to their receiving societies are evidently quite variable: thus, in both the Mexican and Maghrebini cases, migration takes place in the shadow of a previous colonial relationship (from which, moreover, the North African countries and Algeria in particular had freed themselves just prior to the onset of the migration flows); a similar colonial factor is missing in the case of the Turkish migration, which began as a guestworker flow that was gradually transformed into permanent settlement. Yet the comparison is still justified because, in each society, the group in question is the largest immigrant population that is seen as posing a special challenge to assimilation. Insofar as the established majority group seeks to distinguish itself from immigrant minorities, these are the groups that will figure most prominently in the creation of immigrant-native boundaries. According to the argument to be presented, the different histories of the groups and the societies that receive them carry over into the construction of such boundaries, which cannot be manufactured *de novo* and thus are path-dependent; in turn, the nature of the boundaries affects the likelihood and the nature of assimilation. The argument will be illustrated through a consideration of the ways that boundary construction occurs in the domains of citizenship, religion, language, and race.

### **Ethnic change and boundary processes**

Ethnicity is best conceived as a boundary with both symbolic and social aspects, to borrow a distinction from Lamont and Molnár (2002; see also Horowitz 1975; Wallman 1978; Juteau 1999). Thus, it is a distinction that individuals make in their everyday lives and that shapes their actions and mental orientations towards others; and it is typically embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups that give an ethnic boundary concrete significance (so that members of one group think, 'they are not like us because ...').<sup>3</sup>

Of course, many boundaries have these characteristics; ethnicity can be distinguished from others on the basis of Max Weber's (1968, p. 389) famous identification of it with a 'subjective belief in common descent' – i.e., in a shared history based on a common point of origin in the past, which may be real or putative.

Conceptualizing ethnicity in this way makes it clear that an ethnic distinction can be affected by changes occurring on either or both sides of a boundary. Accordingly, Alba and Nee (2003) define assimilation as the 'decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences'. 'Decline' in this context means that a distinction attenuates in salience, that the occurrences for which it is relevant diminish in number and contract to fewer and fewer domains of social life.<sup>4</sup> From the perspective of an ethnic minority, its members' ethnic origins become less and less relevant in relation to the members of another ethnic group (typically, but not necessarily, the ethnic majority group). This can happen for only a few individuals or on a large scale, up to that of the group itself. Assimilation may also involve only minority groups. As Portes and Zhou (1993), in introducing the concept of 'segmented assimilation' point out, an important question for contemporary incorporation is 'into what sector of American society a particular immigrant group assimilates'.

Zolberg and Long (1999), building on concepts formulated originally by Bauböck (1994), have introduced an extremely useful typology of boundary-related changes that sheds light on different ways that assimilation can occur. Boundary crossing corresponds to the classic version of individual-level assimilation: someone moves from one group to another, without any real change to the boundary itself (although if such boundary crossings happen on a large scale and in a consistent direction, then the social structure is being altered). Boundary blurring implies that the social profile of a boundary has become less distinct: the clarity of the social distinction involved has become clouded, and individuals' location with respect to the boundary may appear indeterminate. The final process, boundary shifting, involves the relocation of a boundary so that populations once situated on one side are now included on the other: former outsiders are thereby transformed into insiders.

For contemporary immigration societies, where the second generation is coming of age, the distinction that has greatest relevance is between boundary crossing and blurring. Boundary shifting, while it does occur – the full acceptance of the descendants of southern and eastern European immigrants as white Americans rather than as 'in-between peoples' (Barrett and Roediger 1997) is an example – requires large-scale preliminary changes that bring about a convergence between ethnic groups. It is premature to look for boundary shifts involving contemporary immigrant groups and the ethnic

majorities in their societies, assuming that such shifts are even realistic in an era of permanent movements across national boundaries.

When our focus is on attaining parity of life chances with the ethnic majority, the boundary involved separates the mainstream – the cultural, institutional core, inhabited largely but not exclusively by the ethnic/racial majority – from an ethnic minority group. How ethnic individuals, parts of ethnic groups, or even entire groups narrow the social distance that separates them from the mainstream and its opportunities depends on the nature of the boundary. One case is that the boundary is bright and thus that there is no ambiguity in the location of individuals with respect to it. In this case, assimilation is likely to take the form of boundary crossing and will generally be experienced by the individual as something akin to a conversion, i.e., a departure from one group and a discarding of signs of membership in it, linked to an attempt to enter into another, with all the social and psychic burdens a conversion process entails: growing distance from peers, feelings of disloyalty, and anxieties about acceptance.

The social psychology of this process was described as long ago as the 1940s by Irvin Child (1943), who studied second-generation Italian Americans on the eve of World War II. Child depicted them as hemmed in by a psychological double bind: if they attempted to assimilate, they risked being rebuffed by the WASP majority while weakening or losing their ties to co-ethnics because of apparent disloyalty; if they chose loyalty to the Italian group instead, they largely gave up on the chance to improve more than marginally their social and material situation. Child found many of them to be ‘apathetic’, his term, unable to choose between these two risky options. As one of his respondents plaintively expressed the dilemma: ‘Then a lot of times in the show you see Mussolini on the screen and they all start to razz him. Then I feel, “How the hell do I stand?”’ (Child 1943, p. 88).

The bright boundary was not merely a product of wartime suspicions of an immigrant minority. Ethnographic studies of second-generation Italian Americans from the 1930s through the 1950s found a group that appeared to be stuck in the working class, held back by the constricting bonds of group loyalty (e.g., Whyte 1955). As only became clear later, the studies failed to detect the magnitude of mobility because, at the time, it seemed only to involve isolated individuals (Gans 1982).

The resemblance of Child’s psychological portrait to the dilemmas faced by contemporary minority youth should be evident. As numerous studies of educational settings have described, minority students who attempt to be successful in school may be stigmatized for ‘acting white’, rejected by their peers for disloyalty, while at the same time risking discrimination at the hands of white students and teachers

(Fordham and Ogbu 1987; Matute-Bianchi 1991). Those who elect the path of ethnic loyalty are often choosing, whether they are fully aware of it or not, to participate in what have been called 'reactive subcultures' that are established in opposition to mainstream norms. For most who choose this route, it leads to school failure, becoming a pathway of 'downward assimilation' (Portes and Zhou 1993; Waters 1999).<sup>5</sup>

The counterpoint to a bright boundary is one that is or can become blurred in the sense that, for some set of individuals (generally members of the ethnic minority), location with respect to the boundary is indeterminate or ambiguous. This could mean that individuals are seen as simultaneously members of the groups on both sides of the boundary or that sometimes they appear to be members of one and at other times members of the other. Under these circumstances, assimilation may be eased insofar as the individuals undergoing it do not sense a rupture between participation in mainstream institutions and familiar social and cultural practices and identities; and they are not forced to choose between the mainstream and their group of origin. Assimilation of this type involves intermediate, or hyphenated stages, that allow individuals to feel simultaneously as members of an ethnic minority and of the mainstream.

One way that boundary blurring can occur is when the mainstream culture and identity are relatively porous and allow for the incorporation of cultural elements brought by immigrant groups. This is a familiar phenomenon in U.S. immigration history. The American mainstream, which originated with the colonial Northern European settlers, has evolved through incremental inclusion of ethnic and racial groups that formerly were excluded and accretion of parts of their cultures to the composite culture. While cultural elements from the earliest groups have been preserved – in this sense, there is great cultural continuity (Fischer 1989) – elements contributed from subsequent immigrant groups have been incorporated continually into the mainstream. The resulting composite culture is not uniform but encompasses considerable diversity within a single domain, implying that there are alternative ways of solving specific problems (Swidler 1986). Thus, the incorporation of the recreational practices of German immigrants played an important role in creating alternatives to Puritanical strictures against Sunday pleasures and ultimately left a deep imprint on what is now viewed as the quintessentially American culture of leisure.

American culture in the century after 1880 moved in fits and starts toward the values cherished by German Americans. A love of music and drama and liberal attitudes about card playing, drinking, and



Sunday relaxation ceased to be regarded as foreign imports (Conzen 1980, p. 425).

This influence came in addition to the most obvious cultural borrowing – German Christmas customs, including the decorated Christmas tree.

Whether a boundary is bright or blurred would appear to carry large ramifications for attaining parity with an ethnic majority. Beyond the consequences for the assimilation process that have already been identified, the distinction is obviously implicated in the magnitude of the process, the number of individuals who can become involved. When assimilation more or less requires a breaking of many ties to the group of origin and the assumption of a high degree of risk of failure, it is unlikely to be undertaken by large numbers, even in the second generation. The type of boundary also bears some relationship, albeit a complex one, to whether assimilation occurs as an individualistic process or a group one; in the latter case, when large numbers of minority individuals may be assimilating at the same time and thus encounter one another in venues associated with mobility (the case of Asian groups in U.S. higher education), they are often able to draw on ethnic resources, such as social networks, for assistance. At first sight, bright boundaries would appear to lend themselves to a largely individualistic pattern of assimilation. However, the resistance to minority mobility created by such boundaries also calls forth minority collective action to break down barriers. The Civil Rights movement is an obvious example; another is the even more successful attempts of Jewish organizations to break down anti-Semitic barriers at elite colleges and social clubs during the 1950s (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997).

But how can we know whether a boundary is blurred or blur-able? To answer this question, we must look to the way in which it is institutionalized, that is, the ‘web of interrelated’ normative patterns that govern the way that the boundary is manifested to social actors (Nee and Ingram 1998, p. 19). These normative patterns, exemplified by widely shared and often taken-for-granted expectations about which and how religious holidays will be publicly recognized (e.g., Christmas but not Eid al-Fitr), determine the social distance between majority and minority group and the difficulties associated with bridging it. Institutionalization, it should be noted, is not simply a matter of the native-immigrant distinction itself, but also of other distinctions, such as those in religion and language, that are correlated with it. When this complex of distinctions is manifest in many domains (implying that participants enact it with regularity in their everyday lives) and is associated with salient asymmetries in social status and

power, then it is unlikely to be blur-able; in the opposite case, it is already blurred or is at least blur-able.

That social boundaries separate immigrant minority groups from native majority groups and are typically imposed and maintained by majorities as a way of creating social distance and preserving privileges (or achieving 'monopolistic closure', to employ the famous phrase of Max Weber (1968, p. 388) is hardly news. But what has not been given sufficient attention is that: a) boundaries are not all the same, and their nature may admit of greater or lesser permeability; and b) boundaries are generally constructed from cultural, legal, and institutional materials that are already at hand and thus they depend in a path-dependent way on the prior histories of the societies and groups involved (Favell 1998). Finally, they are sociologically complex in that they manifest themselves in distinct ways in different domains.

### Citizenship

A fundamental aspect of the boundary between a native ethnic majority and an immigrant minority concerns citizenship (Brubaker 1992). Citizenship governs access to fundamental rights in a society, even if the differences in rights between citizens and non-citizens have narrowed over several decades in most North American and European societies (Liebman 1992; Soysal 1994). Nevertheless, citizenship confers not only political rights but greater freedom to leave and re-enter a society along with protection from deportation (a non-trivial issue for the non-citizen second generation in Germany, for instance). It may also affect the ability to assist relatives to immigrate. More subtly, it affects the sense of membership and the willingness to make claims asserting rights.

In general, the rules determining citizenship are distinct for the immigrant and second generations, since the socialization of the latter in the host society is presumed by legislators to facilitate the assumption of the obligations of citizenship. Except in unusual cases, such as the ethnic Germans of eastern Europe, immigrants attain citizenship in receiving societies by naturalization, which requires significant periods of residence and additional 'proofs' of belonging, such as demonstrated proficiency in the host society's official language and knowledge of its history. Partly for this reason, many in the immigrant generation remain legally foreign throughout all or most of their lives. For the second generation, however, there are birthright, or *jus soli*, elements in the rules that determine citizenship in most immigration societies. Until recently, Germany was an exception.

Yet there remains considerable variation in the citizenship situations of second generations in the three societies we are considering. That in the United States is the simplest because of the unqualified attribution

of citizenship to individuals born on American soil. Consequently, second-generation Mexicans hold U.S. citizenship and thus are not different from natives in this respect. Second-generation Mexican Americans are not Mexican citizens, though they may easily become dual nationals through a 'recovery' procedure (created by amendments to the Mexican Constitution that took effect in 1998). At this point, few Mexican Americans appear to have availed themselves of this possibility (Migration News 2001).

France has a more qualified form of birthright citizenship for the second generation, which is complicated in the case of Algerians by the so-called '*double droit de sol*', the automatic citizenship at birth of the third generation (Weil 2002). The French-born children of foreign-born, non-citizen parents, the usual case of the second generation, typically attain citizenship by their majority under circumstances that depend on their year of birth. Before 1993 and since 1998, citizenship has been acquired passively—automatically granted at age 18 unless an individual rejects it. Between those years, however, the more restrictive "loi Pasqua," set the rules: citizenship for a member of the second generation required a declaration of the intent (*volonté*) to acquire it. This declaration amounted to filing a statement between the ages of 16 and 21 and fell far short of a naturalization procedure. Yet other members of the second generation have acquired citizenship at earlier ages if their parents naturalized. For some children of Algerian parents, there is a further complication. Under the *double droit de sol*, the French-born child of French-born parents is French at birth, regardless of the parents' citizenship. Since Algeria was part of France before its independence in 1962, this provision of the law applies to French-born children of parents who were themselves born in Algeria before independence. As a result of the easy access to citizenship, the vast majority of the Maghrebin second generation is legally French by the time of adulthood (Weil 2002, p. 180). Some studies have revealed, however, the existence of confusion over its citizenship status. This includes some immigrant parents who are unaware that their children are French and some second-generation members who, having been born and raised in France, are unaware that they are not legally French (see Tribalat *et al.* 1991; Weil 2002).

The German case remains the most distinctive, despite the fundamental change brought about by legislation that created provisional birthright citizenship for all second-generation children born after 1999. Previously, the second generation was legally foreign at birth and had to undergo a naturalization procedure in order to acquire German citizenship. At first, the requirements were substantially the same as those applying to the foreign-born and included, in addition to a long period of residence, competence in the German language, a significant fee, a clean police record and surrender of previous citizenship (Castles

and Davidson 2000, pp. 86–94). The last in particular posed a problem for many Turkish families because of Turkish inheritance law, and as a consequence the rate of naturalization appears to have been very low in the Turkish second generation (Diehl and Blohm 2003). In 1993, the naturalization requirements were eased for the second generation, although the insistence on surrender of prior citizenship was not. Nevertheless, the rate of naturalization increased among Turks, especially because knowledge about how to circumvent the required loss of Turkish citizenship was spreading. However, as of the late 1990s, the majority of second-generation Turks were not German citizens, and a sizable minority had no plans to naturalize (Diehl and Blohm 2003). The impact of the new law granting provisional citizenship will not be fully felt among adult members of the second generation for two decades.

Thus, in terms of bright versus blurred boundaries, Germany has until recently exemplified the former in the domain of citizenship, while the U.S. illustrates the latter. In principle, France is close to the U.S., although the qualified nature of birthright citizenship interacts with harsh memories of the Algerian War to make France more of an intermediate case for Algerians (but not, so far as the evidence permits one to conclude, for other Maghrebins). Abdelmalek Sayad (1987) has persuasively demonstrated the profound ambivalence that Algerian immigrants – and, one presumes, their children – feel about acquiring French citizenship.

These differences are reflected to some extent in the sense of membership in the receiving society felt by the second generation. At one end of the spectrum is the Mexican-American case. In general, the available survey evidence suggests that Mexican Americans are at least as patriotic as non-Hispanic Americans and are, for example, represented in the U.S. armed forces at rates at least as high as those one would predict from their socio-economic position (de la Garza *et al.* 1996). At the other end is the case of Turks in Germany. Given that a large fraction of them are not German citizens, it is perhaps unsurprising that only a minority of the German-born identify themselves as German and a substantial group, though not the majority, do not intend to stay in Germany (Bender and Seifert 2000, pp. 80–81). The intermediate, but more complicated, case is that of the Maghrebins in France. The evidence, which stems mainly from the 1992 MGIS survey conducted under the direction of Michèle Tribalat (1995; 1996), indicates some hesitation in the identification with France on the part of second-generation Algerians. This is registered above all in low rates of participation in military service, where the reluctance of French-Algerian youth is reinforced by willingness in the military to exempt them (Tribalat 1995, pp. 208–210).<sup>6</sup> The second-generation Franco-Algerians are also

somewhat less likely than other French citizens to be registered as voters. However, they are not at all interested in returning to Algeria and they intend to spend their lives in France.

### **Religion as a site of boundary construction**

In European societies, religion is evidently a key institutional site for the demarcation of native-immigrant boundaries, though the nature of the construction is not so evident at first sight (Zolberg and Long 1999; Kastoryano 2002). For Mexicans in the U.S., the significance of religion as a boundary is much less obvious, but only because of past boundary shifts.

It was not very long ago that mainstream Americans defined the U.S. as a white, Protestant nation. In the early twentieth century the arrival of large numbers of eastern and southern European Catholics and Jews generated intense xenophobia among native whites (Higham 1970). Today, reflecting our contemporary understanding of the differences that matter, the dimensions of this past difference are described as predominantly ethnic and even racial, but, to nativist observers at the time, the religious differences were as salient as the ethnic/racial ones. Judaism and Catholicism, the latter perhaps to a lesser extent since it is in the Christian family, were seen as incompatible with mainstream institutions and culture. The Protestant zealotry of the Ku Klux Klan, which revived in 1915 and reached the zenith of its membership and its influence on the national scene during the 1920s, marks only the extreme pole of a spectrum of anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic attitudes. It has been forgotten today that at that time the Klan had strong contingents in many Northern cities where immigrants concentrated—for instance, more than one in ten Protestant men in Chicago were members (Jackson 1967, pp. 125–26). Many Catholic and Jewish immigrants of the early twentieth century would have been familiar with parades of the hooded figures.

Yet, over time, the formerly immigrant religions have become part of the American mainstream. Contemporary opponents of multiculturalism, in upholding the value of Western civilization, refer to ‘our’ Judaeo-Christian heritage. The religions as practised have certainly changed during the course of this incorporation into the mainstream: for instance, non-Orthodox forms of Judaism, including Reform Judaism, with its muted religious services and commitments, found wide acceptance in the U.S., and what had been a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar, Hanukkah, was elevated in status to provide Jewish children with an equivalent to Christmas; American Catholics have become known within their worldwide Church for combining a high level of religious observance with individualistic dissent from some Catholic teachings, such as those on birth control (Greeley 1990). But

the mainstream changed as well, as its boundary moved to include these alternative models of religious belief and practice.

This boundary shift can be observed in the easing of marriage across religious lines; this has been especially noticeable for Jews, whose rate of marriage with Christians went from less than 10 per cent to 50 per cent or more in the several decades between 1960 and 1990. This intermarriage cannot be understood simply as an assimilation of the Anglo-conformity type, a passing of minority individuals into the religion of the dominant group (Goldscheider 2003). A third to a half of Jewish-Christian couples participate in Jewish congregations and raise their children as Jewish, while others join Christian churches or create a non-denominational family culture. An entire literature has arisen to counsel such intermarried couples. It appears that, for the most part, those who affiliate with Judaism do not locate themselves at the more devout end of the religious spectrum, and their family cultures typically include some Christian elements, such as Christmas celebrations (Fishman 2004). No doubt, many of those who have adopted a Christian religious identity also participate in some Jewish rituals, such as Passover *seders* at the in-laws, since these are, after all, family occasions as much as religious ones. In effect, the once sharp religious boundary has been blurred, in the sense that rituals from both traditions are practised.

Because they are predominantly Catholic, the mainstream-immigrant boundary is also blurred for Mexicans. But it has not been erased. In a number of respects, the position of Mexicans as Catholics resembles that of southern Italian immigrants a century ago (Orsi 1985). They are bearers of a syncretic Catholicism that has absorbed elements from non-Catholic religious and folk practices, and many are more nominal Catholics than observant ones. Consequently, they have proved to be a fertile field of recruitment for Protestant denominations, as was also true of the southern Italians. Within the American Catholic Church, they belong mostly to ethnically Mexican parishes, and some evidence suggests that they have not been as well served by the Church as have the descendants of European Catholics. Thus, David Lopez (2004) points out that the Catholic school system, which provided an early route of social mobility for the Italians, is not as highly developed in the regions where Mexicans are concentrated as it is in other regions with many Catholics. Yet, as Catholics, they can still belong to multi-ethnic parishes when their social and spatial mobility brings them out of barrios. This was also a consequential step in the assimilation of Italian Catholics (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Alba and Orsi 2004).

The situation of the Muslim groups in European societies is quite different. Here we have to take into account the ways in which religion helps to define a mainstream, and which its institutionalization

defines a boundary that identifies those who are religiously 'other'. As Zolberg and Long (1999) point out, the religious mainstream in all three societies considered here reflects historic settlements after long periods of religious conflict. In France and Germany, these conflicts were bloody and prolonged, and the result was the institutionalization of one or two faiths as the mainstream religions. In France, this was Roman Catholicism, while in Germany, Catholicism and Lutheranism formed the two religious pillars. Both France and Germany have reached accommodations with Judaism, which remains very much a junior partner (and in Germany, a very uncomfortable one).

The role of religiously drawn boundaries in western European societies appears paradoxical since, in many ways, their mainstream is overtly secular (Casanova 1994, pp. 25–30). The levels of religious belief and practice are much lower in Europe than in the U.S., and the state and civil society have made attempts to open up to Muslims, most recently in France by the establishment of the *Conseil français du culte musulman* to consult with the state on matters of concern to Muslims. However, the ways in which Christian religions have been institutionalized and constitute, through customs and habits of thought, part of the definition of 'who we are' make it difficult for Islam to achieve parity. Thus, while secular natives of these societies may see religion as a minor feature of the mainstream, Muslims cannot help but be aware of the secondary status of their religion.

The German case is the more obvious, for there the established religions receive financial support through the tax system, which allows each taxpayer to designate one of them to receive a non-obligatory 'church tax' (for a brief overview of the German religious scene, see Schäfers 1990, pp. 296–307). So far, Islam has not broken into this system because the non-hierarchical, polyphonic nature of Islam does not offer up a legally recognizable authority that can receive and distribute tax support (a *Körperschaft des Öffentlichen Rechts*, or public-law corporation; see Barker 2000). In other words, the fact that Islam is not organized in the same way as the established churches leaves it outside the state-supported mainstream (Kandel 2002). Further, the established religions are taught in public schools by regular teachers (i.e., civil servants) during hours set aside for religious instruction. However, Islam has so far failed to be accorded the same status (except in Berlin), and instruction in it is not universally available; when it is, it occurs usually in some non-regular modality, e.g., on an experimental basis or in supplementary classes taught in Turkish by instructors provided by the Turkish consulate (for a review of the current situation, see Engin 2001; Kandel 2002). There is, moreover, considerable resistance among Germans to granting it parity. According to 1996 survey data, 60 per cent of west Germans and 88 per cent of east Germans are against Islamic religious

instruction in schools (see Wasmer and Koch 2000). The strength of this resistance is to some extent a function of disagreement with the provision of any religious instruction in schools. Since, however, the position of Christian religious instruction is unlikely to be challenged, this disagreement effectively adds to the bar against Islamic instruction in particular.

These specific ways in which the state supports the religious mainstream fail to do justice to the deep institutional and cultural embedding of the main Christian religions. This is especially true in the *Länder* of the South and Southwest, where there are large Catholic populations and large immigrant ones. In Bavaria, to take the extreme case, crucifixes still hang in the great majority of public school classrooms, despite a series of court judgements that have found the crosses in conflict with the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom (Auslander 2000; *Der Spiegel* 2002). For these states more generally, rituals and holidays occupy the public space in a way that makes them unavoidable for adherents of other religions. Thus, during the pre-Christmas period, the central squares of cities such as Munich and Nuremberg are fully taken up by Christmas markets. The onset of Lent is marked by riotous Fasching celebrations – the *Narrenfest* in Cologne being especially well known – that are organized by fraternal organizations, which often maintain long-standing traditions. No resident of these cities can be unaware of Fasching, and indeed it is the mostly Turkish Muslim streetcleaners who must sweep up the debris.

The situation in France is different, but the frequently subtle institutionalization of Christianity nevertheless produces a bright boundary for Muslims. The state's role is not overt, since *laïcité*, or strict neutrality with respect to religion, is a fundamental principle of the French state. However, in a society where a single religion, Roman Catholicism, has for centuries been paramount, *laïcité* can work to confine outsider religions to a marginal position rather than to effect religious parity (Baubérot 2000). Thus, the recognition of the major Christian holidays is taken for granted – in school and workplace schedules, for example (Auslander 2000, pp. 287–88). Zolberg and Long (1999, p. 34) note further that 'the display of nativity scenes in post offices and on the public square facing the Paris city hall are not considered violations of the separation of church and state'. There is no equivalent recognition for Muslim holidays.

The paradoxes of the state-religion relationship in a society that views itself as laic are revealed by the long-running *foulard* controversy. In a context where the wearing of the symbols of mainstream religions, such as crosses and yarmulkes, did not arouse controversy in schools, the challenge by the state and its employees, i.e., teachers and school administrators, to the wearing of head scarves by young



Muslim women appears to draw a boundary around Islam (Zolberg and Long 1999; Auslander 2000). The controversy began in the late 1980s with the expulsion from school of three Muslim students by the principal acting in the name of *laïcité*. Though the legal situation was subsequently resolved, if somewhat ambiguously, to allow head scarves, the right to wear them continued to be challenged on the ground, as parents, teachers and school administrators in some regions harassed or barred Muslim students on account of them (see, e.g., *Le Monde* 2000). The education ministry was even forced starting in 1994 to employ a full-time mediator for head-scarf conflicts. The latest and perhaps final chapter in what has become a struggle over national identity in an immigration setting is the passage in 2004, subsequent to a report by a national commission, of a law to bar 'conspicuous' religious symbols in schools; though formulated universalistically, it is understood by everyone to be aimed at the head scarf (*Le Monde* 2004).

In both France and Germany, a widespread problem for Muslims, which is implicated in the native-immigrant boundary, is that of establishing suitable places of worship. Such buildings render the relationship between religion and society visible in material form. There is an inevitable contrast between the mainstream and Islam because of the centrality of numerous impressive Christian churches to the national narrative—Notre Dame, built on the location of Lutece, the original settlement by Celts that laid a foundation for the city of Paris, and the site of important events (e.g., Napoleon's imperial self-coronation) ever since; St. Denis, the burial place of French royalty for centuries; or the Cathedral at Aachen, associated with Charlemagne and the founding of the Holy Roman Empire. By contrast, the places of worship of Muslims are often makeshift. Of France in 2000, Jonathan Laurance (2001) notes that the estimated 4 million Muslims have 1,558 prayer spaces in all of France, the vast majority of them quite small: 'Only 20 can hold more than 1,000 congregants. In all, there are five mosques in use in France that were built expressly as mosques'. By contrast, there are some 40,000 Catholic buildings. The great disproportion involved is indicated by the estimate that Muslims, the great majority of them from North Africa, are about 7 per cent of the French population (*Haut Conseil* 2000).

Moreover, in France, the 1905 law separating church and state has, in the current situation, the effect of subsidizing the mainstream religions while leaving stumbling blocks in the way of Islam. It placed previously existing Christian edifices in the hands of local and national authorities, thus obligating the state to maintain them, while barring it from contributing public money to the construction of new religious buildings (Baubérot 2000). At the time of its passage, the law was strenuously resisted by the Catholic Church. But now it acts as a

barrier to the construction of mosques without financial assistance from abroad (e.g., Saudi Arabia).<sup>7</sup> As described by Kepel (1991), the opposition of the local French population frequently makes the construction of a new mosque a far-from-easy endeavour, in any event, though there is often support from the French side as well. In fairness, one must acknowledge that several mosques have been built with assistance from local or national authorities: this is the case for one of the most impressive Islamic structures in France, the Grand Mosque of Paris, which was constructed during the 1920s at public expense. (However, as Kepel (1991, ch. 2) describes, the motivation lay in the realm of foreign policy: to demonstrate, at a time of restiveness in the Muslim portion of the French colonial empire, that France was a universalistic nation, not a purely Christian one.)

### Language

It might seem as if, in the U.S., language draws a bright boundary between the mainstream and the largest contemporary immigrant group that is equivalent to that associated with religion in France and Germany.<sup>8</sup> But language and religion are not truly equivalent, for language is much more susceptible to a graduated, intergenerational process of assimilation. This is, in fact, what the evidence shows in the U.S. and in France; the evidence from Germany is less clear (on the U.S. see Fishman 1972; Stevens 1985; Alba *et al.* 2002; on France, Tribalat 1995).

In a basic sense, the lack of equivalency is apparent, for one can, fairly easily, speak two languages. It is not impossible, of course, to practise two religions, but it is not easy and there are some obvious impediments in the form, for example, of contradictory dogma. Even in a society, like any of the three under consideration here, where a single national language is paramount and forces itself upon the speakers of other tongues, large portions of immigrant groups and their immediate descendants are bilingual in varying degrees and thus are not confined to one side of a brightly marked boundary.

Moreover, immigration societies usually are rather tolerant of minority languages in public space. Thus, the signage in immigration cities, such as Los Angeles and Paris, is multilingual, at least in some areas. Printed matter in the minority languages is widely available, and radio and television stations broadcast in them as well. Given the very large immigration from Latin America, this is especially true of Spanish in many cities of the U.S., which is making inroads even into the mainstream media marketplace through Univision and crossover advertising (Dávila 2001).

Further, immigrant languages are represented in public-school systems in ways that are not true of immigrant religions. In this

respect, too, the boundary becomes blurred. The paradigm here is not that of bilingual education, which is limited essentially to minority-language students and highly contested in the U.S., where, of the three societies, it is the most practised. Rather, it is 'foreign' language as a required element of study for all students. In this respect, however, there are notable differences among the situations of the three groups. In the U.S., Spanish is universally available in public-school systems and is, by far, the most widely studied language (Draper and Hicks 2002). Evidently, not only students from Hispanic families take Spanish, but so do many ethnic-majority students. The arrival of large numbers of Spanish-speaking immigrants has not reinforced the position of the previously high-prestige European languages, French and German, as a way of creating distance between the mainstream and the new arrivals. In France and Germany, by contrast, Arabic and Turkish are not widely available in schools, nor are they frequently studied, either by minority or majority students (on France, see Simon 1996, pp. 204–205). In France, English and Spanish predominate in the study of foreign languages (according to the data of the cultural minister; see [www.culture.fr](http://www.culture.fr)).

Proficiency in the mainstream language is close to universal in the second generation of all three groups, which is educated typically in the public schools of the receiving society. Some loss of the mother tongue is also common, especially since members of the second generation frequently prefer to speak the mainstream language (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In the U.S. but also in France, the second-generation pattern of 'responding to their parents in the dominant language while understanding what the parents say in the mother tongue' is well known (Charef 1983; Lopez 1996, p. 146).

Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) longitudinal study of school-age members of new immigrant groups is suggestive of the pressures to convert to the mainstream language in immigration settings. At the time of the first interview, in 1992, with first- and second-generation eighth and ninth graders in the Miami and Fort Lauderdale areas and in San Diego, the overwhelming majority were already proficient in English, though a large proportion at that point retained fluency in the mother tongue. Yet even where such fluency persisted, the prestige of English was high: overall, nearly three-quarters of respondents preferred to speak English, and this figure was greater still among the members of the second generation. By the time of the second interview three years later, the position of English had been strengthened while that of a mother tongue had deteriorated. The preference for English had expanded to nine-tenths of the youngsters overall. Moreover, reported competency in English had also grown, while that in the mother tongue declined.

The language outcomes do not seem very different for second-generation Maghrebins in France, though the data do not permit a precise comparison. One difference between the situations is that the Maghrebins are less unified by a single mother tongue, since many of the immigrants were Berber speakers, than are Mexicans in the U.S. Moreover, there is greater linguistic distance between either Arabic or Berber and French than between Spanish and English; and these mother tongues are rarely subjects of instruction in French public schools. According to Tribalat's MGIS data, about a third of the Algerian second generation cannot speak either language, and half claims French as its mother tongue. Overall, the percentage who claim to speak French well is at least as high as the equivalent for English in the U.S. (Simon 1996, pp. 203–205). In Germany, the impressionistic evidence is that Turks are more likely to maintain the mother tongue at home than are French Maghrebins. However, the percentage of the second generation that speaks German well is also very high (Bender and Seifert 2000, p. 81).

The wide study of Spanish by U.S. majority-group students would appear to create greater blurring of the native-immigrant boundary than is the case in either France or Germany. It implies that there is knowledge, however unequal, of the immigrant language on both sides of the boundary. Obviously, this does not mean that many majority members attain fluency in Spanish. Nor does it imply that the use of Spanish by the immigrant or second generation is acceptable in most non-private settings; in fact, its use is often censured (Lutz 2002). But it does affect the social prestige of Spanish, and it facilitates the penetration of some Spanish into the mainstream culture.

## Race

If language is not the basis of a bright boundary between second-generation Mexicans and the U.S. majority group, then perhaps race is. Certainly, the position is widespread among U.S. scholars that the non-white racial appearance of most contemporary immigrant groups creates a chasm between contemporary and previous immigration eras (Portes and Zhou 1993). Moreover, race may create not simply a bright boundary, but one that is virtually uncrossable for those with certain phenotypes. Mary Waters's (1999) research demonstrates how fateful is the black-white boundary for English-speaking West Indian immigrants and their children – how, for instance, it structures the identity options for the second generation. In everyday experience, black West Indians are simply unable to avoid being viewed through the prism of race.

African ancestry is uncommon among Mexicans, only a tiny percentage of whom classify themselves as black on the census.

Phenotypical differences are nevertheless of potentially great importance – Lopez and Stanton-Salazar (2001, p. 72) note that ‘those who fit the mestizo/Indian phenotype, who “look Mexican”, cannot escape racial stereotyping any more than African Americans, though the stigma is usually not so severe’. In truth, we know little about the social role of phenotypical differences among Mexican Americans, partly because they do not fit into the dominant black-white paradigm. We cannot even be sure how well they are captured by the racial classifications of the census, where the basic distinction for Mexicans lies between ‘white’ and ‘other’. Confusion is created by the practice of reclassifying Hispanics who provide a national-origin response to the census race question into the latter category. And, given the perception of ‘white’ as the desirable category, we cannot be sure of the degree to which self-classifications on the race question are, for Hispanics, endogenous rather than exogenous – a by-product of the social contexts in which they find themselves rather than of phenotype.

Yet there is evidence that the racial categories have a bearing on the assimilation process for Mexicans, and it seems plausible that the differences associated with phenotype are indicative of a segmented assimilation, the different trajectories associated with different racial appearances in U.S. society. Telles and Murguía (1990; Murguía and Telles 1996) have found that phenotype correlates with substantial differences in educational attainment and income that are not explained by other variables. In extensive analyses of residential location, Alba and Logan (e.g., Alba *et al.* 2000) find fairly consistent differences between white and racially ‘other’ Hispanics. In Los Angeles, where the Hispanic population is heavily Mexican, Hispanics who are ‘other’ reside, net of their other characteristics, including household income, in tracts that are about \$2,000 poorer than the tracts where white Hispanics are found. In addition, these neighbourhoods contain fewer non-Hispanic whites – by 5 percentage points. Overall, these are modest differences, however. And it is not always the case that ‘other’ Hispanics are residentially disadvantaged – in Houston, where Mexicans are also preponderant, this does not appear to be the case.

The residential disadvantages of racially ‘other’ Mexicans are much less than those faced by African Americans. The distance between the two grows as class position rises and linguistic acculturation occurs. A consistent finding across a large number of metropolitan contexts is that light-skinned middle-class, English-speaking Hispanics live in neighbourhoods that are very similar to, if not identical with, those where socio-economically similar non-Hispanic whites are found. Racially ‘other’ Hispanics are modestly more disadvantaged, but middle-class African Americans are much more so (Alba *et al.*

2000). Murguia and Telles (1996) also qualify their finding of racial disadvantage in education for non-white Mexican Americans, which appears to have been larger in the pre-World War II period and is lessened for Mexican Americans who grow up in English-speaking neighbourhoods.

The significance of racial distinctions is even more difficult to ascertain in the cases of the Maghrebins and Turks. The discourse of difference in France and Germany generally rejects the concept of race as inappropriate to their societies (see, e.g., Todd 1994, on France), though, especially in France, there are social scientists who perceive racism as a social problem (Wieviorka [1992] is one such).<sup>9</sup> In any event, because race and racism have no place in official thinking, no data comparable to those available in the U.S. census have been collected in either country.<sup>10</sup> But what is obvious to any observer in either country is that, on average, the members of both groups differ phenotypically from natives (Winant 2001). Visible difference then could serve as a basis for discrimination. Yet, with each group, there is a spectrum of appearance similar to that among Mexicans, which at one end is populated by individuals with light skin and European features. As is the case for Mexicans in the U.S., the burdens of race do not fall equally on all members of the two European immigrant groups.

## Discussion

The preceding review of the nature of the immigrant-native boundaries for Mexicans in the U.S., Maghrebins in France, and Turks in Germany indicates that the bright vs. blurred distinction reveals a meaningful difference between the U.S. and European situations. In France and Germany, religion creates a bright boundary, which is reinforced in the case of Germany by the barriers to citizenship for the second generation that existed before 2000. Since the recent change in the law affects only those born starting in 2000, the majority of second-generation Turkish adults are still not German citizens. In the U.S., race creates a potentially bright boundary for Mexicans, but one whose significance varies within the group. The evidence on the significance of racial appearance, which ranges mostly from a European phenotype to an indigenous one among Mexicans, is not definitive enough to declare it a bright boundary. If it is one, it mainly affects the half of the Mexican group that does not declare itself to be white.

The difference between the European and American situations suggests hypotheses about assimilation for research. A bright boundary does not usually eliminate assimilation—even hardened racial boundaries allow for some assimilation, but mostly for minority

individuals with a 'favoured' appearance; but it does create a different and narrower avenue to assimilation than exists when a boundary is blurred. In the European setting, the hypothesis that follows from the observation of a bright boundary is that assimilation is largely a matter of individual boundary crossing. It is most available to secularized Maghrebins and Turks and presumably to those who have attained substantially more than the modest educational attainment and occupational status that characterize the majority of these groups. It is likely to be associated with the social psychology that Child (1943) described so well for second-generation Italian Americans in the late 1930s. The risks associated with seeking acceptance from a dominant group that discriminates, while potentially facing accusations of disloyalty from a group of origin that perceives itself as an oppressed minority, are intimidating for many. Under these circumstances, the boundary-crossing form of assimilation is most likely for those individuals whose potential gain from realizing the value of their human capital in the mainstream is sufficient to outweigh the risks involved.

For light-skinned Mexican Americans, the boundary around the mainstream is blurred. This suggests that assimilation could have a broader social base than is true for Maghrebins and Turks, and that it can occur as a gradual process experienced by large numbers in the second generation, who go much further in school than their parents did, climb the occupational ladder, move into mixed neighbourhoods, and perhaps intermarry (for some evidence, see Farley and Alba 2002). Those experiencing some or all of these forms of mobility and assimilation will be aware of other Mexican Americans in similar situations. At the same time, many others in the second generation will experience few if any changes of these types in their lives. Given the role of race in the U.S., phenotypic appearance is likely to play a role in whether an individual falls into the first or second group. One aggregate difference from the European cases appears to be greater differentiation within the second-generation Mexican-American group than is found among Maghrebins and Turks.

One caution needs to be added to these considerations: namely, that the boundary from the mainstream does not come into play for life chances in precisely the same way in each society. This is evident in the sphere of education. In both the U.S. and Germany, boundary-related processes are visible there: In the U.S., the differences in educational attainment among U.S.-born Mexicans are large and apparently fateful for insertion into the labour market (Farley and Alba 2002). In Germany, educational differences in the Turkish second generation are not as big because a large portion of the group is tracked into the lowest tier of a highly stratified system (Alba *et al.* 1994); given the tight linkage between the educational system and the labour market

there, labour-market opportunities are highly limited for these young people (Faist 1995). In France, however, ethnic origin appears to be somewhat loosely linked to educational outcomes, and, in contrast to Mexicans in the U.S. and Turks in Germany, many North African students appear to persist in the academic track of the system (Tribalat 1995). However, young Maghrebins experience a great deal of difficulty when they attempt to find jobs and have high rates of under- and unemployment (Silberman and Fournier 1999; Silberman and Alba 2004). Hence, they appear to be unable to realize the labour-market outcomes to be expected from their persistence in the educational system.

## **Conclusion**

In all immigration societies, the social distinction between immigrant and second generations, on the one hand, and natives, on the other, is a sociologically complex one. It is, in a sense, a fault line along which other differences and distinctions pile up. In general, the immigrant parents of the second generation are distinctive in their language and some of their customs; and they may also be so in terms of their labour-market concentrations, their religion, and their racial appearance. The second generation shares some or all of these features. The societal mainstream is largely in the hands of the ethnic/racial majority group, which, in seeking to impose a social distance between itself and immigrant minorities, makes certain that its culture and characteristics are valorized in key institutions. But the construction of immigrant-native boundaries is, in each society, a path-dependent process that hinges on the materials available in the social-structural, cultural, legal, and other institutional domains of the receiving society, as well as on characteristics and histories that the immigrants themselves present. Hence, boundaries do not have the same character everywhere; and though invariably they do allow for some assimilation to occur, the terms under which this happens vary from one societal context to another.

Because assimilation is not the uniform process it has sometimes been stereotyped to be, we are in need of comparative research to identify the conditions that affect it. This may be especially true for the study of immigrant groups in the U.S. As Barbara Schmitter Heisler (2000) argues, theorizing in the U.S. (where most theorizing occurs, in fact) has largely taken for granted the structural features of American society, such as the salience of race. One requirement for comparative research is the identification of concepts that enable the researcher to find equivalents in other immigration societies for such features, or equivalents in the U.S. for prominent distinctions and differences elsewhere.



The argument here is that boundary concepts, such as bright vs. blurred boundaries, provide a productive basis for comparisons. These concepts subsume features like race that have proved their explanatory power in the U.S. and enable them to be matched with their equivalents (or near equivalents) elsewhere.

The utility of this approach can be illustrated with the model of segmented, or downward, assimilation, which has drawn a great deal of scholarly attention since it was first proposed by Portes and Zhou (1993, see also Gans [1992]) only a decade ago. Downward assimilation has been posited as the trajectory of low-income, nonwhite groups residing in the inner city, where second-generation youth are attracted by the oppositional culture of the native underclass (Portes and Zhou 1993; Lopez and Stanton-Salazar 2001). But the evidence, particularly for some of the Maghrebins in France (that for Turks seems less clear), points to a trajectory like that posited for downward assimilation—relatively early departure from school, a high incidence of difficulties with the police, relatively high unemployment, and modest occupational attainment on average (Charef 1983; Tribalat 1995; Silberman and Fournier 1999). While the model of segmented assimilation depends on hardened racial boundaries and ghettoization, these features are without precise parallels in France. In fact, they are directly disputed by many French social scientists, who claim that the mildness of racism and the absence of ghettos *à la américaine* are precisely what distinguishes the French scene from the American one (e.g., Body-Gendrot 1999). What this example suggests is that the model of downward assimilation, if reformulated in terms of bright boundaries, can be freed from its dependence on U.S. structural features and generalized to apply to second-generation exclusion in more than one society.

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## Notes

1. Some may prefer the term 'integration' for this parity. The relationship between the terms 'integration' and 'assimilation' remains unsettled because of variations in the way that they are defined. Generally speaking, however, the term 'integration' tends to be preferred by scholars who want to allow for the possibility that parity may occur without significant diminishment of ethnic cultural and communal attachments (see, for example, Richard and Tripiër 2002). This possibility may be realizable for members of groups that possess or can attain substantial economic resources; but it is highly unlikely for the sort of labour-seeking immigrant group considered here. For such a group, typified by contemporary Mexican immigrants to the U.S. and by southern Italians in an earlier era, the attainment of parity is generally accompanied by changes in other domains that are consistent with the concept of assimilation as defined by Alba and Nee (2003).

2. Not all of the indigeneous groups of the Maghreb were Muslim; the Jewish presence was substantial. However, in France, the term 'Maghrebin' is usually applied only to the Muslim portion of this immigrant stream. The reasons can be traced back in French colonial history, where the legal and social position of North African Jews was different from that of Muslims. In Algeria, which unlike Morocco and Tunisia was made integrally part of France, Jews were collectively naturalized as French citizens by the Crémieux decree of 1870, while Muslim Algerians were regarded legally as French nationals but not citizens until 1947. Although individual Muslims could in principle become citizens, such naturalization required them to withdraw from the separate Muslim legal system and was tantamount to apostasy; hence, it was extremely rare, as was, incidentally, conversion to Catholicism. This was true despite the facts that Muslims were subject to an onerous legal code (*code de l'indigénat*), and that, until late in colonial history, few could vote and then only for candidates for seats reserved for the indigenous population (see Ruedy [1992] for a very clear explication of these difficult matters). At the moment of independence, Algerian Jews left for France as French citizens, whereas the great majority of Muslims immigrated after independence as citizens of the new state. Clearly, then, their relationships to the receiving society were starkly different (Alba and Silberman 2002).

3. The definition of ethnicity is intentionally formulated to subsume the concept of race. Scholars of ethnicity and race differ on the question of whether ethnicity and race should be regarded as nested or distinct concepts (Cornell and Hartmann 2002). For the purposes of investigating immigrant-group incorporation, however, it is extremely useful to be able to regard the perception of racial difference as one aspect of a broader ethnic distinction.

4. This is not the only new definition of the concept, as scholars seek to reformulate it in terms of contemporary immigration. Brubaker (2001, p. 542), for instance, defines assimilation as 'becoming similar (in some respect, to some reference population)'.

5. The parallelism I have invoked between second-generation Italians in mid-twentieth century America and contemporary children of immigrants is open to challenge. A difference of considerable magnitude in their prospects could result from the changes in the economic structures of Western societies that have been widely argued to reduce the likelihood of socio-economic advance by today's second generation (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993). Though the changes are real and have been much discussed, their ramifications for the second and third generations remain uncertain (see, e.g., Boyd and Grieco 1998; Farley and Alba 2002).

6. This difficulty has since been eased for second-generation Maghrebins by the 1997 legislation eliminating universal military service.

7. As I write, there has been some discussion by the current government of amending the law to make possible public contributions to the construction of mosques (*Le Monde* 2003).
8. Indeed, the title, but not the text, of Zolberg and Long's [1999] subtle institutional analysis suggests as much.
9. The philosopher Etienne Balibar has also identified racism as a problem affecting immigrant groups in France. However, he uses the term in a broader way than most social scientists would, speaking of racism as 'articulated through the stigmata of alterity (name, skin colour, religious practices)' (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988, p. 28; my translation).
10. In the case of France, the significance of race can be established by tracking the position of groups of sub-Saharan African descent, which have arrived either from French territories in the Caribbean or from former colonies in Africa. The relevant research, while not extensive, indicates substantial disadvantages for those with black skin (e.g., Model *et al.* 1999). Moreover, second-generation members of these groups are highly likely to believe that they suffer from discrimination in the labour market and to perceive their skin colour as the marker of their disadvantage. Second-generation Maghrebins are equally likely to see themselves as victims of discrimination, but they perceive their names more than their skin colour to be the marker involved (Silberman and Alba 2004). These data suggest the more racially ambiguous situation of the North African groups.

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**RICHARD ALBA** is Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Public Policy at Albany, State University of New York.  
Email: <r.alba@albany.edu >