

Ethnic differences in the process of labour-market entry: the case of second generation in France

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Extended abstract.

Second generation faces more difficulties in their access to the French labour market than natives and the risk of unemployment is exceptionally high for North African groups (cf. Boumahdi & al., 2005; Meurs & al, 2006, Silberman & al., 2007). Once hired, the wages of this group are similar to other wage earners (Aeberhard & al., 2007), once individual characteristics taken into the account. So the question of wage discrimination appears to be negligible compared to the unemployment gap between groups of different origins.

Given these observations, the concept of a segmented assimilation seems relevant in the case of France. According to this hypothesis (Portes and Zhou, 1993), the assimilation of different groups of migrants and of their descendants may follow different paths. In the US, racial discrimination plays a central role in this phenomenon. In the case of France, Silberman & al. (2007) argued that markers such as names are more responsible than skin colours for the discrimination on the labour market.

To test this hypothesis, we take advantage of the availability in the last French labour force surveys of information on the nationality, the country of origin and the social status of parents' individuals. We compare the situation on the labour market of the following groups: male natives and three sub-groups of second generation: men born to immigrant parents, men born to a migrant father and a French native mother and men born to a French native father and a migrant mother. We distinguish between those with a North African origin and those with a South Europe origin. We postulate that the (father) name is used by the employer to deduce the origin of the person. So the name reveals the immigrant origin in the case of people born to a migrant father. We estimate a probit equation of the probability to be unemployed controlling for human capital variables, region and parents' characteristics. Our results indicate that North African second generation born to intermarried parents has a higher risk of unemployment if born to a migrant father than born to a migrant mother. The effect of having a migrant father rather a migrant mother on the risk of unemployment is not observed in the case of South European group. We conclude that a statistical discrimination based on the name plays probably a large role in the high rate of unemployment of North African second generation on the French labour market.

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