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„ (Re) - Constructing Collective Identity: the Experience of
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On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

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L'Algérie Française (and its downfall) left a lasting mark on French society, especially for those who experienced the colony firsthand. The return to France of former settlers in the 1960s transformed the essence of who they were and who they were to become. In this research, I will ask how the group identity of the Pieds-Noirs was reshaped after their exile to France in the early 1960s, and reflect on how this question speaks to broader collective dynamics. The relevance of these questions has not lost of its intensity with time. In fact, the integration of post-colonial communities into French society is a question that is still very much present in today's political debates and the bilateral ties between France and Algeria, are to this day, darkened by memories of war and historical breakage. The social-psychological weight of this debate is necessary to fully grasp how the Pieds-Noirs utilised collective memory to fill the gap of a lost land. This research argues that: 1) the interactions between the Pieds-Noirs and their environment is the basis of our understanding of their collective identity; 2) identity is an expression of power structures and the loss of colonial status of the Pieds-Noirs changed their social position; and 3) collective memory allows group identity to endure beyond contextual expressions, however, it does not allow for the equal intensity of social consciousness.

Die Algérie Française (und ihr Untergang) hat die französische Gesellschaft nachhaltig geprägt, vor allem für diejenigen, die die Kolonie aus erster Hand erlebt haben. Die Rückkehr der ehemaligen Siedler nach Frankreich in den 1960er Jahren veränderte das Wesen dessen, was sie waren und wer sie werden sollten. In dieser Untersuchung werde ich der Frage nachgehen, wie die Gruppenidentität der Pieds-Noirs nach ihrem Exil in Frankreich in den frühen 1960er Jahren umgestaltet wurde, und darüber nachdenken, wie diese Frage mit einer breiteren kollektiven Dynamik zusammenhängt. Die Relevanz dieser Fragen hat mit der Zeit nicht an Intensität verloren. In der Tat ist die Integration der postkolonialen Gemeinschaften in die französische Gesellschaft eine Frage, die in den heutigen politischen Debatten immer noch sehr präsent ist, und die bilateralen Beziehungen zwischen Frankreich und Algerien sind bis heute durch die Erinnerung an den Krieg und den historischen Bruch verdunkelt. Das sozialpsychologische Gewicht dieser Debatte ist notwendig, um zu verstehen, wie die Pieds-Noirs das kollektive Gedächtnis nutzten, um die Lücke eines verlorenen Landes zu füllen. In dieser Studie wird argumentiert, dass: 1) die Wechselwirkungen zwischen den Pieds-Noirs und ihrer Umwelt die Grundlage für unser Verständnis ihrer kollektiven Identität bilden; 2) Identität ein Ausdruck von Machtstrukturen ist und der Verlust des kolonialen Status der Pieds-Noirs ihre soziale Position veränderte; und 3) das kollektive Gedächtnis es der Gruppenidentität ermöglicht, über kontextuelle Ausdrücke hinaus zu überdauern, es jedoch nicht die gleiche Intensität des sozialen Bewusstseins ermöglicht.

I. Introduction

J'ai quitté mon pays (*I have left my country*)

J'ai quitté ma maison (*I have left my home*)

Ma vie, ma triste vie (*My life, my sad life*)

Se traîne sans raison (*Goes by without purpose*)

J'ai quitté mon soleil (*I left my sun*)

J'ai quitté ma mer bleue (*I left my blue sea*)

Leurs souvenirs se réveillent (*Memories awaken*)

Bien après mon adieu (*Long after my goodbyes*)

Adieu Mon Pays, Enrico Macias; October 5th, 1962

After over one hundred years of French colonial rule, Algeria regained its independence in 1962. In the months following the political agreement between the two countries, Enrico Macias, a former French settler, wrote *Adieu Mon Pays* as a farewell to his Algerian home. The oriental guitar and melancholic verses only capture a portion of the sadness of hundreds of thousands of European settlers as the French colony of Algeria came to an end amidst brutal conflict. Memories of French Algeria, however, crossed the Mediterranean alongside former settlers in exile and continue to be a sensitive aspect of French history. School curriculum dedicates an entire chapter about the former colony and its modern-day relevance, significantly more than for any other French colony. Continued politicisation was made apparent in 2005 when educational programmes were encouraged to incorporate more “positive” aspects of colonisation. This state-led initiative caused outcry amongst those who had experienced French colonies firsthand, and called out the lack of solemnity of the French government towards the brutality of its former colonial empire (Savarese 2006: 4). This year, in an interview with Algerian author, Kamel Daoud, French President Emmanuel Macron stated: “*I don't have to ask for forgiveness, that's not the point, the word would break all ties*” (Le Figaro 2023). President Macron maintained his position from his visit to Alger in August of 2022, during which he emphasised the necessity to step away from discourses of shame and repentance (ibid). These statements had already been subject to debate as some consider that more recognition of the atrocities committed is needed to work towards genuine reconciliation.

The Scramble for Africa designates the period of intensive invasion and colonisation of African states by Western European countries in the nineteenth century, opening a new chapter of European imperialism. Algeria was first occupied by France in the 1830s and would remain French until more than a century later. During this time, many Europeans settled in Algeria, to find a better life for their families. This changed when Algeria won its independence in 1962, as almost a million settlers were expected to return to Europe, the majority of which returned to France. This transition represented a breaking point between the two realities, if not the most traumatic experience for those who experienced it. In some way, the move to Algeria was a door closed to European life, and this door was not intended to be reopened. Officially, the group of nearly one million settlers who returned to France in the early 1960s are called the *rapatriés* in French, or the repatriates in English (Savarese 2006: 5). From a legal perspective, they were granted a special group status from the beginning of the decolonisation process: *French nationals who have had to or consider themselves obliged to leave, as a result of political events, a territory where they were established and which was previously placed under the sovereignty, protectorate or trusteeship of France, may benefit from the national solidarity affirmed by the preamble to the Constitution of 1946* (Law n° 61-1439 of December 26th, 1961). The question of integration into one's own country of national seems like an odd one to pose. However, for many Pieds-Noirs, Algeria was all that they, and their elders, had ever known. Their arrival represented the loss of a brutal war for France, and metropolitans struggled to accept the Pieds-Noirs as their own. The transition from their status as colonial settlers to that of a population in exile carried important implications for their position in the social structure, as a group and individually. In fact, settlers who appeared loosely tied to each other in Algeria became seemingly more aware of their unity in France, which leads us to question whether this transition was decisive in their collective identity. The end of the colonial era meant that former settlers had to adapt to their new environments and find a new place for themselves amongst other French nationals.

To what extent did the Pieds-Noirs' exile contribute to the construction of a collective identity? The relevance of such interrogations is multifaceted. First, this case is of high emotional value in France and continues to speak to a large group of people, either those who experienced French Algeria themselves or those who are direct descendants. This case study speaks directly to the societal makeup of French society today and offers a voice to those who have been forgotten in the effort to put colonisation behind us. From a conceptual perspective, observing relational patterns in group

formation is directly relevant for our understanding of other groups of former colonial settlers who have had to return to the colonising state. Secondly, the discussion about minority identities, in general, is politically relevant given the current rise of right-winged and populist political discourses in Europe and the idealisation of homogenous societies, where majority voices are over-prioritised. Finally, the literature has under-explored the relationship between identity-building through interaction and minority groups. The intersection between political and behavioural science is one of particular interest for our understanding of how groups interact. I hope to contribute to the discussion about minority identities and the opportunity of shared experiences to be a basis for collective consciousness, and more broadly, how interpersonal relationships come to organise social structures and expectations.

I will begin by summarising the story of French Algeria, from the invasion in the 1830s to the independence of Algeria in 1962 and the exile of the Europeans established there. Then, I will establish the academic and theoretical framework surrounding collective identity of former settlers in Algeria, leading up to an analytical discussion on the construction of their collective consciousness upon their return to France. Here, I will connect empirical data to conceptual understandings, to the implications of the transition of how the Pieds-Noirs perceived themselves and their surroundings.

II. Historical Overview: Franco-Algerian Relations over Time

The African continent had already begun to feel the economic greed of European states during the earlier stages of Western industrialisation (Holsinger 1986: 4). The organised annexation of African states was accelerated by the Berlin Conference and the resulting *Scramble for Africa* between powerful imperial states in Europe. Algeria did not escape the colonising frenzy of the nineteenth century, and became a French colony of settlement in 1830 under French King, Charles X (Lorcin 1999: 655 & Holsinger 1986: 4). The invasion of Algeria took some years to accomplish, progressively pushing deeper into the Sahara desert (see map below) (Holsinger 1986: 4).

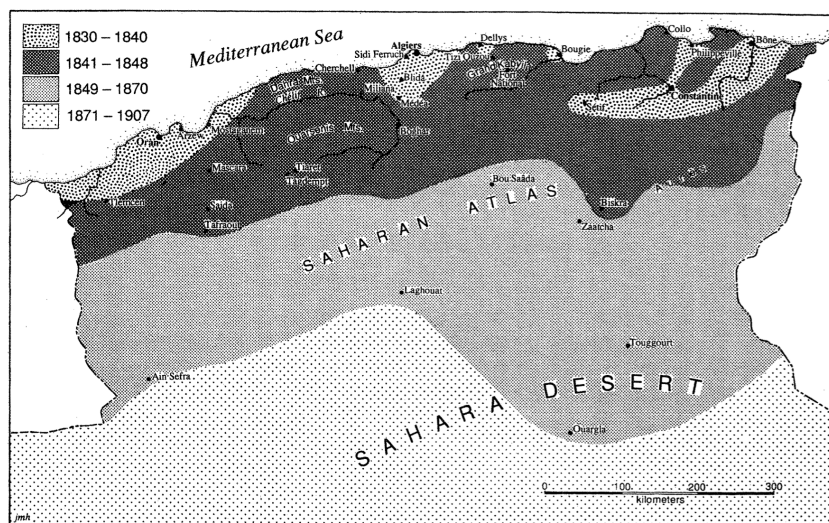


Figure 1. Map showing the stages of the French conquest of Algeria. (From John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992]; used by permission of Indiana University Press.)

Map: (Lorcin 1999: 656)

In line with the colonising narratives of the nineteenth century, France presented itself as Algeria's *saviour* and the key to its development. In 1930, during the centennial celebration of French Algeria, a memorial monument wrote: "the French Republic, having given prosperity to this country, civilisation, and justice, grateful Algeria pledges to its Mother Country its eternal allegiance" (Cohen 2003: 137). The relationship between colonisation and paternal influence cannot be ignored, both in our understanding of historical processes and the legacy of colonialism as a structure of thought. In 1848, Algeria became an integral part of France under the Second Republic and the country was then divided into three *départements*: Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. The military government was replaced by a civil government headed by Governor General Randon, the administrative director of Algeria (Holsinger 1986: 4). The submissive character of the relationship between Algerians and the newly imposed French government quickly became evident. In a letter to

the people of the Mizab region in the North, General Randon wrote “this is not a question of a commercial treaty between you and us but rather of your submission, pure and simple, to France” (ibid: 8).

Settlers from France, Malta, Spain, German, Switzerland, and Italy progressively poured into various cities in Algeria, who hoped to find jobs and better living conditions (Grandgeorge). Flows increased as the French government heavily promoted the colony of settlement for its opportunities, and introduced citizenship laws in 1889 to allow settlers to directly obtain French nationality from the colony (ibid). By the time war broke out in 1954, Algeria was home to upwards of 1.2 million settlers. Within the colony, settlers and locals interacted solely on a superficial level, and Algerians disposed of far fewer rights than European settlers (ibid). Political decision-making power was unequally distributed and Algerians had little say over their rights and their property (Zack 2002: 64). Algeria was reinvented to confirm French imperial superiority, and assimilate French culture (ibid). From the perspective of the settlers, the coexistence with local populations was peaceful and mutually acceptable. One personal account stated: “Muslims, Christians, and Jews practised their religion in perfect harmony, in mutual respect of each others’ beliefs, their mores and ancestral customs” (ibid: 130 & 132). This perception, however, showed its weaker face in the early first half of the twentieth century, as violence spread throughout the country and locals expressed their disapproval of the colonial status quo.

This violence ultimately resulted in an eight-year war that would change the fate of both countries for decades to come, and is considered one of the most brutal colonial conflicts to have taken place after the Second World War (Zack 2002: 55). In the 1940s, the disproportional rise of the Muslim population, and the increased awareness of the inequalities between groups in Algeria, caused unrest (ibid: 81). Anti-colonial opinion rose after the Second World War, the French Government attempted to curb the unrest with some minor policies to increase the rights of the local population (ibid: 82). This was not enough, however, and in November 1954, the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*, or National Liberation Front) launched an armed attack against the French in the Eastern part of Algeria, in an effort to put an end to French colonial rule and establish an independent regime (ibid). Generalised violence broke out throughout the country and summited at the Battle of Algiers in 1957 (ibid: 85). The FLN received increasing support, both from local communities inside Algeria (Arabs, Berbers, and Muslims), as well as from other Western states who no longer found justification to the French colony (ibid). European settlers, on the other hand, deeply cared to

maintain Algeria French (Feist 2022). The first accounts of group identity-building became apparent here, and opposed who supported the independence and who did not (Zack 2002: 85). In response to deceiving losses, devoted civilians and frustrated military officials in favour of the French colony founded the OAS (*Organisation Armée Secrète*, or Secret Army Organisation) in 1961 (Blanche 2007: 3). The OAS and the FLN engaged in localised acts of barbarity, and bombings, massacres and other militia attacks took over the final years of the conflict. Public opinion in France urged the government to respond to the chaos, and on January 8th, 1961, a referendum in France established Algeria's right to political sovereignty and suffrage over their fate (Evian Accords 1962). On March 19th of the following year, the Evian Accords were signed between both states, formally putting an end to the war in Algeria (Zack 2002: 85). The agreement, signed by De Gaulle's government and the FLN's provisional government of Algeria, provided national sovereignty and self-determination to Algeria, who would be free from of colonial role. Nonetheless, the accords allowed the two states to maintain economic, financial and cultural connections, primarily in the French interest (Jordi 2022).

The dissolution of French Algeria led to a massive exile of European settlers who had been established there. Whether or not European settlers would remain in Algeria after its independence was a question that did not pose itself at the time, as the shocking violence of the militia groups didn't leave a choice (Cohen 2003: 130). Fear of retaliation from local communities in Algeria, with whom utopias of peaceful cohabitation had vanished during the war, left many questioning their safety in Algeria, and many returned to France with a sense of urgency. The arrival brought to the surface unhealed wounds of the conflict and a forced acceptance of a lost colonial golden age, and proved to be a difficult process, both for the settlers themselves and the Metropolitan French. In fact, significant human and material losses on the French side, along with a humbling military failure, made many French metropolitans reticent to the arrival of former settlers (ibid). The purpose of this study is to explore this transition between the colonial reality and the former settlers' return to France, particularly assessing the shift in collective consciousness associated with this change.

III. Literature Review

In this section, I will attempt to understand how this study contributes to the wider body of literature about collective identity. The academic underpinnings of this research are particularly broad and draw from both political and socio-behavioural literature, however, the relationship between Pieds-Noirs and collective memory has been particularly under-explored.

Perhaps the broadest definition of an established group identity is the national unit. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* provides a basis for reflection on how individuals come to consider themselves as part of an entity bigger than themselves. He argued that the nation-state, beyond its legal and political characteristics, is ultimately a social construct (Anderson 2006: 6). In other words, communities exist insofar as individuals acknowledge that they do. The first component, the *imagined*, suggests that individuals mentally construct their belonging to a larger group of individuals. Thus, the level of legitimacy of a group is granted by its members. Nationals of a given country will most likely never meet every single one of their compatriots, yet the commitment to the idea that they exist is what allows a nation to withhold a sense of community (ibid). However, this construction of the mind is limited both objectively, through physical borders and subjectively, through a more complex understanding of who can belong to the community and who cannot (ibid: 7). While the nation-state is a larger, more institutionalised structure, than what we are exploring in this research, the understanding of the community as something that doesn't simply exist, serves as a relevant foundation for this present research. However, this argument seems to overlook the role of individual identity in our understanding of the group. Primordialism (early twentieth century), for example, criticises the lack of consideration for objective individual factors of similitude. In other words, this theory argues that, in order to create collectiveness, objective factors are more prominent than the subjective, or imagined, ones that Anderson suggests (Coakley 2017: 1). The hegemony of constructivism of the 2000s largely dismissed this theory, however, some authors continue to argue in favour of its fundamental relevance in any discussion about identity (ibid: 2). It argues that group consciousness is "derived from 'primordial' ties which bind people together, either by virtue of genetic links, (...), or through perceived cultural similarities based on such features as language, religion, territory and kinship (Smith 1998, in ibid: 6). The connection between the two theories is not strictly one of opposition, however, despite being brought up in different periods of political thought. In fact, Coakley argues that the Primordial approach to nation-building is an *ingredient* of nationalism, where nationalism added the subjectivity inherent to its time. What do the above-mentioned theories bring to the table? The

nation-state, as the broadest and most formalised group identity, has been extensively peeled apart theoretically and opened up more recent discussions about other collective constructions, much smaller and less institutionalised.

Minority identities, for example, stand at the intersection between fully constructed groups, such as the nation, and smaller, less objective, group formations. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) understands minority groups in objective terms: “in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language”. Here, the subjective nature of group consciousness, as brought forward by Benedict Anderson with regard to the nation-state, is not considered. First, the concept of a minority is, by name, a relative one (Ramaga 1992: 105). This idea had already been brought forward in the Ohrid Conference of 1974, where it was established that minorities needed “the sufficiency in number to pursue group aims, but numerical inferiority to the rest of the ‘people’” (ibid: 106). This means that minority groups are labelled as such insofar as their existence as a collective is in parallel to a larger group, the majority. Within a single nation, multiple minority groups coexist with more loosely established ties. The objective, and rather obvious, aspect of this fact of minority identity speaks to our understanding of the group structures, however, does not allow for a deep comprehension of the social, historical and cultural underpinnings of group identity. Ethnicity, language and religiosity, all of which are objective factors, are seen as the foundations of minority identity. First, religion, or absence thereof, has long been looked at as a strong vector for identity, and to a large extent, communities in themselves (Ramaga 1992: 411). Religious belief systems, particularly, are one of the largest anthropological foundations of identity, and this has been the case throughout most of history. Ethnicity provides more room for a subjective understanding of the self and the other (ibid: 413). Race, on the other hand, is not necessarily mutually exclusive to ethnicity, and refers to a greater extent to physical attributes (Porter & Washington 1993: 140). As an interpretative concept, ethnic characteristics refer to cultural grounds, *including* the controversial elements of race, nationality, and self-determination. The conceptual flexibility of ethnicity, and the plurality of composing factors, have led to some grey areas in the definition of minority groups. Adopted in 1994, the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, introduced *self-identification* for minorities (Council of Europe 1995). This conceptual nuance allowed more room for minorities to decide upon their existence based on subjective factors and is more relevant in this discussion.

Mutual experiences and common memory are one of the subjective, self-imagined, foundations of collective identity. To what extent does this constitute their identity? According to Siebers, mutual trauma and collective pain is sufficient to bind, or “glue”, individuals together into groups (Siebers 2017: 111). These negative experiences are likely to transfer onto the political stage, expressing some discontent as a group. In other words, negative emotions play a role in mobilising collective action. However, the transfer into the political landscape of experiences of coercion, discrimination and judgement may be harmful, and counterproductive, in the establishment of a collective identity (ibid: 119). The politicisation of minority identities “exacerbates the negative and painful experiences of minority people, endangering group cohesion and political action” (ibid). This conceptual understanding can be applied to the case of the Pieds-Noirs, for whom common memories of war and collective frustration towards the French government, gave the impression of collective cohesion (Jordi 2003: 73). In fact, when Algeria won its independence from the French, a widespread sentiment of betrayal was shared by the formerly established settlers, resulting in the “desire to create and hold on to a memory, to recapture the world that was lost” (Cohen 2003: 129). It is the conflict in Algeria, and the new fragility of the colony in itself, that brought the Pieds-Noirs to a form of collective mobilisation to maintain Algeria French. Who was considered *truly* French and who was not depended on their positions with regard to the conflict (Zack 2002: 56). Those who were considered ‘French’ ranged from distinguished Metropolitan elites to all those living under French rule throughout the globe (including in all the colonies), and the imagined ‘Algerian’ varied from religious figures to Arab leaders to virtually any person who was committed to the idea of an independent Algerian state (ibid: 57). Here, the polarisation of society took place in the face of a conflict to affirm national identity, and individuals formed alliances in ways that weren’t necessarily sustainable.

Scholars agree that identities are social processes and are built up through interaction (Ramaga 1992; Spears 2021; Burke 1980; Stets and Burke 2000; Turner 2001; Bierstedt 1950; Pożarlik 2013:). In other words, collective identity cannot be understood without considering the social structure that surrounds it. Identity is not a fixed concept: it changes, reacts to its surroundings and expresses itself in different ways (Pożarlik 2013: 78). In the literature, the relationship between majority and minority has been particularly touched upon. The words themselves already seem to suggest an imbalance in power, how can we establish which group is dominant, and which is not? First, dominance does not necessarily coincide with numerical superiority. If we look at the case of Burundi for example, the Hutu population was much larger than the Tutsi population in number, yet

the Tutsis were in control of the land and affirmed their dominance (Ramaga 1992: 113). In other words, a social position is not only a matter of numerical superiority, but is also involved in a complex interplay of power, and ultimately the ability to affirm an identity as stronger than another. Power can take an objective and subjective form. Robert Dhal famously understood the concept as: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dhal 1957: 203). Nonetheless, it only exists insofar as there is an immediate response to the exercise of power between actors with some sort of connection between them (ibid: 204). Power is projected and received in a mutual process, with each actor having a role in this exchange. In the case of former Algerian settlers, the transition from colonising nationals to a quasi-refugee in their own nation meant a significant loss of power. No longer in a position of political influence, the Pied-noir community discovered an environment hostile to their status as French nationals who had established their history in Algeria. The relationship between the power associated with colonial rule and identity, in Algeria but also in other European colonies, has been under-discussed in the literature. However, this connection is not only important in the context of colonial rule but also complements our understanding of how shifting power dynamics within decolonisation impacted the colonised and the coloniser in the construction of a reshaped collective identity.

How can we explain the integration of Pieds-Noirs on the basis of these interactional considerations? Classical conformity perspectives, such as the Asch paradigm (1956), observe the extent to which individuals are likely to conform to the majority due to the effects of social pressure and ultimately, the influence of the majority group (Spears 2021: 369). In this regard, the desire to conform and belong to the greater, more influential, group call for an increased ability of the majority to influence decision-making in other groups. Another approach, the group identity theory of social influence, understands group identity as an internal process that goes beyond conformity to the majority, as identity is strong enough to surpass barriers of self, and truly integrate into one's vision of oneself (Požarlik 2013: 79). Here, the basic assumption is that a group goes beyond ties of association, the group *penetrates* the individuals understanding of oneself: members are influenced not only by the expectations of the group itself but also by what they expect of themselves as a member of this group (Spears 2021: 373). In this scenario, collective identity becomes stronger than the individual identity. These questions have not specifically been posed for the Pieds-Noirs, and ultimately come down to questioning the ties of association between the Pieds-Noirs on an individual basis and their community as an entity of its own. According to Jean Jacques Jordi, the

commitment to the Pied-Noir identity as a collective declined with time, however, the sentiment of not fully belonging to the “whole” of the French population (Jordi 2003: 74).

IV. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will review the theoretical underpinnings of the concept and reflect on the various facets of identity, both in its individual and collective virtues. I will begin by discussing the core assumptions of identity, through role and group-based factors, and will follow by reflecting on how identity is exchanged through interaction, “culture-building” and power dynamics.

What is identity? How does it come into existence? Our conceptual understanding of identity is faced with the volatility and interpretive nature of the term. Identities are *meanings* attributed by oneself and by other individuals (Burke 1980: 19). These meanings are mutually exchanged and validated during interaction through actions, language and appearance, what is referred to as symbols (ibid & Turner 2001: 332).

- 1) *Identities are relational.* Identities are relative to each other and are mutually constructed through interpersonal exchange. In other words, how an individual sees himself (for example, a husband, a hairdresser, a community leader...) shapes his understanding of other individuals' identities and his expectations of the relationship between people (Burke 1980: 19). Group identity is more than a question of in and out-group dynamics, but rather as a flexible concept mirroring the complexity of human interaction (Shapiro 2010: 636). Individuals are permanently shifting their expectations of themselves and others in interaction, and the perception that is made of a relation may change.
- 2) *Identities are reflexive.* Identity is seen as feedback one gives himself about the consequences of his being (Burke 1980: 20). This occurs indirectly, through the feedback of others, and directly, through response to oneself (ibid). Such processes of response, both from others and oneself, are largely shaped by the performances, or actions associated with an identity, that come to light during an interaction, such as language, action, or visual appearance (ibid). This feedback is also given to others in interaction, ultimately shaping the expectations of a specific role, or the *implicit social contract* (Shapiro 2010: 637)
- 3) *Identities are indirect processes.* As mentioned above, the personal performances that are shared with the world are the drivers of identity. However, this process does not take place directly, but rather takes place within a number of phases of progressive social constructs (Burke 1980: 20).

Images of self, or how we see ourselves, are subject to circumstantial change (what Burke coins *current working copies* of identity), they cannot be considered as the permanent translation of identity, which does not change as easily (ibid: 21). While the performance associated with an identity is changeable depending on the context (to preserve positive connections with others), the core identity associated that performance is not.

- 4) *Identity serves as a motive for action.* Identity “classifies and names social objects including the self and items of social behaviour or performance” and, in turn, motivates action (ibid: 22). Nonetheless, the reciprocal relationship between identity and action is ever-evolving: the context within which it takes place plays an important role in establishing this relationship (ibid). The cultural expectations of a given interaction speak to auto-proclaimed classifications and those given to others, and agents are to agree on these classifications. This means that an identity is to be acknowledged by oneself and seen by others, in order to serve a motive for action. This relates to Anderson’s conceptualisation of the nation as a body of mutually recognising individuals, where self and group consciousness are the foundations of the imagined community that is the nation (Anderson 2006: 6).
- 5) *Identities are multifaceted and hierarchical.* Individuals are more complex than a single identity, or societal role, can accommodate. Thus, they have multiple roles in society and “craft themselves” (Požarlik 2013: 80). The more highly-placed, or important, an identity is, the greater its salience within society (McCall and Simmons 1966, in Burke 1980: 19). For instance, an ethnic identity is more likely to be considered relevant than an identity as a daughter or sister, and more likely to form an identity-based group.

Social identity theory (group-based) and identity theory (role-based) provide two distinct theoretical approaches to the building blocks of collective identity. Group-based identity, or social identity theory, emphasises self-categorisation and in/out-group sentiments, seeing group alignment as the most important process (Stets and Burke 2000: 224). On the other hand, role-based identity theory argues that individual actors conform to the expectations of their peers, depending on what role they hold in society (ibid). In other words, role-based identities observe the social structures calling for role-specific behaviour, whereas group-based identity sees a collective process of group formation. However, both processes of identity-building integrate themselves into socially structured system and, according to Durkheim, contribute to larger processes of social integration (ibid: 225 & 228).

At the intersection between the two theories lies the so-called *person identities* (ibid: 229). First, looking back at the framework of social identity (group-based), individuals construct personal identity on the basis of the group that they belong to. Here, personal identity is subordinate to the group (ibid: 228). Social groups are embedded and structural entities, in which individuals demonstrate a strong connection to the group as an object in itself, regardless of individual ties and the status of the group (ibid: 226). This *commitment* plays an important role in decision-making: in-group members tend to align their behaviour to conform to group expectations and interests. Such commitment is both quantitative, through the *number* of individuals one is tied to, and qualitative, through the depth and importance of those ties (ibid: 230). However, this engagement to the group also calls for de-personalisation in which the individual loses primacy in the face of the group (ibid: 231). Tribal groups are an extreme example of such abandonment of self-interest for the benefit of the group itself (Shapiro 2010: 638). Here, loyalty to the group at all costs emphasises the primacy of social identity over personal identity. In case of conflict, the threat to the group is perceived as equivalent to a threat to the individual, resulting in intense and highly emotionally-driven defensive mechanisms (ibid). Now, looking at role-based identity theory (identity theory), the relevance of groups in identity structures is not fully ignored, however, it understands the expectations of an individual role as more important than those of the group as a whole. Here, the individual drives the interplay between personal interpretations of a particular role and the behaviours associated with it (Stets and Burke 2000: 227). Behaviours are showcased in interactions with other individuals in order to maintain imagined identities and expectations. Unlike group-based identity, the emphasis is not set on the alignment of group identity and consequent behaviours, but rather on the interconnectedness of individual roles in society and the relationships between them (ibid). In other words, the identities (or meanings) an individual gives himself are understood and constructed by others, but remain individual in nature, as they do not *melt* into the greater whole (Burke 1980: 19). Nonetheless, both theories commit to the idea that identity must be *activated* within the social structure for them to be relevant and valid (Stets and Burke 2000: 231). Where social identity theorists look at the social structures and connections activating these identities (de-personalisation), social identity theory sees the specific situations in which individuals recognise themselves in a given role (self-verification) (ibid: 231-232).

How do the above-mentioned concepts move within society, and how are they exchanged between individuals? In response to this question, the interactionist theory understands the individual, as in a single person, and the relationships between such singular entities, as the building blocks of social

dynamics. Belonging to the body of literature surrounding personality studies and psychology, this model traditionally assumes that “(a) behaviour has to be derived from a totality of coexisting facts, (b) these coexisting facts have the character of a "dynamic field" in so far as the state of any part of this field depends on every other part of the field” (Lewin, 1951 in Ekehammar 1974: 1929). The agent and his environment are indissociable: behaviour cannot be understood without considering the circumstances surrounding it (ibid: 1030). Given the permanent and imperfect interactions between an individual and his environment, behaviour is, as a result, a changeable phenomenon. Such a concept is, therefore, relevant when looking at displaced communities and group formation, as the relationships binding individuals to their environment are likely to change in an even more striking manner.

Interactions are intrinsically mutual and within them, each agent gives and receives something in return. First, within an interaction, culture is said to be *taken* and *made* (Turner 2001: 332). Symbols, norms, and values are exchanged and, as a result, shape mutual expectations within that interaction, Hochschild (1979) defines this as “feeling rules” (ibid). Such cultural feedback, through adapted language, frames of expression, and forms of interaction set the tone for the emotional expectations of that interaction (ibid). These elements compose what is produced and borrowed from interaction, and affect the way individuals view themselves in relation to others. The second aspect, also in relation to an exchange of material through interaction, relates to *status-taking* and *status-making* (ibid). In line with the cultural processes explained above, interactions vary according to the status one attributes to himself and the other. Within this process, agents “seek to determine the status of others (status-taking) and, at the same time, to present their status (status-making) to others” (ibid). Status, or the relative position or rank of an individual, is both related to identity and power, and establishes the sum game of interaction. First, this view understands identity as a process of exchange between actors in conversation. In line with its multidimensional aspect, identities shape themselves in interactions and may vary according to the context or expectations of the other (Požarlik 2013: 80). Within the exchange, individuals “verify” their core identity (how others view this person), social identity (how this person views themselves), group identity (which group does this person feel attached to) and role identity (which role is this person playing) (Turner 2001: 334). These levels of identity are interconnected: if one is left unverified, the balance of identity is likely to be thrown off (ibid: 336). These processes of identification, while they are individual insofar as they treat individual perceptions, they are also collective and bring to light the larger social system. Collective interactions are embedded within the broader framework of

institutions, such as the economy and education, and social stratification systems, including social class, ethnicity, and gender (ibid). When the four pillars of identity are not clear, the more likely these negative emotions will transfer to larger structural patterns (ibid: 337). On the other hand, when individual identities are positively reciprocated and further confirmed within an encounter, the reciprocating actor is likely to do the same (ibid).

Interactions and the solidified identities that arise from them are equally influenced by power relations. Power exists in virtually every form of human interaction, and it is identifiable in different ways (Bierstedt 1950: 730). When looking at group dynamics within a given society, the concept of power is inextricable from the multiple interactions that take place. Power is not restricted to the formal stage of interaction, where authority is at play (ibid: 735). When looking at the informal social space, “the prestige of statuses gives way to the esteem for persons” sets the hierarchical tone of the interaction (ibid: 736). In any case, power is vital in any social organisation, both for its continuity and for the enforcement of norms regardless of the level of formality of that organisation (ibid: 735). It comes into being through numerical superiority, social structures and resources (knowledge, financial means, prestige...) available, despite none of these sources being sufficient on their own (ibid: 737). Dhal’s classical understanding sees power as the expression of influence from one party on another speaks, however, despite being closely connected, power and influence guide us towards different sociological processes (Dhal 1957: 203). Where power is seen as the ability to directly modify behaviour (seen as a capacity), influence is the act of using that power to indirectly suggest a change in behaviour (Lucas & Baxter 2012: 50). Status characteristics theory understands the power position of groups and individuals within society as the result of the esteem given to them by themselves and peers (ibid: 51). Individuals within a group construct expectations for themselves and other group members based on their status characteristics, which ultimately come to shape the collective structure (ibid). These characteristics can be specific if they refer to a very narrow competence used in a specific context or they can be diffuse, meaning that they imply expectations for behaviour in a broader range of contexts, examples are ethnicity and gender (ibid: 52).

Power and identity exist insofar as there is interaction. A man who lives in autarky cannot be recognised in his identity, nor can he affirm his domination and influence over others. The relationship between the two concepts gains even greater relevance in this discussion: a powerful entity is recognised by others who are subordinate to it. In this regard, relationships between

individuals and groups are dictated by the place they hold in the greater cosmos, whether they have the power to impose themselves or not. Colonisation, in itself, is the illustration of power relations at play. The colonisers attributed themselves a superior status over the colonised states, and justified their imperialism through their legitimacy to "guide the different parts of the globe to civilisation" (Lorcin 1999: 669). Identity, and attributed roles in this colonising game, were determined by who held power and who did not. The community of settlers was the most visual *proof* that Algeria no longer belonged to the Algerians and a daily reminder to the local population that these individuals had every right, if not more than them, to be there. In this established reality over generations, settlers no longer questioned whether or not their presence was temporary, and whether their position of dominance would ever be questioned.

V. Methodology

In this study, I will shine light on processes of collective identity-building, specifically looking at the return of former colonial settlers of Algeria to France in the early stages of their arrival. In other words, I will attempt to bridge the gap between historical accounts of the return of former settlers to their country of origin, and the broader socio-political discussion surrounding group identity. In order to isolate the effects of the transition to France, I will focus specifically on the period following the Evian Accords (1962), and the resulting mass exile of former settlers.

The emphasis on this timeframe is intentional and highlights what I consider to be the most important moment in Pied-Noir history, their exile. The transition from Algeria to France constitutes the most drastic change in Pied-Noir collective history. Moreover, this research focuses specifically on the experiences of first-generation Pieds-Noirs. Younger generations have shown to be less engaged with their Pied-Noir heritage, and other vectors of identity, more in line with their time, have taken primacy over the Pied-Noir identity (Cohen 2003: 144). I will begin by setting the historical and academic foundations of this research, as a basis for further discussion on how collective identity operated in the Pied-Noir's exile. Then, I will establish the conceptual framework of collective identity, focusing on the role of social interaction and power dynamics. The latter sub-concepts are particularly relevant in the colonial context and this research considers that the culture of power established in French Algeria continued to shape the relationships between colonial actors, including former settlers, and their environment. Lastly, the analytical discussion will connect the theoretical material to empirical findings and personal testimonies, to grasp the subjective elements of this highly emotionally-driven case.

Speaking more broadly, I hope that this research will contribute to the larger body of academic work surrounding human behaviour and its relationship to broader political frameworks. In fact, through the case of the Pieds-Noirs in France, I expect to grow an understanding of how individuals interact with their surroundings, both in structural terms (to governance structures and established societal organisations) and with other people on an individual basis. The intersection between political science and social psychology is largely relevant in the discussion about societal structures as a whole, which ultimately, will have an impact on the political outcomes and landscapes. We cannot anticipate any collectively-motivated action without first considering how a group came into being, and what elements led these individuals to act in a given way. In the conceptual discussion about

collective identity, the Pied-Noir case study will allow for greater visualisation of the processes at hand and greater depth into the specificities of the French setting at that time. The narrow scope of the research contributes to greater internal validity, however, this may also be a disadvantage when attempting to apply the findings of this study to other cases. This is especially true given the uniqueness of the Pied-Noir identity, at the intersection between French nationality and generational ties with Algeria. Moreover, this case is intertwined with complex colonial dynamics, involving a brutal eight-year war and a strong relationship to collective memory. When looking at different groups in exile and the transition to a new country, whether it be their country of nationality or not, circumstantial elements may differ (outcomes of war, language, the quantity of persons in exile...) and produce opposite outcomes of integration. Here, the relationship between theory and empirics in this case has an inductive approach, as the starting point is the investigation of a specific point of interest (the Pieds-Noirs) and the goal is to formulate a broader theory from the identified patterns. While this logic of research broadens the potential for further discovery, it faces the potential fragilities of incomplete knowledge.

In order to capture the emotional and political value of this case, I will rely on personal testimonies and historical accounts of the settlers' transition from Algeria to France, and will rely on both French and English-language sources. Most personal testimonies are found in French databases (as the Pieds-Noirs spoke French) and the topic is of particular interest and value, as it relates to French domestic history. ARTE (a French-German cultural television platform), INA (the National Audiovisual Archives), individual interviews from the Eco-Museum of Le Val de Bièvre, and various smaller platforms promoting Pied-Noir voices, are some examples of the sources used for individual accounts. They focus extensively on the memorial value of collective memory and the continued relevance of these topics today, in a larger effort to maintain the Pied-Noir heritage alive throughout generations. On the other hand, English-language literature offers a rich discussion on collective identity and the underlying dynamics of human interaction. By including foreign sources, this research aims to resist overly emotional, and perhaps subjective, interpretations of this reality. A majority of the conceptual content of this research will be presented by English-speaker authors, primarily from psychological and behavioural science. The social-behavioural aspects of this research are relevant in sight of the interactions I am attempting to study. By referring to previously-established patterns of group consciousness, this research hopes to determine to what extent the Pieds-Noirs formed a collective sentiment during their exile to France. I believe that this approach allows for a clearer understanding of the knowledge structures surrounding colonialism.

VI. Empirical Considerations

i. Retracing the Exile and Personal Testimonies

Algeria's independence was the end of an era of French imperialism, and even more so, the end of a reality for the European settlers established there. It is often with great fear, regret and anger that they transitioned to France. Vivid images of violence accompanied their journey across the Mediterranean, and the lukewarm welcome in France exacerbated their feelings of rejection. The exile took place massively after the Evian Accords were signed, making it one of the largest migration flows across the Mediterranean of the twentieth century (Jordi 2003: 61). Some had fled before the official declaration of independence in March, but many others had held on the hope of keeping Algeria French. The desire to hold on to an alternative reality followed the Pieds-Noirs throughout their journey, and long into their integration.

Images of over-filled boats making round trips between the ports of Marseille and Oran are still present in the collective memory of those who experienced it, and those who watched it happen. Around half of the former settlers completed the journey by sea, while the other half travelled with daily flight connections between the two cities, with airport halls as full as the decks of the ships (Jordi 2022). Long waiting times in departure ports, crowded ships, and disorganised arrival ports prolonged the journey over several days for some, and collective feelings of uncertainty and abandonment weighed heavy in minds. Until mid-May, two months after the signature of the Evian accords, boats were more or less able to respect their maximum intended capacities, however, in the early summer months of 1962 and with the increasing urgency to evacuate Europeans from Algeria, boats began to disregard capacity limits. As a result, arriving groups were bigger than expected, and reception centres were quickly overwhelmed by such large groups (ibid). Most Pieds-Noirs arrived within May to August 1962, primarily to Marseille (a coastal city in the south of France) (Jordi 2003: 65). Through its role as a reception city, Marseille became the urban figure of the exile, and marked a physical rupture point between the colonisation period and the beginning of a new era for settlers (ibid: 63). While mass migrations of upwards of 500,000 settlers returning from former colonies in Indochina, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia had already confronted the country with large migratory flows in the previous decades, the return of the Pieds-Noirs destabilised France in ways it had not expected (ibid). The country was overwhelmed and failed to recognise the scale and urgency of the situation in due time. Robert Boulin, designated Minister to the Repatriates, later

admitted that the French government expected settlers to disperse within France and fill the needs for labour in the industries and post-war efforts (ibid). As this did not turn out exactly within the expected time frame, Marseille became, in many ways, the epicentre of the exile. The French government registered only 160 000 arrivals in the summer of 1962 (Jordi 2003: 66). It was only in November of that year that they recognised the 800 000 repatriates from the former Algerian colony (ibid: 67). Today, a bronze propeller statue stands on the “Corniche du President JFK” as a reminder of the journey of the Pieds-noirs across the Mediterranean to Marseille (Ivey 2019).

During his official speech to the settlers of Algeria in 1958, General de Gaulle said: “I understand you” to those established in Algeria, and many saw this as an invitation for renewed hope for Algeria to remain French (Feist 2022). Therefore, the decision of De Gaulle in 1961 came to much of a surprise to the settlers, and contributed to the loss of trust in the French government. From this point, distrust and sentiments of injustice grew. Upon their arrival to Marseille, boats poured out settlers into ports of the city which lacked the sufficient infrastructure to accompany the former settlers into temporary housing centres (Jordi 2003: 65). Up until mid-May 1962, reception centres did not exist and even then, it was mostly private charities, such as the Red Cross, who had to take matters into their own hands given the passivity of public services (ibid: 67). Rapidly, both private and last-minute public centres were overwhelmed and by July, Marseille’s available housing had been exhausted, paving the way for tensions between those who had arrived and the established population during the summer (Jordi 2003: 69). Women and children shared beds and were given vouchers to eat in cafeterias, where they would receive alienated looks (Gérard Rodriguez 2023). However, during the summer months, the lack of reactivity of public actors, along with the turmoil within the city challenged the integration process. On one hand, the Pied-Noirs felt abandoned by the French state, which had neglected the conditions of their arrival and, on the other hand, animosity from the local population (Jordi 2003: 69). Tensions between the two groups continued throughout the summer of 1962. the Pied-Noirs were accused of virtually anything that went wrong, including traffic jams (ibid). Rising prices, housing shortages, and increased criminality came as consequences of the abrupt increase in population and cause further unrest. The mayor of Marseille Gaston Defferre, famously quotes: “Let them go and rehabilitate elsewhere”. This was published as title in the daily journal (see image below): showing the level of public attention that was drawn to their return, source of debate and frustration amongst locals.



Image: Algerian Circle of Grenoble

In the months following the summer, a large portion of those who had arrived to Marseille left for other French cities; only a fifth remained in Marseille (Jordi 2003: 74). Communities began to disperse, in search of a new beginning after the chaos of their arrival. Carnoux is a commonly-used example of a town created by and for a population of repatriates (Feist 2022). Built in only a few years, the town rapidly became home to many Pieds-Noirs and their descendants, as well as other repatriates from French colonies of North Africa, such as Morocco. Flat roofs, the municipal church of *Notre Dame d'Afrique* (Our Lady of Africa), the square *Maréchal Lyautey* (named after the first French Resident-General in Morocco), the stadium Marcel Cedran (French boxer and Spanish Pied-Noir), the cemetery with soil from former colonies, and the memorial arch all serve as reminders of a common colonial history (Marie de Carnoux 2014). Moreover, since 1963, the yearly pilgrimage of *Notre Dame d'Afrique*, continues to honour the journey of former colonial settlers. Even the municipal coat of arms portrays its dual sense of belonging to both Provence (the French region within which it is located) and the former French colonies of North Africa (ibid).

The perceived disengagement of public structures during the first stages of the Pied-Noir repatriation was further brought to light in personal testimonies. Crucial to our subjective understanding of events, these voices took time to come to the surface on public platforms. In fact, as a response to the trauma, many of the first generation of Pieds-Noirs remained silent for a long time. These voices bring clarity to their exile and bring a necessary subjectivity to our historical understanding. For most repatriates, the departure took place in a context of fear. The relationships with Algerians had changed since the declaration of independence, and Europeans felt that they were no longer tolerated. André Moyo returned to France, to Carnoux, in 1962, along with thousands of others fleeing directly after the Evian Accords (Feist 2022). Of Italian origin, his family had been established in the Eastern part of Algeria for generations. He wanted to remain in

Algeria despite the conflict, in what he felt was his natal land, until the last minute. He quickly realised, however, that he could no longer remain safely in Algeria. When he came home to his apartment in 1962 (shortly before he left for France), his space, along with all of his belongings, had been taken over by an Algerian family who claimed their right to his property (ibid). They said to him: “this is our home, you are nothing here anymore”, and he understood that he had to leave immediately. For André, the departure from Algeria was “the biggest tragedy of his life” and he considers that he will never move on (ibid). Leaving his family behind, including those who had passed and been buried in Algeria, was unthinkable for him. He illegally transported the bodies of five of his family members, including those of his mother and his grandmother, by bribing a transitory agent. In many ways, such as this one, the Pieds-Noirs showed great resistance to their departure. Similarly, Claudine, who was living in Alger before she was forced to leave in 1962, felt the insecurity and the rejection from locals who, after winning their independence, wanted nothing to do with the settlers. She felt that the local population switched to a mindset of conquest: “it was the suitcase or the casket”, she says (ibid). Another testimony shares that parents were scared that their children would be raped, or even killed (Licht 2011).

On March 26th, 1962 French military forces fighting in the war shot French citizens during a mass protest to maintain Algeria French, sixty civilians were killed and two hundred were injured. This tragedy is particularly present in collective Pied-Noir memory as a strong rupture point and the urgent need to leave the country. For example, Claudine, who lived on Isly Street in Algiers, remembers coming down after the scene, and seeing blood spread out everywhere (Feist 2022). This massacre added to the countless vivid images of violence and fear from the war, which had started already eight years prior. Danielle Michel-Chich also remembers particularly vivid images, such as walking to class when she was a child, and seeing Arab locals shot dead at their fruit stands, folded in half over their produce. She shared that, due to her young age, she was happy to leave this excruciating violence behind and doesn't regret the colony. Her parents, on the other hand, lived in sadness and resentment long after their return to France (Feist 2022). Regardless, these images and memories of war were present, despite the strong will to stay in Algeria, and the intensity of the violence they saw was realised much later. Some even bought real estate in Algeria to affirm the desire to stay there (France 3 2004). In sum, the final years of the colonial experience were fundamentally defined by war, loss, rejection, and a changing image of “the Algeria” that the settlers had previously known. Images of peaceful cohabitation between settlers and locals, despite living separately, had been taken over by a more gruesome image of cohesion falling apart and

chaos installing itself. As a result, the period prior to the return to France was already a progressive realisation of the inevitable faith of French Algeria and the irreversible changes that had occurred during the war. The brutality of the conflict meant that, even if the resolution had been different and they could have stayed, nothing would have ever been the same.

The fear of the unknown dictated the transition period between the two countries. Claudine was twenty years old at the time, and vividly remembers the uncertainty of arriving to France with no job, no apartment, and no financial security (ibid). Similarly, René admits to feeling extremely “destabilised” at the idea of starting a new life in France, even if the language wasn’t an issue (René 2011). These experiences were shared by many others who crossed the Mediterranean. While Danielle Michel-Chich had no expectations for her new life in France, she was thrilled to leave Algeria and discover a life without violence (ibid). Danielle was the youngest victim of the Milk Bar attack by the FLN in Algiers in 1956. In this attack, her grandmother passed away and she had to get one of her legs amputated due to the injuries. This enthusiasm, however, was not shared by her parents, who had constructed an entire reality in Algeria over generations: an established family life, professional stability and further projects, homes, and social connections (Feist 2022). The apprehension of creating a new life elsewhere was worsened as the former settlers received a cautious and cold welcome from those established in France. It was clear that their arrival in France was not appreciated, nor understood. They were often misjudged, bullied, and rejected by French locals. One testimony shares “my most painful memories are not the war itself, but the deplorable welcome I received. I still have deep memory of the insults” (Midi Libre 2022). Another remembers the port of Marseille being covered in writings of insults: “go back to your village, to your country, Pieds-Noirs to the sea!” (Licht 2011). The fear of the unknown was decoupled by the hostility they faced upon their arrival, which would come to follow the Pieds-Noirs for some time and hindered their initial integration.

Almost all of the testimonies that have been considered for this research present strong feelings of injustice (Feist 2022; France 3 2004; Licht 2011). The former settlers perceived themselves as victims of injustice, both from the local population in France and their judgement, but also from the French government. Metropolitan France as a whole seemed to be disconnected from Algerian settlers, and this dissociation continues to characterise the dynamics between the French population and the first generation of repatriates, specifically. France had not anticipated the intensity or scale of their repatriation, nor the weight of memory that they would bring with them. According to

André, the Pieds-Noirs were the forgotten victims of colonisation and were forced to take responsibility for the tragedies of Algeria (Feist 2022). “People saw us as free-riders”, he says, “but this was not true, we worked hard” (ibid). In fact, French locals often perceived those who had been living in Algeria as a wealthy class of colonisers, a sentiment which was unsurprisingly shared by the Algerian locals towards the settlers during the colonial period. In reality, the Pieds-Noirs were most commonly a working class and arrived to France with little to no money, in a country which was equally impoverished by the war in Algeria. Some, like Claudine, left when they were young, which left more flexibility than for older generations, who struggled to envision a fresh start to their lives. As a result, the testimonies suggest limited contact between the local population and the new arrivals and remained, at least in the first instances, a relationship drawn by animosity. This sentiment of injustice and misunderstanding was equally felt towards the French government at the time, if not greater, as it was not prepared to accommodate this community. Already from 1958, the Pieds-Noirs had felt abandoned by France. The disappointment and perceived treason of De Gaulle’s unkept implicit promise of 1958 were already felt: “the Pieds-Noirs hate him, he let us hope and then abandoned us”, one testimony shares (Feist 2022). As previously mentioned, the French government did not sufficiently anticipate their arrival and was not able to provide the resources and infrastructure to support the transition, nor was the government able to provide psychological support given the prejudice from the population. One Pied-Noir shares “the other women went to bed and we the young ones laid close to my mother and cried with her, but with time I think it was fear that made us cry” (Gérard Rodriguez 2023). Moreover, the Pieds-Noirs felt that the French government did not consider them in a respectful and considerate manner, making integration and the “feeling of being French” even harder to conceive. As one Pied Noir testimony formulates “I say that the French government, they behaved in a way, well... disgusting. With us, but we still were still French” (Licht 2011).

The term Pied-Noir itself played an important role in sealing identities and marking a collective turn to their collective existence. The term did not exist prior to the outbreak of violence and ultimately, the exile of settlers to France. The origins of the expression, however, are subject to various interpretations. What is clear, however, is that the term started off as a negative, insulting term, and was later reappropriated by the Pied-Noir community as a sign of their unity (Feist 2022; Licht 2011; Jabinet 2011). According to Christian Fenec, a second-generation Pied-Noir, and Charles Jabinet, who had been in Algeria since his young childhood, the term had always been used as an insult to characterise the settlers in French Algeria (Feist 2022 & Jabinet 2011). Others said that the

term had been used specifically after they arrived to France (Licht 2011). Over time, however, the term became a way to characterise the community, as it is the case in this research, and “became a badge of honour” (Jabinet 2011). Importantly, this label served a uniting purpose and people felt mutually connected by this feeling of injustice towards them, and their perceived position as the victims of the Evian Accords. In this regard, what was seen as a mere settlement colony with a loose sense of common identity become a well-defined group in the early 1960s (Feist 2022). This idea is in line with Sieber’s understanding of “pain as the glue”, able to bind minority groups through shared experiences of hardship (Siebers 2017: 111). The trauma of war, along with the sentiment of being misunderstood, brought people together in ways that had not existed before. However, this identity was shaped in complex ways and was not limited to the present reality of integration into French society, but rather as a culmination of what had been known, how this fell apart, and the uncertainty of the future ahead. Today, the term is proudly and unambiguously used as a marker of group identity in websites, associations and groups defending the interests and causes of the community.

The above-mentioned collective consciousness that came into existence upon the settlers’ exile was somewhat temporary. For some, such as Christian Fenec, who leads an association in France around the legacy of his parents’ experiences, this collective identity mustn’t die down. However, for the majority of the descendants of the Pieds-Noirs (current third-generation), their connection has progressively been watered-down. For Christian Fenec’s nephew, for example, he feels distanced from Algeria, and has only heard stories through his grandparents. He doesn’t see Algeria as a country with any particular identity over another. Christian Fenec refers to this disengagement of the younger generations as “disintegration”, the deepest form of integration into the majority (Feist 2022). Culinary traditions are, for some, the only surviving memories of this time (Licht 2011). Additionally, the 1960s represented a time of intense socio-political destabilisation in France in general. This period of major political change and disruption gave some settlers the opportunity to insert themselves into another cause. For René, student protests of 1968 integrated him into the greater pool of French students, “it is by contesting society that I integrated it” (René 2011). For Danielle Michel-Chich, her engagement with the Communist party (which was known to be critical of the Pied-Noir exile) forged a new identity and reinvented her position within society (Feist 2022). Her Communist identity came to be stronger and more relevant than her Pied-Noir identity ever was (ibid). However, these experiences were shared by politically active young people who were in the twenties during the exile, making the integration processes simpler.

ii. The Structural Shift

Alongside individual experiences, the return to France, as a result of the decolonisation of Algeria, was embedded in larger socio-political processes. De-colonisation, as the name suggests, refers to the process of undoing colonial establishments that had been previously brought up. These structural shifts changed the arena within which individuals interact and defined their role, and the role of others, in this new structure. The relationship between personal and structural experiences, as the connections between an individual and his environment, directly influences an individual's behaviour (Lewin, 1951 in Ekehammar 1974: 1929). For collective consciousness, the environment within which a group finds itself directly impacts the meanings associated with it.

The sentiment of superiority, inherent to colonialism, had developed over decades. The invasion and colonisation of Algeria in the 1830s was already the victory of France over the Algerian state, and these power dynamics established themselves throughout the colonial process, with the establishment of a civil government in 1851, composed of primarily European settlers. Europeans were enabled, on the basis of their status as the colonising force, to make decisions in the country as a whole. Not only did this allow ordinary settlers themselves to feel represented by similar individuals in the political class of another country than theirs, but it also reinforced the idea that Algeria was fully subject to French authority. With the political influence already established, the sentiment of superiority came relatively naturally. The objective, or “hard”, power that comes along with political capacity is accompanied by norms that justify the dominating position. The political rights that were granted to Europeans post-invasion were related to tangible forms of power and domination over the local population. However, it is the reinforced idea that the French had the moral legitimacy and relative superiority to make this decision that relates to non-coercive, implicit, forms of power. This looks at the knowledge structures that support the colonial act of domination of one state over another. When looking at the aftermath of the colonial era, post-colonialists look, not only at the actual decolonising process, but also at the legacy of the imperial narrative, which continues to shape our memory and relations with past colonies (Loomba 2007: 12). In fact, colonialism does not start at the initial confiscation of power during an invasion, nor does it stop at the independence of a given state. In Edward Saïd's *Orientalism*, it is argued that the relationship between dominant and dominated is embedded deeply into Western cultural structures, and made particularly visible through literature, language, and art forms (ibid: 47). These knowledge structures have shaped the perception of the *other* as an inferior being, and therefore, came to shape

the relationships between Europe and the Orient as a separate body (ibid). Zooming back in to the individual perspective, these overarching knowledge structures determine the ways in which an individual envisions himself, and will directly influence how this individual envisions others around him (Burke 1980: 19). In this relational understanding, identity, whether collective or individual, is built alongside its context.

The colonising process, and the process of erasing any local past to embrace the reality of the coloniser, imagined “new individuals, born with France, which offered them a present and a future for the price of their past” (Branche 2013: 204). The present and future was reshaped in accordance with the Christian calendar, and everyday schedules were taken from French life and applied to the Algerian context (ibid: 202). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the past was reshaped in order to conform with the French present. In the late 19th century, when the remaining Northern regions of Algeria were successfully conquered and settler flows increased, the French education system in Algeria taught Algerian children that their ancestors were Gallic (ibid: 203). The intention here was to distract the local population from the idea that they had been anything other than French before the colonisation and, thus, reinforce the status of France as an all-encompassing and powerful empire (ibid). The effort to erase the Algerian past was also seen in the distribution and relationships to land (ibid: 204). In fact, by changing the relationships between Algerians and their ancestral land, the attempt was once again to shape an alternative view of a collective past.

Considering identity as a relational concept between individual and structure, to what extent did the settlers forge their identity in this process? Collective identity amongst settlers in Algeria during the colony itself was limited. Some had lived in Algeria for generations and even came to overlook that their presence in Algeria was the outcome of a political struggle. However, the idealist portrait that was painted of French Algeria by its settlers had already been weakened by the conflict. While the settlers advocated for Algeria to remain French for a long time, the particular intensity of the end of the war brought the realisation that the situation could no longer be sustained: “the independence of Algeria was inevitable” (Christian, in Feist 2022). The Pieds-Noirs’ position as the dominating group was progressively weakened. First, and most evidently, Algeria’s victory in its war for independence demonstrated the lack of solidity of French Algeria as an idea. Other states had already begun to pick at the relevance of maintaining the colony, and encouraged France to let go. The golden age of European imperialism was coming to an end, and it no longer made sense to sustain the colony. In light of the brutality of the war and heavy losses on both sides, the French

metropolitans themselves also began to shift their initial intentions to maintain the colony and slowly came to the realisation that losses would surpass the gains. In other words, the deep desire of European settlers in Algeria to maintain the colony progressively lost support from all sides. Second, when independence was achieved for the Algerians, the local population regained control over their land and rejected the previously accepted status quo between locals and settlers. In fact, for the most part, settlers had known peaceful relations with locals, yet these dynamics shifted rapidly when Algeria became an independent state. Multiple previously mentioned testimonies share that the local population showed aggressiveness towards the settlers after regaining control over Algeria, urging them to leave. The Pieds-Noirs feared retaliation, and again, the mental construct around their social position of power was questioned (Feist 2022; Licht 2011). Moreover, and thirdly, these feelings of rejection did not stop at the French border, rather they were amplified. Upon their return to France, the Pieds-Noirs were faced with judgment and non-acceptation from the locals once again. On paper, the settlers were full French citizens, yet they were not accepted as such, at least in the initial period. The Pied-Noir identity faced its greatest ambiguity: if the settlers no longer had their place in Algeria, and if France rejected their status as well, how could they see themselves? From a structural perspective, the Pieds-Noirs became progressively more isolated, and the knowledge structures surrounding their dominating position lost their justification.

Again, looking at Burke's conceptualisation of identity as a relational process, the conditions of decolonisation resulted in different relational patterns between the Pieds-Noirs and their surroundings. Their relations to governance, land, themselves, and others, were no longer as they were during their settlement in Algeria. No longer colonial settlers, they had to redefine their relationship to those around them. They were met with distrust and categorisation on the basis of their previous social status as privileged colonisers, and Metropolitans considered the settlers as free-riders (André, in Feist 2022). This lack of understanding of who the settlers truly were, contributed to false expectations of their place in society. On top of having to redefine themselves in a new context, the Pied-Noirs had to prove themselves to the local population. The initial confrontation between the former settlers and the French population was based on false-concluded conceptions of their identity, which at that time, was unclear in general. As a way to establish blame for what had happened, the Pieds-Noirs served as the face and the reminder of the tragedy. The judgement of the locals and the feelings of destabilisation of the Pieds-Noirs pushed down any opportunity for any definite collective identity to come into being (ibid). The power processes of colonialism are especially relevant when looking at the position of the Pieds-Noirs in France, to understand what

social context they were coming from. The roles associated with the dominant (and the dominated figures) changed in this new context, partly for the reasons expressed above. Coming from a place of colonial rule and explicit and implicit superiority, the return to France was a different reality. The immediate loss of status and power that came along with the exile meant that social domination was no longer a vector for identity. This new position in the social system is two-fold: it influenced how other social beings in the system perceived them and which expectations they set for them, and given the reflexive nature of identity, how the Pieds-Noirs perceived themselves in return.

Whether or not the structural dispositions in France positively contributed to the integration of the repatriates depends on whom answers the question. The majority of settlers considered that the treatment they received upon their arrival was unacceptable. As the implicit promises of De Gaulle in 1958 to keep Algeria French did not deliver, many settlers arrived in France with an already established animosity towards the French government. In addition, the unpreparedness of the French public services (lack of reception centres, housing issues, inability to deal with the societal grudge against the repatriates) amplified the cleavage between the newly arrived Pieds-Noirs and the government. Many Pied-Noirs asked for compensation for their lost lands in Algeria, yet this was denied. However, on the other hand, others have argued that this period showed the efficiency of the French providence state and the mechanisms of institutional solidarity (Cohen 2011: 4). Through a bureaucratic approach, the French government mobilised fully to assist the repatriates through a series of decrees, laws and provisions (ibid). Monthly allocations were distributed, equal pensions to those retired settlers had in Algeria, and conventions were signed with major companies (national railways and public transportation, National Bank) to reintegrate the repatriates into the economic system (ibid: 5). In other words, the treatment of former settlers upon their return to France is interpreted differently by different parties. This disagreement between the French government and the repatriates on what was done and what should have been done is at the heart of the cause of Pied-Noir associations even today. The sentiment of wrongdoing of the government remains present, more extreme for those who never truly integrated, and these groups continue to ask for recognition (Feist 2022). In sum, the relationship between the settlers in Algeria and governance structures changed in the process of relocation. In Algeria, the government was composed of European officials and the interests of the settlers were placed on the forefront of the political agenda. Without fully realising the privilege and influence that comes along with colonialism, the Pied-Noirs maintained what could be understood as a self-validating connection to the government. Upon the return to France, however, the colonising privilege had been replaced by

a new reality and a humming sound of frustration towards the government. In the discussion about collective identity and the relationship between structure and individual, this relationship to the *public entity* is particularly relevant. In Anderson's theory on nationalism, individuals imagined themselves bound to each other under the umbrella of a state body (Anderson 2006: 7). The limited nature of the state as a conceptual being gives its authority legitimacy. Despite being intrinsically linked, we may distinguish between *belonging* to a nation in theory (nationality) and adhering to the social construct of the nation (integration and relation to others). In their insertion into French society, the latter question was particularly relevant, and brings us to circle back to the ambiguity of belonging to the French nation by nationality and citizenship, but feeling on the outskirts of an already established nation. This point speaks to a conceptual elaboration that is out of the scope of this research, but an interesting space for further research, namely: the ambiguity of any individual having left his country and attempting to re-insert himself.

iii. Collective Memory

Collective memory, and the shared experience of the rise and downfall of French Algeria, contributed to the establishment of the Pied-Noir community as such, and the recognition of mutual experiences with other settlers. In other words, the Pied-Noir identity was particularly strong during the process of decolonisation and the dismantlement of the Algerian status quo. The particular intensity of violence during the war, followed by the difficulty of the departure from Algeria to France, brought individuals closer around a common sentiment of injustice. The question that remains is: to what extent have these pillars of collective identity been sufficient to maintain a strong sense of collective consciousness amongst former settlers *beyond* this transitional period? Those who experienced the Algerian decolonisation firsthand consider themselves the last "defenders" of the Pied-Noir legacy, as younger generations see this past as a marker of family heritage more than a pillar of their own identity (Christian Fenec, in Feist 2022). The progressive disengagement Pied-Noir descendants suggests that this sense of identity was specific to the context of exile. However, in line with our previous theoretical discussion, identity is a long-lasting concept whose manifestations may change depending on the circumstances (Burke 1980: 21). Here, the expression of collective identity lost in intensity over the years, leading us to question whether or not it was ever a collective identity to begin with.

The context within which the Pied-Noir identity came to being was one of frustration and distrust in the French government, greatly reciprocated by the metropolitan population towards the arrival of the former settlers. As conceptualised by Tobin Siebers, pain is said to serve as the “glue” for group identity. However, I would argue that while shared hardship brings people closer, it does not necessarily result in lasting constructions of collective identity. Organised memorial groups that arose from this period were and still are largely based on the memory of French Algeria and more specifically, the struggle for recognition from the French government for their wrongdoing and inadequate response to the exile. While the relationship to a past reality is particularly strong, there is a limited projection into the future. The collective consciousness constructed around this shared past does not envision a common future, and the former settlers did not have specific interests for their future as a group in France. In other words, memory is a mortal concept and requires active voices to live on. As time advanced and integration deepened, the defence of past interests became less relevant. One testimony shares “our integration was such a success, it is now disintegration” (Feist 2022). This “disintegration” of the Pied-Noir community over time is a result of the integration into the larger whole, which was somewhat anticipated given that the former settlers were already French by nationality and spoke the language. However, the Pied-Noir legacy has not completely passed and descendants continue to be proud of their heritage, mostly on an individual level. The Pied-Noir memory is still very present today and continues to initiate debate within society, bringing to the table the same questions that have never been truly answered.

Collective memory stands at the intersection between how an individual perceives his own existence on the basis of his experiences, and how multiple individuals come together on the basis of their shared history. While it is clear that the Algerian colony, the war, and the exile, are an integral part of the Pied-Noir story, whether or not it is sufficient to bring these individuals together in the longer term is an open question. The elements at our disposal seem to suggest a more or less common vision of a past life in Algeria, and a shared hardship in France in the early 1960s but varied relationships to the future and what it means to be Pied-Noir moving forward in this new reality. Some integrated more rapidly than others, and some held on to the memory of Algeria and the struggle for recognition. In the Algerian context, settlers had somewhat of a common perception of their establishment in Algeria, a governance system in their favour, and a widespread intention to maintain that status quo. However, in France, the future seemed less clear. The Pieds-Noirs, as a group, and their collective memory, didn’t gain enough momentum to project their group interests across generations. The progressive loss of mobilisation in the youth to defend the interests of the

Pieds-Noirs has confirmed that the connections between former settlers lacked the strength to endure as a group in France. This does not entail, however, that the memory of Algeria has fully disappeared with those who experienced it. As initially mentioned in the introduction of this research, France continues to have a special relationship with the former colony, more so than with other former colonies, and the memory of Algeria has not lost its relevance. This, however, is not only in relation to those who had been established there. The war was traumatic for both states and “has continued, to this day, to haunt the political cultures, collective memories, historiographies, and people's psyches” (Zack 2002: 59). The conflict mobilised whole societies: soldiers and governments, militias, civil society and settlers, and foreign actors, and to a large extent, public opinion (*ibid*).

VII. Discussion

The understanding of the Pieds-Noirs as a distinct entity in the broader societal makeup would lead us to consider the former settlers as a minority group. Looking back to the characteristics of a minority group, however, in its socio-political understanding, the Pieds-Noirs did not have ethnic, religious or linguistic differences with the rest of the French population. What they did have, however, is a shared past in Algeria. There has not been a widespread mobilisation of this memory in the years following the arrival to France. Does this mean that the Pieds-Noirs are excluded from any formal understanding of a minority? Not necessarily. With the notion of self-recognition, individuals have the agency to decide upon their belonging to a minority group. In this sense, the Pieds-Noirs could be considered a self-proclaimed minority on the basis of common history. In fact, they expressed their frustration with regard to the French government, and their arrival made it very clear that they were “different” from the rest of the French nationals.

From a broad conceptual perspective, a social agent cannot be understood apart from his environment (Ekehammar 1974). This means that individual, and thus collective, identities arise from interaction with other social entities. In the shift between Algeria and France, the Pieds-Noirs completely transformed their environment and, as a result, their societal position. This means that the roles, expectations, and sentiments exchanged during interaction between the Pieds-Noirs and their environment were bound to change as well. I would exclude the considerations of social-identity theory in this case, given that the Pieds-Noirs did not subordinate their personal identities to any long-term collective umbrella of identity. The lack of commitment to the Pied-Noir identity itself as an exclusive social definition, allowed the Pieds-Noirs to integrate into another identity “box” down the road, namely the French one. Thus, the ambiguity between colonial history in Algeria and European cultural heritage (language, religion, nationality) is more adequately captured by theories of interaction and relationships with surroundings as foundations of group identity. The collective sentiment that arose from the exile originated from a changing posture in the social hierarchy or, in other words, changing relationships with others. In this theory, identity is best seen as the *meanings* an individual attributes to his existence and the feedback that is given by those around him on that identity (Burke 1980: 19). Role-based identity theory, for example, understands the case of the Pied-Noir as an expression of a given societal role to match the expectations of other social entities in the system. In this interaction, the behaviours that are expected of a certain group, in this case of former settlers, shaped how they also saw themselves. Upon arrival, they were judged

for their prior connection to Algeria, which was a very sensitive topic for the Metropolitan French at the time, and this judgement, or feedback, from their surroundings contributed to the Pieds-Noirs sentiment of injustice towards the French Metropolitans. Their identity as a group was shaped by expectations of their behaviours, and the expectations they made of the local French, not only shaped the kind of interactions they had, but widened the gap between the two groups in the initial stages. In other words, in the exchange between the locals and former settlers, different information was being exchanged about the identity of the Pieds-Noirs. This unclear definition contributed to negative emotions on both sides (Turner 2001: 337). These negative emotions and tensions between the two groups caused the former settlers' identity to be limited to their status as former settlers. While it is evident that the thousands of individuals who arrived to France were not solely Pied-Noir, they held various personal identities that made up their roles in the social system. However, due to high levels of politicisation, the Pieds-Noirs were only seen as Pied-Noir. Actually, just as the relationship between French metropolitans and settlers wasn't clearly established, neither was the identity of the Pied-Noir. In other words, the very concept of Pied-Noir emerged in parallel to the exile, and in response to a new social environment.

The confrontation to new social circumstances meant that the Pieds-Noirs lost their previous status, and position of superiority as colonial settlers in Algeria. The power shift that accompanied the transition played a role in establishing a new public identity for the former settlers. Power and identity are undissociated concepts that are built up, in parallel, within interaction with other individuals. There is no power without identity and vice versa. Before the exile, power relations between settlers and local populations were typical for the colonisation period. The Pieds-Noirs were comfortable and were protected in their status by their position as the *colonisers*, whose status as leaders and moral superiors was structurally implicit. However, this completely flipped as the Pieds-Noirs were ousted from Algeria as it became independent. Not only was this an initial blow to the previously established power structures, but it was only amplified upon their return to France, in light of the rejection they faced. This does not mean that their identity didn't pose a problem in Algeria, instead it meant that the Pieds-Noirs had the power to impose their identity as superior to that of the locals, a superiority which was not maintained upon their return to France. While they were French, and had all of the same rights as other French nationals on paper, their differences and the memory conflict that they brought with them, stripped them of their right to belonging. Therefore, they no longer had the capacity to affirm this identity to a third party, paving the way for conformity and integration into the larger French system. In the long term, the integration of the

Pieds-Noirs as “typical” French citizens brought to light two elements. First, their cultural basis was very much French, from the language to the education system, and some even had more formal ties with Europe, through family members, for example. This meant that this integration, was more a of an acclimation to the new status quo and the progressive *melt* into French society (Christian, in Feist 2022). Secondly, the role of collective memory in building Pied-Noir identity was volatile, as memory is. In other words, as the memory of French Algeria faded, so did the commitment to the Pied-Noir identity, both in how former settlers view themselves (social identity) and how others view them (core identity) (Turner 2001: 334). Some committed to opportunities for other identities, such as political causes particularly vocal in the 1960s in France (Danielle, in Feist 2022).

Despite the progressive disengagement from the Pied-Noir memory as a vector for social and core identity, memorial associations, monuments, references in popular culture, and preserved family heritage have allowed French Algeria to keep its high place in French historical heritage. I would argue that collective identity and high levels of solidarity that characterised the collectiveness of the Pied-Noir exile, progressively transformed into a memorial identity, more distant, in the following years and alongside processes of integration. First, personal accounts have been shared within family circles with younger generations (Christian, in Feist 2022). Indeed, private transmission of stories of French Algeria and memories of exile remains an important part of the preservation of collective memory, yet many stories don’t reach the public realm (websites, archives). However, those who have publicised their stories, including the ones found in this research, have allowed the French Algerian legacy to remain present, under all of its aspects. Can this memorial weight be considered a vector for identity? To what extent can a group understand its collectiveness in the past? As mentioned, the collective consciousness of the exile and the one we may observe today are radically different. In fact, I would argue that the Pieds-Noirs will never be as Pied-Noir as they were in the early 1960s, when the exile brought them to confront a new environment. Holding on to this memory has allowed the repatriates of Algeria to come together around common life stories. Moreover, as the sentiment of injustice carried a large part of their experience to France, along with feelings of misjudgment, the intentions of this “memorial communication” intends to portray an identity in line with how the Pieds-Noirs perceives themselves (ibid & Algerian Circle of Grenoble). To a large extent, the former settlers consider that the identity that they were given was different to the identity they gave themselves, and that the French Algeria they experienced is different to the French Algeria that continues to be mentioned in the public realm. While these sentiments have lost momentum as the group has integrated, some continue to rely on them as a

platform for expression. The Pieds-Noirs continue to “require the truth” and, thus, shape their existence as a group around a memory of what was and what could have been (Algerian Circle of Grenoble: 2022).

VIII. Conclusion

This study has explored one of the most complex concepts in social sciences, identity. More specifically, through the case of the former settlers of French Algeria, I have attempted to deconstruct the foundations of collective identity. Indeed, French societal organisation cannot be fully apprehended without taking into account its colonial past. The former Algerian colony has a particular place in the French heritage, and the narratives surrounding its history continue to be a source of public discussion. The end of the colonial period, the Algerian war, left a permanent mark on both countries, given the unprecedented levels of violence between those who supported French rule and those who called for Algeria's independence. When Algeria obtained its independence in 1962 after the signature of the Evian Accords, hundreds of thousands of previously established settlers made their way back to France, in defeat. Traumatized by the conflict, and unsure of what the future held in France, the exile of the so-called Pieds-Noirs opened a new chapter for the social definition of the former settlers. Existing literature provides an incomplete illustration of the shift in collective identity for the Pieds-Noirs, specifically in their from "colonial settler" to "repatriate". However, scholarly work has allowed us to situate the case in a broader discussion about where individuals stand in the broader social structure, and how these social meanings come into existence through other social processes. Ultimately, it is argued that identity is a relational concept, responding to objective concepts, such as group characteristics, but also subjective ones, such as power and knowledge structures. In fact, the various circumstances to which individuals are confronted play a role in determining their social identity. In this regard, identity is not a fixed concept, and as the literature has shown, it has been understood differently in different academic trends. The various manifestations, perspectives, and contexts within which identity operates make it a challenging conceptual construct.

The present study presents three core findings. First, in line with the interactionist argument, the Pied-Noir identity came to existence within specific conditions of interaction. Prior to the exile, collective consciousness amongst settlers was relatively loosely established. The hardship brought about by the exile in itself contributed to a sense of solidarity, in how the Pieds-Noirs perceived each other, and a common relationship with the French metropolitans, who attributed a common "label" to the Pieds-Noirs as a group. In other words, the roles and expectations exchanged by the two groups created a sense of identity and collective awareness. As this relationship changed, however, through integration most evidently, the Pied-Noir identity per se lost potency. Second, the question of power is at the forefront of identity. As power is exchanged through interpersonal

relations, meanings attributed to individuals and groups are as well. In this case, the loss of power, inherent to the role of coloniser, was caused by the return to France and the loss of this title. The power shift took place as the former settlers moved from a place where they held implicit (and explicit) control, to a place where locals questioned their very legitimacy to be there. The role of power in collective identity has been under-discussed in the literature, especially when it comes to identities built in a colonial setting. The power dynamics of colonialism do not stop at decolonisation, but rather continue to shape knowledge structures, and these may be disturbed or questioned when these structures lose their foundation. Thirdly, this study has argued that collective memory allows collective identities, which have been partially forgotten, to continue in time. I argue that collective memory, as it is so strongly present for the Pieds-Noirs, may serve as a basis for collective consciousness, yet the intensity of collective identity provoked by memory diminishes with time. In other words, memory is a temporal construct, an idea of the past, that weakens as time progresses. However, despite being weakened, collective identity may endure over time in ways it could not have if collective memory wasn't still present. This is the intention of memory groups and Pied-Noir associations and acts as a way to maintain relative control over a history that was taken from them.

The present reflection brings attention to the relevance of historical knowledge in our understanding of societal makeup, and in turn, according to which foundations groups behave. At the crossroads between history and sociology, stands our modern-day understanding of group mobilisation and formation. Further research into this cross-discipline relationship would allow for a more in-depth understanding of the transition between the private composure of group identity, and the passage to the public realm, in politics. Moreover, this research's approach to power relations and identity is an opening for larger questions of the mental constructs of dominance in post-colonial states. In response to this research, it would be interesting to observe how the Algerian identity changed after the settlers left the country, and Algerians regained free access to their country, both physically and culturally.

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