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WHAT'S BEHIND SCHOOL CHOICE? MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTS

IN FRANCE, RACE, AND DECISIONS OVER PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS

by

ANTHONY E. HEALY

Under the Direction of James William Ainsworth, PhD

ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the role of race in school choice among French middle-class parents. It finds that institutional policies and individual practices combine to foster school segregation, which among immigrants may only be seen as racism. This qualitative study involves semi-structured interviews of 29 parents at three typical schools in the Parisian suburbs where a confluence of geographic and policy factors grants school choice impetus despite official restrictions. In building on a model from Ball (2003), the parents fall into four qualitative types in actions on school choice. Conducted amid a period of terrorist, political, and economic incidents in 2016 and 2017, the study also inquired on the effects of global risk, drawing on an alternative theory of Beck (1992; 2002). Little in parental accounts indicate that class anxiety and risk are salient in school choice, however. The racial inquiry is framed by Omi and Winant (2015), Bonilla-Silva (2013), and Lamont and Molnár (2002). The study finds that ideology and conventions weigh heavily on how race is understood. Though parents see commonalities between the United States and France on segregation, they explain it as a social class effect,

keeping with Marxian stratification. These accounts correspond more with Lamont and Molnár than with the critical theories of Bonilla-Silva and Omi and Winant. Nevertheless, by paying attention to racial ideas, language, and outcomes, as Bonilla-Silva urges, what emerges from parental accounts is a "how you see it, how you don't" view of race rather than a "now you see it, now you don't" view as in the United States. Moreover, instead of blaming the victim, the parents point to social and economic conditions, not personal failure. The model of school choice and race that emerges shows that race becomes obscured in the school choice process. The racial coin has two faces. On one face are the parents acting in the "best" interests of society and children. On the other face are the acted-upon, immigrants with their own racial scripts. On that face is what to immigrants may be readily understood from institutional policies and individual practices as racism.

INDEX WORDS: Race, Middle-class, School choice, Global risk, Social networks, France

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DEDICATION

Without hesitation, I dedicate this dissertation to Joyce Elliott, my maternal aunt. She made it possible. At a difficult juncture when one set of doors closed behind me, she opened new possibilities that led me to this late life ambition. Not only is she the last of the elder generation of my family, she is too of that female generation who more than a half century ago opened new doors for women. That arguably was a time of progress in American society, which is unfortunately all-too tenuous in the present day.

Aegroto dum anima est, spes est— Erasamus

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Finally, there are my adult children, Thomas and Becky, who saw too little of me in recent years. Never of course to be excluded is my indulgent wife of recent years, Lori. She sometimes accompanied me to France, where I then vanished to explore and interview. Too often what she saw of me in the last year of analysis and writing back in the United States was also fleeting, in my daily rushed transition from a lengthy commute and a long day on campus to my upstairs office in the evening at home.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a blog post in 2016 widely reported in French media, Thomas Piketty decried the high level of segregation by social class of middle schools in Paris. Piketty, an economist known for his work on economic inequality, claims this segregation exists because parents put their children in private schools, a result of misguided national policy (Piketty 2016b; Piketty 2016a). Though Piketty is concerned mainly with economic segregation, the maps he posted with the blog also match where immigrants mainly live. The maps provide evidence of another form of school segregation in Paris, segregation by ethnicity, if not also by race.

The existence of French school segregation is not unknown to French scholars, evident in studies of the Parisian suburbs (Oberti 2007; Merle 2010; Benito, Alegre and Gonzàlez-Balletbò 2014; Ben Ayed 2015) and in Bordeaux (Felouzis, Liot and Perroton 2005). That segregation is related to a gap that has developed in recent decades in schooling outcomes (Dobbins and Martens 2011; Meuret and Lambert 2011; Ichou 2013; Benito et al. 2014) despite a longstanding emphasis on schooling equity (Bowen 2008). For example, a 2014 report of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) attributes gaps in mathematics scores to social disparity (OECD 2013; Mons 2016), a finding reaffirmed in the 2015 PISA test (Ramos 2016). The results led two newspapers, one on the political right and the other on the left, to claim that France is the "champion of inequalities" in schooling (Piquemal 2013; Brigaudeau 2017).

This segregation sounds much as that which exists in U.S. schools. But the two countries are not entirely analogous, so the comparison is not straightforward. For instance, U.S. schools face substantial resource inequities that aggravates segregation (Baird 2008; Baker and Welner 2010; Porter 2013). France's centralized educational system ensures a more equitable distribution of resources (Auduc 2013). School choice acerbates U.S. segregation because white,

middle-class parents, usually shy away from schools with too many racial minorities, such as African-Americans (Goyette 2008; Mickelson, Bottia and Southworth 2008; Roda and Wells 2013; Saporito and Hanley 2014). Though France limits such school choice (van Zanten and Obin 2008), French middle-class parents are also known to use what means they can to avoid schools with too many immigrant children, some of whom are from Africa (Raveaud and van Zanten 2006; van Zanten 2006; Benson, Bridge and Wilson 2015).

France does not have the long and violent history of legalized, internal racial subjugation as the United States, but rather has long-established public policies meant to thwart racialization (Alba and Foner 2015; Omi and Winant 2015). France does not have official racial categories (Bessone and Sabbagh 2015); it bans the collection of racial data (Simon 2008a). A 1972 law prohibits racially defaming speech (Bleich 2001). Immigration policies have been color-blind, without national quotas, unlike the racialized quotas the United States once enforced (Lewis 2011). Nevertheless, public policy does not preclude other forms of institutionalized racism, much less individualized forms, especially that which is subtle (Mayer and Morris 1996). Socialization through social and political institutions is against racialization, not like in the United States where racial socialization remains intense (Winant 2009; Bonilla-Silva 2013). The evidence here is that while racism exists in France, it rests on different social, cultural, and political bases and is neither as prevalent nor as embedded as in the United States. And yet, the increased school segregation hints of similar racial attitudes that exist within the two countries.

This led me, as an American student of education, families, and social inequality, to scrutinize the criteria on which French middle-class parents decide about their children's schools. As I worked through the topic, the research question that arose dealt with the role of race in school choice among French middle-class parents. Certainly, in the U.S. case, race enters

schooling decisions as a proxy for school quality (Goyette, Farrie and Freely 2012) or because the presence of racial groups leads white parents to avoid schools (Saporito and Lareau 1999; Goyette 2008; Goyette et al. 2012; Saporito and Hanley 2014). Does it in France? Furthermore, France is also a good place to research it. As van Zanten (2002) argues, the country is an inimitable place to study a national schooling system because its deeply entrenched but consensual Republican model of schooling has kept at bay many global influences.

This research question, what is the role of race in school choice among French middle-class parents, is not easy to address in France. First, race is not a taken-for-granted notion there as it is in the United States (Alba and Foner 2015; Omi and Winant 2015). Differences exist between French and English on the usage of the word "race" as understood both academically and popularly. Neither the etymology nor the semantic base of the French word race entirely corresponds to those of the English word "race" used in the United States (Taguieff 2001). In contrast to the United States, too, which has well-known, official racial categories and identities, France does not have official, much popularly less agreed upon, racial categories or identities (Bessone and Sabbagh 2015). To the degree that categorization exists, the preference is for "ethno-racial," given the French sense of the "other" (Safi 2013; Bessone and Sabbagh 2015)

Second, prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology impede research on race. By cultural conventions, I mean the behavior, language, and practices which exist in a national cultural framework, such as here later, in parenting practices. By social and political ideology, I hold that it is as with Swidler (1986), "a highly articulated, self-conscious belief and ritual system, aspiring to offer a unified answer to problems of social actions." Within this French case, this integrative ideology is made official, nationally imposed on all elements of the social structure, though not without its internal inconsistencies and

silences, and yet is consensual, the product of more than a century of sustained political and institutional dictums directed against competing social and class distinctions (Jennings 2000; Nord 2011). Finally, these conventions and ideology are not independent of each other, as with Swidler, but are dependent on, and largely in sync, with each other.

Conventions and ideology are why France collects no data on race: It is officially prohibited even to ask people about their race (Simon 2008a). The conventional and ideological framework on race also means French social science is hesitant to explore race as a topic of stratification, preferring lingering Marxian ideas of social class. French theory and research on race and its effects are accordingly sparse. Not only do conventions and ideology make race an illegitimate form of social distinction for study, they make it an inappropriate basis for public policy. French intellectual traditions mean Marxian ideas of social class underpin much of public policy (as evident in Piketty's blog post). In the United States, by contrast, not only is race often the subject of study and great social science interest, it is often fundamental to public policy.

With these considerations in mind, I designed a study that worked around the issue of race through careful terminology. I took it to the Parisian suburbs, where because of the collision of the middle-class and immigrant families there, the process of school choice is most evident. In two visits over five months, I interviewed 29 parents in middle-class households whose children attend public middle schools. The interviews probed the processes and criteria of school choice, examined how anxiety impacts school choice and segregation, and explored attitudes around the "color of the skin" and on ethnic mix in schools and communities.

What emerges from parental accounts on the role of race in French school choice is clouded. Prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology weigh heavily on how race is understood and if parents act on it in school choice. By paying attention

to racial ideas, racial language, and racial differences, as Bonilla-Silva (2013) pushes race study to do, what emerges in parental accounts is an understanding of the role of race in school choice that might be termed "how you see it, how you don't" rather than his "now you see it, now you don't." That may be the case among the middle-class parents, but for those on whom they act the picture is perhaps not as cloudy. The racial coin has two faces. On one face are the actors, middle-class parents supposedly acting blamelessly in the interests of society and their children. On the other face of the coin are the acted-upon through institutional policies and individual practices, immigrants whose racial concepts may be drawn from globalist, not French, perspectives. To them, that face is engraved with what they may understand as racism, the results of school policies and middle-class school choice. I argue that despite the many differences that exist between France and the United States, it still comes down to an appearance of racism in the role of race in French school choice, though it is obscured.

This study makes five important contributions. First, the study of school choice often employs rational choice as a theoretical frame, though sometimes implicitly, tied as it is to neoliberalism on which school choice is politically grounded as Powers and Cookson (1999) and Felouzis, Maroy and van Zanten (2013) claim. I build on Ball (2003) a substitute model to understanding the processes and criteria of school choice which accommodates the role of culture within school choice. This model applies not only to French middle-class parents but potentially, and perhaps helpfully, to the U.S. middle class as well. Second, as a product of that model, the study exposes the numerous, overlapping, and sometimes conflictive packages of criteria that parents employ in deciding about schools. Third, using that model, the study provides insight into how parental social networks operate, and in this case, within the French context. Fourth, the study expands our knowledge of the role of race in French school choice,

which no known qualitative research in that country addresses directly. Finally, and similarly, the study expands our global knowledge of the link between middle-class agency and racial effects.

In this chapter, I first describe the French schooling system, its structure, resources, ideology, and inequalities. Next, I summarize theories on school choice, global risk, and race that both structure and sensitize this qualitative study. I then outline the plan for the dissertation.

1.1 The Schooling System in France

A few days before I arrived in France in the fall of 2016 to begin interviews, 3.3 million middle-school students had already arrived for the first day of school, the traditional *rentrée*, which occurs nationwide for all students at the first of September (Le-Nouvel-Observateur 2016). This exciting first day of school is of course repeated globally. But schooling itself is not consistent across countries. Schools are more than organizations that instruct students. They are according to Green (1990) part of national systems whose structures, policies, and ideologies rest on different societal, cultural, and political foundations. They perpetuate different sets of social values, beliefs, and expectations, and both promote and restrain social and economic inequalities within their societies. The French Republican model of schooling differs substantially from the U.S. model of schooling in its structure, policies, and sources of inequalities, as I explore here.

1.1.1 The Structure of Schooling in France

The massive, centralized French system has about 63,000 schools that provide early education to higher education to most of the country (Mattei 2012; Auduc 2013). The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education, and Research is the nation's largest employer with a budget that is a sizable part of the national government's expenditures (Auduc 2013).

This study is interested in the middle school, a relatively recent creation in the French system. The middle school, the *collège*, is a four-year lower secondary school. Analogous to the U.S. middle school, its first year is equivalent to the U.S. sixth grade and its last year, the U.S. ninth grade. At the end of middle school, students take a national test, commonly known as the *brevet*. In 2016, about 87.3 percent of students passed (MEN 2017a). Completion of middle school brings to an end in combination with primary school a nine-year period of common schooling, one of the longest among developed countries (Green 1990; Gombert 2008).

Afterward, students mostly self-select into specialized programs in high schools, the *lycées*. In contrast to the United States, where high schools may offer several programs within a single facility, the three-year high schools are divided into the *général*, essentially college preparatory, and the *professionnel*, largely vocational, as well as into arts and technology schools which are not as numerous and are not often nearby (Auduc 2013). Students complete high school with the passage of the *baccalauréat*, an arduous national test. Students who pass (88.6 percent did in 2016) then move on to higher education by self-selection.

Before middle school, children attend the pre-primary school, or *maternelle*, which lasts three years. Though it is not compulsory, most children attend it. France is one of few countries that has universal, free early childhood education, considered effective in reducing social class inequalities (Dumas and Lefranc 2010). The last year is equivalent to a U.S. kindergarten (Auduc 2013). The primary school, or *élémentaire*, that follows is compulsory and lasts five years.

Not all schooling is public. Private schools are a parallel, smaller system, partially supported by the education ministry under a 1959 law (Bowen 2008). In exchange for government support, private schools agree to conform to the national curriculum and meet national standards. This policy means private schools are within the reach of many middle-class

parents (Fridenson 2002). Though most are Catholic parochial schools, they cannot include religion as a subject or admit students based on religion, only by using academic criteria (Fridenson 2002; Bowen 2008). In the most recent government data, 17 percent of students in 2017-2018 attended private schools, compared with 10 percent of U.S. students (Kena et al. 2014). Many more are enrolled in secondary schools than in primary schools, 20.7 to 13.2 percent (MEN 2018). In general, private schools have higher test scores, better behavior, and less diversity than public schools (Tavan 2004; Bowen 2008).

1.1.2   Resources for schooling

Though France devotes a large part of its national budget to education, per capita expenditures for schooling are not high comparatively. France spends the equivalent of about $10,000 per primary and secondary student (MEN 2017a). Though above average for European countries, France's expenditure per capita is about half of that in the United States for core education costs (OECD 2014, Table B1.2). The national government pays about three-fifths of the operating costs of public schools. Local governments pay the rest, which goes for buildings, supplies, and non-teaching personnel, as well as for school lunches (Auduc 2013). The local towns, or *communes*, are responsible for pre-primary and primary school costs, the larger *départements* (analogous to counties) for middle school costs, and the much larger *régions* (analogous to states) for high school costs (Auduc 2013). Despite the outlays, local governments exercise little control over the running of schools or the hiring of teachers (Auduc 2013).

I visited nine schools during this study. These schools have the same general facilities. The education ministry sets the facility requirements when local governments build or renovate schools (Auduc 2013). None of the schools I visited are as lavishly equipped as they are in a few

wealthy U.S. school districts. Some had been renovated recently or are to be renovated. In a few instances, the schools needed repairs (at one, the glass roof of the foyer leaked when it rained). But I did not find a derelict building, as is still the case among U.S. schools in poor districts (Kozol 1991). The schools have computers, digital technology and wi-fi. They are not air conditioned, however, and classrooms are uncomfortable when temperatures soar. The schools are ecologically conscious: Lights turn off automatically in the halls when no one is in them.

The national government hires teachers based on a national examination and supervises and evaluates them through regional bodies. Teachers are responsible only to the education ministry, not to the principal, locality, or parents (Gombert 2008; Nord 2011). Importantly, this national system makes for uniform teacher qualifications and salaries throughout the country, introducing a level of equality in sharp contrast to the United States where teacher qualifications differ from state-to-state and where salaries range widely among states and school districts (Baird 2008; Baker and Welner 2010; Porter 2013). Additionally, middle and high school teachers hold academic degrees in their subject fields but are not pedagogically trained. Pre-school and primary school teachers are pedagogically trained at teacher colleges and paid equivalent salaries (Auduc 2013). Finally, French classrooms are teacher centered, as was clearly evident in the many classes I visited, and which were in contrast with my own experiences as a mathematics teacher in the United States where classes are more student-centered.

Nevertheless, the promotion system produces inequality because of which teachers end up at which schools. Teachers are able to apply for open positions throughout the country and are awarded the positions based on seniority and periodic evaluations (Auduc 2013). Experienced teachers do not ordinarily seek positions at schools with problematic student behavior, usually considered to be schools with poor and immigrant students (Viguier 2006). The newest, least

experienced teachers usually qualify for posts at these schools, and many leave when the

promotion system finally allows it, leaving the schools with the least qualified and experienced

teachers (Viguier 2006). These schools also have few highly credentialed teachers. According to

2016 PISA data, highly credentialed teachers usually in schools with students from high-income

families, and few of them teach in schools with predominately low-income students (Piquemal

2018). In addition, when they fall short on teachers, schools are sent temporaries, year-long

substitutes who are paid less and do not meet regular qualifications (Auduc 2013). Finally,

French teachers have more leeway to be repeatedly absent than U.S. teachers (Auduc 2013).

Unsurprisingly, teachers are absent most often in poor and immigrant schools, leaving students

with days in which no instruction occurs in that teacher's subject (Viguier 2006).

The national promotion system thus also introduces inequality. It contributes to the

precarious reputation of suburban schools, too. The best and experienced teachers come and go

when they feel where they teach is less desirable than in other places. The quality and stability

of the teaching team signals to parents whether the reputation of a school is good, and that

reputation can erode if teachers begin to exit or become absent, "red flags" warnings to parents.

1.1.3   *History and ideology of the system*

The oldest form of public schooling is the *lycées* that Napoléon Bonaparte founded to

train civil servants. These competitive secondary schools introduced a strong sense of elitism

into French schooling that lingers still in recent decades (Green 1990; Bowen 2008; Ichou and

Vallet 2013). France's first longstanding democratic government, the Third Republic, established

a national system of primary schools in 1886 (Nord 2011). The explicit purpose of this "first

revolution" in schooling was to displace the then-dominant Catholic school system, and impose a

common ideology instead of a common religion on the nation (Green 1990; Auduc 2013). The words *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, fraternity) emblazoned the fronts of the schools, a motto rooted in 18th century Revolutionary ideals and the French Enlightenment (Green 1990). The school became the instrument by which the Third Republic incorporated citizens into a singular, shared civic culture (Green 1990; Bowen 2008). The Republican model of schooling rests on a dominant social and political ideology whose explicit purpose is to achieve political and cultural integration (van Zanten 1997). Religion and ethnicity have no place in the French school house. More recently, this model has faltered in the face of growing ethnic and immigrant groups, some practicing Islamic persons, which some of the French public believe to be resisting acculturation and integration (Bowen 2008).

In the late 20th century, the school system underwent a profound evolution in which the primary concern became social class equity rather than elitism. The system had expanded rapidly during the economic boom that followed World War II. France raised the obligatory age of schooling from 14 to 16 in 1959 (Ichou and Vallet 2013). It established the middle school in 1979 as a separate lower secondary school with a common curriculum during this "second" revolution in schooling (Resnik 2007; Auduc 2013). The "third revolution" that immediately ensued, known as the "democratization," directly addressed class and gender inequalities (Auduc 2013). Legislation in 1989 set a goal that 80 percent of the next generation would finish high school (Viguier 2006; Auduc 2013). The rate by which all students sat for and passed the *baccalauréat*, the high school test, rose from 21 percent in 1970 to 80 percent in 2005 (Duru-Bellat 2002; MEN 2017b).

Of much importance to this study is a law adopted in 1963. Parents before then had leeway in which middle school they enrolled their children. The new law required students to

attend the middle school according to an assigned sector. The intent of the law was to reduce economic segregation by keeping wealthier parents from putting their children in schools other than the neighborhood school (Ben Ayed 2015). The law had the unintended effect, however, to tie where students go to school to where parents decide to live (Grzegorczyk 2013).

School policy directed at reducing inequalities mostly focuses on economic inequality, not on ethnicity or race, because of the legacy of Marxism (van Zanten 2006; Oberti, Préteceille and Rivière 2012). Prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology make it difficult for sociologists to study the effect of ethnicity, much less race, on schooling outcomes, too, as does the sparsity of data (Simon 2008b; Bessone and Sabbagh 2015). They also make it hard for policymakers to devise initiatives focused on ethnic (or racial) groupings other than on the traditional emphases of social class and gender (Taguieff 2001; Fassin 2002; van Zanten 2006). The major policy initiative directed at student outcomes, the creation of Zones of Educational Priority in 1982, provides social supplements in places where schools are faltering to pay for school supplies, clothing, and lunches among low-income families. These zones are considered largely ineffectual, and at worst, signal to parents which schools and neighborhoods to avoid (Bénabou, Kramarz and Prost 2009; Rochex 2012).

1.2   Theories of School Choice

For the purposes of this dissertation, I define school choice as an educational system that provides alternatives to schooling children in an assigned public school through a range of policies and programs such as private schools, between-school transfers, charter schools, tracked classes, and tuition vouchers. Here, I first focus on the U.S. literature on school choice; then, second on the global synthesis; and finally, third, on the processes and criteria of school choice.

1.2.1 The U.S. literature

The school choice literature originates in the United States. That foundational literature, includes Chubb and Moe (1990) and Coleman and Hoffer (1987) who contend that the structure and composition of public schooling is responsible for what they claim is widespread, poor student performance and that ineffective organizations and educational negligence are the natural result of the political control of schools. This literature mainly stresses the positive academic benefits of school choice and largely ignores its negative societal effects. Powers and Cookson (1999) and Felouzis et al. (2013) claim that this literature resembles more a political movement than empirical science. These authors note that rational choice theory and neoliberal theory with its stress on the efficiency and efficacy that markets bring underlays this movement, propagating beliefs about the benefits of choice and the costs of state regulation.

1.2.2 Global synthesis of school choice

Dissatisfied with state of both the study and theory on school choice, especially American, Felouzis et al. (2013) establish a sociology of the education market by synthesizing research on school choice globally. They critique the neoliberal ideology of school choice that now permeates U.S. schooling and whose polemics infuse debates and views over school choice, if not even influence social science research. The authors conclude that the effects of school choice are largely perverse, principally because it promotes segregation rather than integration.

They make three main points. First, Felouzis et al. (2013) contend that education cannot be reduced to an economy because its production, distribution, and consummation do not obey the standard laws of supply and demand. Its demand is not governed by its price, for example, but by its quality, the identification of which is problematic, unlike price, which is known and

listed. Second, nations have three types of markets. The first type exists in countries where competition is only between public and private schools. The second type is the quasi-market, in which the state regulates curriculum, teachers, and institutions, but allows limited choice, which is the case in France. The third is the official market in which national and local policy permits high levels of choice, as in the United States.

Finally, Felouzis et al. (2013) claim that school choice increases educational inequality and segregation. Because information on school quality largely comes through social networks, these networks share parental perceptions and judgments, for example, about the racial and social class makeup of schools, which then drive parental choices. Felouzis et al. (2013) claim that the middle-class and upper middle-class parents who are most active in school choice pathologize the families of working class and minority students as having negative behavioral and attitudinal traits that reduce educational achievement and outcomes.

1.2.3 Ball's theory of school choice

One can certainly contend that the French school segregation is an effect of social class segregation. Social class segregation falls more heavily on immigrants and ethnic groups because they are less advantaged. This argument holds sway in France's social sciences and public policies in which social class is understood as the primary basis for stratification, not race and ethnicity. That argument, however, does not explain adequately increases in school segregation in recent decades (Felouzis et al. 2005; Merle 2010; Benito et al. 2014; Ben Ayed 2015). Segregation appears not to be increasing because of widening socioeconomic differences, which in France are less pronounced than in other developed countries including the United States (Bigot et al. 2012; Atkinson and Brandolini 2013; Dallinger 2013).

An alternative social class explanation is that middle-class anxiety is increasing. Ball (2003) contends that the middle class has become anxious, fearing economic risk is eroding its ability to ensure class reproduction for the next generation, and leading middle-class parents to engage intensely in social closure through school choice that then leads to school segregation. I use Ball's explanation to structure this qualitative inquiry in two ways: First, to explain how school choice takes place, and second, to explore the idea of middle-class anxiety.

Ball constructs a model of school choice, on which I build, that places this class struggle in a school marketplace. Despite the economic imagery, Ball's school marketplace is not entirely rational or utilitarian as in U.S. literature, but partly cultural (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1996; Ball 2003). This localized marketplace is also not only about the middle class as buyers; schools themselves are sellers because they see the middle class as prized customers. The sizable presence of middle-class students in a school heightens its reputation and marketability by raising academic results and improving discipline (Ball 1997; Ball 2003).

Parents possess resources, select schools, and affect policy based on the differentiated abilities and interests that exist among social classes (Ball 2003). Prizing good education, the middle class has material goods that grant a range of choices of where to educate its children, such as buying homes in pricier school zones and enrolling in costly private schools (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1995). The middle class possesses non-material assets, too, including useful knowledge of education and schools and extensive and well-positioned social networks that supply that information (Ball and Vincent 1998). As Felouzis et al. (2013) also discuss, networks are value-laden, persuading parents to make "correct" decisions (Ball and Vincent 1998).

To Ball, the acceleration in segregation lies in an amplified sense of economic risk that is driving the middle class to intensify the class struggle through schooling and school choice,

forcing social closure and blocking competition to retain its class position (Ball 2003). With the all-too-ready collaboration of the schools, the middle class dislodges the working class from "good" schools (Ball et al. 1995; Ball 2003). They trample wholesale over the working class in pursuit of social class advantage for their children which school choice has made all too easy.

The model I build from Ball frames my interviews. The frame firstly focuses on the processes and criteria of school choice. Processes are how parents engage in school choice, and criteria are the aspects of schools that parents value, such as results, programs, reputations, and students. The frame secondly addresses parental anxiety, based on the concept of global risk discussed next. It attends here to how anxiety compels the middle class to trample wholesale over minorities in pursuit of the best schooling, blind to whom they displace as they do.

In line with Nogueira (2010), this model reflects the quantum shift in the study of educational inequality in which the focus is not on the effects of the structure of schooling, as in earlier French and U.S. literature (Coleman 1968; Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Baudelot and Establet 1971; Jencks 1972; Boudon 1973; Bowles and Gintis 2002), but on the efforts of the middle-class to manipulate schooling to its own purposes, creating inequality for others, evident in recent work in both countries (Felouzis et al. 2005; Merle 2010; Lareau 2011; Lareau and Muñoz 2012; Lewis-McCoy 2014; Ben Ayed 2015; Lewis and Diamond 2015). Finally, this model abandons a purely rational choice perspective to integrate cultural factors, much in line with Felouzis et al. (2013) and what Weber termed "axiological rationality" (Weber 1978).

1.3 Beck's Global Risk Theory

To understand Ball's claims on the intensification and continuation of the class struggle, the second part of the frame on which I draw from him, I take an important conceptual detour in

this study from the research question to explore what lies behind his claims. Ball (2003) asserts that economic risk arouses middle-class anxiousness and drives their engagement in school choice. Ball draws on Beck (1992), as well as others,[1] for the concept of global risk. To Beck, modernity brings the emergence of a risk society that globalized events haunt. Global risk is an outgrowth of the modernization process in which the effects arise largely not from nature, but from the advanced systems of late modernity (Beck 1992).

Global risk comes from three sources, or axes of conflict: the environment, the financial system, and terrorism (Beck 1992; Beck 2002). Financial risks are easier to see than are ecological or environmental risks. Such economic risks are more likely to fall on individuals, through job loss, unlike ecological risk, whose effects are spread widely, such as through pollutants (or more aptly today, through climate change, which according to Beck (2010), is a new dimension of ecological risk). Terrorism is an "uncontrollable risk." Its effect is to erode trust in fellow citizenry, non-nationals, and the political system (Beck 2002). Through these axes, national political systems are then paralyzed, shaken by recurrent waves of change brought about by both democratic and non-democratic global movements (Beck 1992).[2]

In this frame of inquiry, the relationship of risk to school choice is three part. The first is that risk creates middle-class anxiety; the second is that the anxiety affects the lives of the middle-class; and third, that the middle class accordingly changes its schooling plans for its children. The ideas about risk appear to be apropos to France, which as I discuss in Chapter 2, had been immersed in violent terrorism, economic woes, and political malaise during the study.

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[1] Ball also discusses Crook (1999) and Giddens (1990) for his concept of risk and anxiety, but here I focus on Beck because his work is more salient to Ball's claims.
[2] My presentation here of Beck is straightforward, if not simplistic. Beck's concept of global risk is complex, in which theoretical ambiguities and unresolved questions remain (Rasborg 2018).

1.4   Theories of Racialization

The research question I ask in this study is about the role of race in school choice among French middle-class parents. While Ball explains school choice as founded on class and anxiety, most U.S. literature directly faults parental racial perceptions and racialized structures for the negative societal and educational effects of school choice, including segregation.

Because social class is the orientating principle in French social research and public policy, the investigation of race is underdeveloped there. One of the difficulties of researching race in France is the absence of theory. I carry to France as an U.S. sociologist a concept of race drawn from a national discipline in which race is broadly accepted as a social construction, and its destructive effects on interactions, social groups, and society are widely studied (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Bessone and Sabbagh 2015; Omi and Winant 2015). In France, the wariness of the social sciences on race means indigenous race theory is sparse (Amiraux and Simon 2006; van Zanten 2006; Simon 2011). Critical race theory is well-developed in the United States but mostly spurned in France (Wieviorka 1997; Wieviorka 2000; Heilbron 2015). Postcolonial theory is similarly resisted academically, though gaining some adherents (Amiraux and Simon 2006; Moura 2008; Baneth-Nouailhetas 2011; Stoler 2011). Exceptions are the newer work of Safi (2013), Laurent and Leclère (2013), and Fassin (2011).

This sparsity of work should not be taken to mean that racism is not present in France. It is. It is well-noted, is felt, and it raises social anger (see, for example, Begag 2007; Wacquant 2007; Pager 2008; Bertossi 2012b). Racial ideas between the two countries rest on different social, cultural, and political bases, however. This study is foremost not about if racism exists in France, or how it is constituted, or why it persists there, all of which is beyond this study's scope, but only about its role in school choice. Nor should racism be conflated with xenophobia and

religious intolerance, both of which are present in France (Laurent and Leclère 2013).

Social science concepts and theory are one thing. Popular concepts of race are another thing. As Appiah (2015) contends, studying race in a society is similar to studying sorcery in a culture. We know neither sorcery nor race are real, but it is necessary to understand what sorcery (or race) means in a culture to investigate its influence. That requires sensitization to race as a social and popular concept, to the discursive clues of what constitutes that racial formation and/or diffusion. To do that, by necessity, I employ theory that are mostly American in content and scope. They are the critical theories of Bonilla-Silva and Omi and Winant, and the cultural model of Lamont and Molnár. I have not included the critical perspective of Feagin (2006) because his work on systemic racism is entirely focused on the United States.

1.4.1   *The racialized system*

Bonilla-Silva (2013) directs us to the importance of racial ideas, racial language, and racial outcomes in the study of race. He purports powerfully that racist effects result from a racial ideology that has emerged since the 1960s, that of color-blindness. They no longer flow from the prejudice and actions of racists, as once common. This politically formidable but loose dominant ideology relies both on the fluidity of its conceptual content and on its facility to be represented as outside of racist notions for it to exist and persist. It metamorphizes as dominant and subordinate groups endlessly struggle to obtain social, economic, and political power.

The ideology is embedded in a racialized structure. Though pliable, the structure is a daunting wall between minority groups and whites. The color-blind ideology explains the persistence of racial inequalities as the result of economic forces, natural phenomena, and cultural limitations, but not as the result of biology or genes, as before. Four social beliefs prevail

among many whites that explain inequality and create blindness. First is the concept of abstract liberalism, a combination of political and economic philosophies that stress equal opportunity and individualism; second is the assumption that racial group inequalities are natural or normal; third is the contention that any inequalities are the product of a faulty minority culture; and fourth is the minimalization of racism in which economic, social, and political discrimination is held no longer important or relevant. These beliefs are constituted in overlapping racial frames, discursive ways of explaining how life is or should be, largely posited by and apportioned among whites. Finally, the racial structure is covert and its processes are invisible, functioning in a way that means "now you see it, now you don't" (Bonilla-Silva 2013).

1.4.2   *Race as a global process*

Omi and Winant (2015) call attention to the ways that ideas of race are diffused globally, infecting other societies and their social structures. The possibility exists that race is being globalized, entering national societies such as France that do not share the racial history of the United States. These authors advance an overarching global theory of race that views the construction of race and the effects of race as a historic, deterministic sociopolitical process. The authors assert that the United States is not an exception as it is a "pioneer" in the process. Racialization is defined as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (Omi and Winant 2015, 111).

Race is a fluid social concept that arises from the embodiment of social conflicts and interests, signified and symbolized by and within the human phenotype. The construction of race follows a societal trajectory that both structure and representations steer. That trajectory brings racial formation, in which racial identities are formed, cemented, and dissolved through historic

processes. Racial projects are the cases within a society of racial formation in which multiple

social elements are assembled together to produce racial identity, meaning, and activity, and

from which material and non-material resources are then allocated racially. Racial formation

shifts through religious to scientific to political themes, the latter of which is dominant now. The

politicized theme draws on neoliberal and colorblind ideologies, of which colorblindness is an

emergent and highly unstable hegemonic social belief. Attempting to ground their overarching

theory within national contexts, Omi and Winant supply few concrete clues observable

discursively on the processes of racialization, racial projects, or of racial formation.

Theirs is not the only theory with transnational implications. They include other works of

Winant (2006; 2009; 2014) and that of Bonilla-Silva (2000), but which are not applicable to this

study because they are insufficient as frames for qualitative inquiry or analysis.

1.4.3   Social boundaries and groups

Lamont and Molnár (2002) focus on how social groups form boundaries against the

"other" and originate collective repertoires that justify and defend those boundaries. They define

social boundaries as social and cultural distinctions that are, in a sense, made plain in discourse.

The formation of social boundaries arises from such symbolic boundaries held at the individual

level, such as racial or class attributes. Symbolic boundaries may be more likely to create social

boundaries when they are brought into a binary opposition to an "other," an out-group (Lamont

and Molnár 2002). These social boundaries lead to social inequality by controlling access to

resources and through differentiated and unequal opportunity. The theory explains how othered

groups manage and resist racial and ethnic stigmatization and foster social resilience through

their cultural repertoires (Fleming, Lamont and Welburn 2011; Lamont et al. 2016). Though the

theory explains the responses of subjugated groups, it also explains the boundary-making and opportunity hoarding of the potential perpetrators of that racism and discrimination, as Lamont and Duvoux (2014) have done in assessing the shift in symbolic boundaries among the French middle class, an explanation which is pertinent to this dissertation.

1.5   Plan of the Dissertation

This dissertation proceeds step-by-step, integrating literature, theory, data, and discussion as it goes, in eight chapters. This approach is necessary to integrate properly the context of the French case and the evidence from the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the qualitative methodology. In line with Ball (2003), the population of interest is middle-class parents of school children. I use semi-structured interviews, recruiting middle-class parents by word-of-mouth at three typical public middle schools in three typical towns in the Parisian suburbs (van Zanten 2007b; Ben Ayed and Broccolichi 2009; Augustine and Virot 2012). I interviewed 29 parents during the fall 2016 and spring 2017 school sessions. A model of school choice processes and criteria and the need to work around French precepts on school choice and race frame the inquiry and the construction of the interview guide. I am interested in how parents explain and justify their lives and actions within the social structure and ideological frameworks in which they interact. The study's timing is of note. There were multiple terrorist events, a divisive election with an antiimmigrant presidential candidate, a wave of massive migration from Africa and the Near East, and a stagnant economy in which unemployment remained high. They comprise an incipient situation that parallels what Swidler (1986) calls an unsettled cultural period and which becomes unintentionally part of the study. In Chapter 3, I focus on changes in migration, immigration, and policy that instigate school choice

and define the school marketplace of this study. Despite official restraint, school choice has gained impetus because of a confluence of three factors over the past three decades, a movement of middle-class parents into the Parisian suburbs, a policy relaxation regarding the school sector, and the repopulation of the suburbs with immigrant and ethnic groups. The chapter describes the three towns and three middle schools where I interview parents and brings context to the places that the parents inhabit and to the lives they live through observational and other data (Lamont and Swidler 2014). Known by pseudonyms, the schools and towns are Legacy, a traditional, high scoring school in Riviereville, a well-to-do town; Arche, a mixed[3] school with tracked, elite courses that middle-class children largely fill in increasingly middle-class Petiteville; and Haven, a mixed school in highly mixed Centreville, whose classical music academic program is a magnet for middle-class students from elsewhere.

Building on the work of Ball (2003), I explore in Chapter 4 the processes by which middle-class parents engage in school choice. After I discuss how school choice works in France, I turn to the school choice process among the parents. Based on the parental accounts, I develop four empirically grounded, qualitative types (McKinney 1969; Kluge 2000), the chapter's main contribution. The base of the types is agency, expressed through two dimensions of action—enrollment and residence—and two dimensions of reasoning—ideology and attitudes. The four types are Adherents, Assenters, Appraisers, and Avoiders. Staying put assigned schools, Adherents and Assenters tend to think and act according to what is best for society, while Appraisers and Avoiders, who contemplate on and exercise their options, tend to think and act according to what is best for children. In addition, the chapter looks at how parents get

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[3] I use the term mix or mixed to express what in English is considered diversity in composition of students and population, a usage consistent with the French word *mix* or *mixite*.

information, especially from their social networks, which appear less purposeful among these parents than similar networks among U.S. school parents. Finally, it explores schooling options parents considered and the degree of parental contingency.

In Chapter 5, I address the criteria that middle-class parents use in school choice. Criteria are the aspects of schools that parents value for the education of their children. I find that parents have many packages of criteria by which they evaluate schools. Two themes arise inductively from the profuse and diverse criteria that parents name as important to them for the school their children attend. One of the themes is the academic quality of schools; the other is the school context, in line with much of the school choice literature (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe 1990; Mickelson et al. 2008; Cucchiara and Horvat 2013; Felouzis et al. 2013). Parents highly rate mix, behavior and teaching as school criteria, but social, ethnic, and cultural mix is more problematic. Parents are divided over the merits of this criterion, as well as that of the quality of teaching and pedagogy, but not of student behavior. The explanation is grounded in the ideologies and attitudes that underlay the types. They are tied to other, longstanding societal notions about mix and teachers, reducing the effect of the types on criteria.

Chapter 6 takes a conceptual detour to address the effect of social class anxiety on school choice as an explanation to the role of race in school choice. Social class in France is considered the primary legitimate form to study social stratification, not ethnicity or race. Thus, it is essential to understand how class is related to school choice before preceding to race. In addition, anxiety would appear to be highly salient because of events that transpired in France in and around the time of the interviews. It is necessary to understand if the many events, expressed as global risk, increase parental anxiety and change schooling plans, in accordance with Ball (2003) and Beck (1992). They evidently have not. It has not led to the wholesale trampling of minorities

in blind pursuit of the best schooling. Parents instead use the hopeful language of a satisfactory life, not of class struggle or social closure. These parents act on their social class position, though, through the schools and classes in which their children are enrolled. This chapter's important contribution is three spectrums of individual dispositions from parental accounts. Parents range from the philosophical to the psychological, the collectivistic to the individualistic, and the resolute to the uncertain.

In Chapter 7, a clouded picture emerges on the role of race in school choice. The parental accounts indicate that the parents do not intend to act on race in their lives and children's schooling. Of theory reviewed in Chapter 1, the reasoning and actions evident here are mostly in line with Lamont and Molnár (2002). They describe how groups form boundaries against the "other" and justify and protect the boundaries through collective repertoires. Of the historic theories, however, not much easily corresponds with Omi and Winant (2001) and their historic, deterministic thesis. Bonilla-Silva (2013) contends that Americans use slippery language to evade racial references, if not to obscure racism, what he phrases as "now you see it, now you don't." Though his frames likewise have little applicability here, I contend from the evidence that for these middle-class French parents, race is matter of partial or non-recognition, not obscuration, or "how who see it, how you don't." Two sides exist to the racial coin, however. On one side is the supposedly blameless actions of French parents to act for the good of society and their children, and on the other side is what immigrants, carrying their own globalist perspectives, may only view as but racism.

To this point, this dissertation proceeded step-by-step, integrating literature, theory, data, and discussion, chapter by chapter. Chapter 8 is the capstone that presents a conceptual model of school choice and the role of race within it. The model contains three societal strata in which

parents engage with schooling, those of individual dispositions, social structure, and ideology. It accounts for the effects of recent events and the hidden effect of race on school choice. I make concluding points about the role of race in school choice and explain the importance of this study and potential lines of future research, as well as discuss the study's limitations. I argue that despite all the differences that exist between the French and U.S. case, it still comes down to the appearance of racism in the role of race in French school choice.

2   STUDY METHODS

In this qualitative study, I seek understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of middle-class parents as they relate to school choice and race (Lofland et al. 2006). Following Ball (2003), the study's population of interest is middle-class parents of school children, sampled at three typical middle schools in the Parisian suburbs where middle-class parents live (van Zanten 2007b; Ben Ayed and Broccolichi 2009; Augustine and Virot 2012). To convey the lived experience of the parents, I additionally collect descriptive data (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

The selection of parents with children in middle school is purposeful. The French middle school, or collège, is a common school that lasts from the equivalent of 6th through 9th grade in the United States. It is a pivotal institution in French schools, after which students enter different high schools based on their academic success and vocational interests (Auduc 2013). French middle-class parents are highly aware that middle school shapes their children's academic success and future progress (van Zanten 2003). For those reasons, the public middle school is often the subject of school choice research in France (see, for example Felouzis et al. 2005; Poupeau, François and Couratier 2006; van Zanten 2009; van Zanten 2012). For practical reasons, I did not interview parents with children in private school, not unlike other French

researchers. Getting the cooperation of private schools is much more difficult than for public schools. Parents in these schools also are scattered residentially because private schools have no school sectors, making it difficult to contact and interview parents.

Qualitative methodology is appropriate to this research because I am interested in social relationships and in "thick description" (Geertz 1973; Weiss 1995). The study is structured through a theoretical model that guides the inquiry on the process and criteria of school choice. That model frames the semi-structured interviews, conducted with a multipart interview guide on choice, risk, and race. Semi-structured interviews are the proper method because, though I have specific questions about processes, at the same I want to gain a grasp of the reasoning of the parents, giving them some breadth in their answers (Fontana and Frey 1994; Weiss 1995). Such a form of interview is also a reliable means of eliciting information on attitudes, and to a lesser degree, on behavior, if placed in a social context (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

Here, I explain the methodology and the study design. The chapter is organized along five issues that arise from the research question. The first of the five issues is the selection of towns and schools for the interviews. Second is data gathering, including the development of an interview schedule based on the study's theoretical model. How the study samples parents is the third issue. The issue of language and the problems that language entails, both in the interviews and subsequent analysis, is the fourth. The fifth is the interviewer's position in transnational research and how that position enables and impedes the work. Additionally, the timing of the research is further consideration, a study that occurred when France was under a state of emergency, and which has important consequences. I address these issues in turn below.

2.1 Selection of Sites

The first issue is the selection of sites that are typical of the places and institutions in which school choice occurs in the Paris suburbs. The selection of the towns and schools is grounded in a thorough review of the French and English language literature on French schools, school choice, and geography, as well as consultations with French academics and officials. I sought three types of towns. The ones I selected are Riviereville[4], which is middle class and has low levels of ethnic and social diversity; Petiteville, a town transitioning to middle class but which retains its diversity, and Centreville, a mixed town with an isolated but stable middle class. The goal was then to locate typical public schools in the three respective towns. They are a higher performing middle school, Legacy; a mixed school with elite tracked classes, Arche; and a mixed school with a specialty academic program, Haven. The schools reflect types of middle schools that result from the conjunction of school and parent strategies (Broccolichi and van Zanten 2000; van Zanten 2007b; Ben Ayed and Broccolichi 2009). They are also in accord with types of French secondary schools that van Zanten (2007b) describes. They include traditional schools with mostly "good" students, and entrepreneurial schools that engage in strategies to attract or retain "good" students through specialized programs or courses.

That selection took place in two steps. First, I did an extensive review of relevant demographic, social, and economic data from France's census agency on the innermost Parisian suburbs. Second, I reviewed what school data is publicly available from the Ministry of Education, though the data are limited. Media compilations supplemented that official data, including of *brevet* test scores. In each of the towns, I made a preliminary selection of two schools for consideration. I contacted all six of the schools by email, telling them about the study

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[4] The towns and schools are described more fully in Chapter 3. The names are pseudonyms.

and asking if I could visit. In the spring of 2016, I made a preliminary trip to France. I met with principals, toured schools, and sat in classes, as well as walked through towns. Unfortunately, one school was unresponsive despite multiple attempts to contact it and a second school in that same town said it had lost its middle-class parents. Of the four schools I contacted and visited, I selected two possibilities. I re-contacted them that summer to ask if they would cooperate with the research, which they and the regional bureaucracy agreed to do.[5]

However, the selection of a third site remained elusive. During the fall of 2016, while conducting interviews, I tried to recruit two schools in a fourth town, but the principals would not cooperate. Before I resumed interviews in the spring of 2017, I made a third effort to contact schools in a fifth town, and this time, had success. A school there became the third site. An unfortunate consequence of the late selection of that school is that I was unable to spend as much time in it as I did in the other schools.

2.2   Data Gathering

The second issue is data gathering. It first required the development of an interview schedule, along with a short post-interview survey instrument in French. I made a concerted effort, too, to provide context to the study through lived reality of the respondents by acquiring statistical data and by making observations at each site.

The language of the interview schedule and the post-survey instrument is French. Respondents were given the opportunity to respond to questions in English, if they felt comfortable and precise responding in it. Many middle-class persons in France have a grasp of

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[5] Formal processes of permission required to conduct research in U.S. schools are unnecessary in France. The cooperation of the school and the regional authority, which I had, is adequate.

English, and some are fluent, as is evident in the interviews. One respondent responded entirely in English to questions asked in French. A few respondents elaborated on their responses in English. To overcome any language difficulties, I shared the text of the interview schedule with respondents, along with the French text of any other material related to the interview.

In France, social science interviews must be structured to be an equal exchange. As much as possible, the wording of the interview questions should avoid what is considered an interrogation, which has a negative connotation. The term evokes a time in early 19th century French social research when working-class families were interviewed in the presence of the police (Blanchet and Gotman 2010; Heilbron 2015). This means also avoiding direct and accusatory statements, following French language conventions. I worded the questions in respect to prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology around race and school choice. As a foreign interviewer, I otherwise risk inhibiting parent recruitment and parents shutting down in interviews. Even as written, questions were sometimes met with long pauses and interjections, such as "*pfft,*" indicating that the questions were thorny.

2.2.1   *Interview schedule*

The interview schedule (see Appendix A) is broad, 16 questions in total, which are structured into four sections, or frames in accordance with the model of school choice I build from Ball (2003). The first two frames address parental processes and criteria in school choice. The third frame appraises the influence of global risk on the middle-class parents, as theorized in Beck (1992). Finally, the fourth frame, addresses the perceived effects of race in a comparison between U.S. and French society. Though broad in topics, the interview guide is compact, anticipating that the respondents would be short on time, which they were, and that I as the

interviewer also did not have the luxury of time, limited to two periods I would be in the field.

The first frame has five questions regarding parents and schooling. Parental roles are less well researched in France than in the United States because of French norms on family privacy (Le Pape and van Zanten 2009). This study extends present research by tracing parental sources of information, more extensively studied in the United States (Holme 2002; Lareau 2014; Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg and Cucchiara 2014). I delve into the role of social networks, major sources of information sources in school choice (Felouzis et al. 2013).

The second frame consists of three questions. They ask the respondent to assess on a rising scale of 1 to 10 the general importance of social, cultural, and ethnic mix, student conduct, and teacher and pedagogical quality in schools and then probe why the parent assigns that numeric level of importance. The purpose of the questions is to understand the importance of key criteria and their relative value in relative to each other. The U.S. and French literature indicate that these three criteria vary in importance according to parental social class and values (Ball 1993; Oberti 2007; Mickelson et al. 2008; Sikkink and Emerson 2008; van Zanten 2009; Kimelberg 2014; Lewis and Diamond 2015).

The third frame assesses the effect of global risk on the parents, their lives, and schooling plans. Global risk is an amorphous concept that is difficult to qualify on the individual level. As Beck (1992) describes it, this form of modern risk often requires consciousness of hidden or nonspecific harms rather than direct physical injury as was usually the case with famine in previous epochs. The first question is open ended, asking about news events that distress respondents. The next questions ask how events affect daily life, or sense of security, and then how they affect schooling plans for their children. The questions first assess if risk is felt, second if it affects parents personally, and third, if affects schooling plans.

The fourth frame has three questions that ask respondents to compare France to the United States on racial attitudes, and on place and school segregation. The purpose of these questions is to elicit from the parental discourse how race is perceived, racial language is used, and social differences are explained in line with Bonilla-Silva (2013). The questions are structured, too, to give parents the opportunity to say if the countries have come together on race and segregation through the cross-national diffusion of social ideas in line with Omi and Winant (2015). The construction of the questions requires explanation. First, comparing the two countries is plausible among these parents. Much of the French middle class is knowledgeable about the United States. U.S. news appears regularly on television and in newspapers. The interviews confirm that level of awareness. Some parents have visited the United States; two have lived there. Few parents hesitated because they did not know enough.

Second, the wording of the questions is intentional. Direct personal questions about race are not socially desirable because race is not understood as a legitimate social category. The question wording is designed to draw the greatest response on how race may arise in France yet adhere to cultural norms. Questions allow respondents to respond generally about French society rather than about themselves, as is the custom in France. The parents act as informants on French society, in the classical sociological sense, without informing on, or accusing, their family and neighbors, a cultural redline.

Third, the questions are designed to make valid measurements between the United States and France. The first question uses the phrase *couleur de peau*, "color of the skin," instead of the French word *race*. The phrase has been used in official French surveys (Simon 2018), and appears in French academic work on discrimination (see for example, Carde 2007). The phrase *couleur de peau* is not euphemistic. It is valid measurement. Appiah (2015) maintains it is

necessary to distinguish between racial identity as in populations, that is, persons of places with

recognized cultures, and racial identity as in physical characteristics, that is, such as skin color,

the texture of the hair, and so forth, to which social ideas about an assumed culture or group

qualities are attached. In the etymology of the French word *race*, one encounters the former,

peoples, not usually the latter, appearance (Taguieff 2001). The phrase induces respondents to

think about race more as Americans would, as a physically based category.

Finally, this question and the next two are meant to capture what similarities exist in the

respondents' minds between France and the United States. Partly the reason is that the diffusion

of claims transnationally about social problems requires people in the recipient society

perceiving conditions there as similar to the society from which the claims originated, as Best

(2001) claims. The question thus contributes to understanding how conditions between the

countries may be similar. On the other hand, the question's limitation is that it records not if race,

racism, or segregation exist in France, but if they exist to the same extent as in the United States.

But this study is not about whether racism exists in France, only if race affects school choice.

After first several interviews, I introduced probes about specific events that may cause

anxiety. Some respondents had brushed aside the question despite the many events that had taken

place in France. The probes asked directly about terrorism, the economy and unemployment,

immigration, the political situation, and the environment, all salient as risks in France. Another

change after several interviews is that I announced transitions between frames because the switch

in frames confused some parents in the first interviews.

2.2.2   *Post-interview survey instrument*

The brief post-interview survey instrument (Appendix B) asks for information on sex,

age, number of children, children in school, the employment, occupation, and education of respondent and household partner, length of residence in town, former place of residence, nativity, and political stance. As is customary in France, it does not ask about income, and as prohibited in France, about race. The political stance question requests the parent to place her or himself on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being on the far-left politically and 10 being on the far-right. Party affiliation is considered private information in France, but not political leanings. Despite the use of a scale, five respondents did not respond or had unusable responses.

2.2.3 Contextual data

To provide context to the interviews, I acquired demographic, social, and economic data on the towns and on the census geography that most closely matched the sectors of the schools from the National Institute on Statistics and Economic Studies, the French census and economic data agency. I am fortunate that the sectors of the schools, which are defined by streets on which people live, largely matched the neighborhood census geography, which is usually not the case (Felouzis et al. 2005). Additional information gathered on schools included passage rates on the national test at the end of middle school. Provided by schools were data on enrollment, teachers, discipline, parental social standing, and academic programs.

In addition, I spent time in the schools. I helped in lower-level English classes at Haven and attended a school council meeting there. At Legacy, I took part in a Saturday morning orientation for parents, and on another occasion, an evening meeting of a parent association. I got together informally with teachers, principals, and parent association presidents, at the schools and in cafes for coffee or lunch. The time spent was part of the effort to learn more about French educational system, as well as to provide context to the interviews. During the study, I walked

through towns and school neighborhoods. I read local news and accessed town websites. I also sought the advice of a French urban geographer, Jean Christophe Francoise at the University of Paris Diderot, an expert on the Parisian suburbs who provided guidance and verified many of my emerging insights. In spring 2018, I returned to France to catch up with my contacts and to share preliminary results from the study with them.

2.3   Sampling Method

The third issue is the sampling means. Its object was to recruit middle-class parents of middle-school students. In France, the term "middle class" applies to people in households whose primary person is in a professional or managerial occupation, and not by income or education, socioeconomic measures more customary in the United States.

The sampling procedure follows that of similar French studies (for example, see van Zanten (2009), among others), as well as conversations with French researchers engaged in similar work (Debarbieux 2015; van Zanten 2015). Similar to the snowball sampling in the United States, person-to-person recruitment is common in French qualitative research (Blanchet and Gotman 2010). This approach is also necessary because French privacy laws prevent the sharing of directory information, including e-mail addresses and telephone numbers, by institutions without the explicit permission of the persons involved (CNIS 1978).[6] Because of those laws, as well as stipulations of the Institutional Review Board, contacts who made referrals for interviews had to seek the verbal permission of the potential respondent before I could contact them.

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[6] Article 9 of the French Civil Code protects private life and family life. It says that all persons have a right to respect for their private life. These laws are based on that code.

Sampling relied on four sets of contacts. They were the principals of the schools, the presidents of the parent associations, teachers, and fellow parents. Principals did not generally produce referrals because their interaction with parents is more limited than in U.S. schools. Teachers made referrals at one school, but not at the other schools. The association presidents were the most productive because the leadership and members of parent associations are largely middle class (Gombert 2008; van Zanten 2009). They produced many referrals at two sites, Legacy and Arche, which had multiple parent associations. I asked all parents I interviewed for referrals, which produced subsequent interviews at two schools. Because of the number of referrals, I could be selective at those two schools. The limitation of association and parent referrals is that they may exclude unaffiliated parents or parents, as well as they make act as institutional gatekeepers who direct or restrict access to certain respondents (Seidman 1998).

The contacts were explicitly asked to refer persons who had a child at the school who they thought to be middle class, and if they could, of different backgrounds than their own. I provided summary information about the study to contacts. I used email to contact potential respondents. The email briefly described the study and asked the parent if they would agree to an interview. If they agreed, and nearly all did, a time and place was scheduled based on what was most convenient for the respondent. Contacts occasionally misstated information about the study, however, which led in a few cases of confusion. No respondents, however, backed out of an interview, following the IRB procedure stated to them, and the confusion was sporadic.

I made known to parents that I would use a pseudonym for their names, as well as for the schools that their children attend and for the towns where they live, for purposes of privacy.

I conducted the interviews in two waves, the first from early September to late November in the fall of 2016 and the second from early May to early July in the spring of 2017, months

when French schools are in session. The two waves allowed for interviews at the beginning of

the school year, which turned out to be less productive, and at the end of the school year, which

was more productive. It coincidently also meant that the interviews took place before and after

the 2017 French presidential election, a major political event.

The interviews are digitally recorded on a Sony ICD-PX440 device with an external

Plantronics microphone. After the interviews, the digital recordings were uploaded to the

researcher's laptop, a separate flash memory device, and to a cloud-based storage service.

Information on each interview, including place, time, and off-hand observations, is logged in a

notebook with a random number assigned to the interview. The number served as both the file

name for the digital file and the transcript.

2.3.1   Results of sampling recruitment

The recruitment process resulted in 29 interviews, as Table 2 at the end of chapter shows.

The sampling was enough to produce a pool of middle-class respondents with variety in

backgrounds and responses, as necessary for a qualitative study (seidmanSeidman 1998; Guest,

Bunce and Johnson 2006). The average interview lasted 35 minutes, ranging from 22 minutes to

the limit of 60 minutes that IRB strictures imposed. The first wave in the fall produced 11

interviews and the second wave in the spring produced 18 (Table 2). Recruitment was successful

at two schools. First-wave interviews were mostly with parents at the first school, Legacy, for a

total of eight respondents, as well as three at a third school, Haven. All interviews took place in

the second-wave interviews at the second school, Arche. In the second wave, Legacy produced

four additional interviews, and Haven produced two more interviews.

Three factors led to the small sample at Haven. First, the school had fewer middle-class

parents to contact. Second, middle-class parents were apparently not as tied into a conducive parental social network as at the other two schools. The school generated no parent-to-parent referrals. Finally, the effort to contact parents through teachers and the president of the school's sole parent association was less fruitful than through teachers and multiple association presidents at the other schools. Parents and teachers at the other schools took more interest in the research, too. In fact, two parents at Legacy offered to rewrite the French translation of the interview schedule and survey instrument into more appropriate wording, which they did. Though the purpose of Haven was to sample parents with exemptions, the schools altogether produced seven interviews of parents with exemptions. Nevertheless, in respect to parents who seek specialty academic programs, this limits the study on one form of school I set out to address.

Most parents choose to be interviewed at home, with seven interviews at the schools. Another six choose local cafes, the latter of which were unfortunately noisy. One site was unusual, a picnic table next to the stone ramparts of a 19th century fort that once protected Paris.

One of the values of this study's data is that eight of the respondents are fathers (Table 2). I made a deliberate attempt to recruit fathers. One reason is that school choice researchers almost always interview mothers of the school children (see for example, Holme 2002; van Zanten 2003). The effect of gender is often ignored in such studies, as Stambach and David (2005) and Byrne (2006) note. While mothers often carry an undue burden in the legwork associated with their children's schooling (Ball 2003), the participation of fathers in decision-making should not be ignored. Another reason is that the interview schedule is more than about school choice, it is also about risk and race. It is important that the sample is not confined exclusively to mothers and women but includes fathers and men.

2.3.2   Description of interviewees

The sampling method did recruit middle-class parents (see Table 2). Most of the parents are college educated. All but six of the 29 parents had a college degree. All but six, too, held jobs typical of the middle class. Of the respondents who had partners, the partners held middle-class jobs, usually upper-tier professionals or managers. Three respondents are currently unemployed (not shown). Only two respondents are not in middle-class households, including an unemployed female parent who did not complete high school, but who I include in the sample.

Parents at Legacy are older on average than at the other schools. The parent households overall average about two children, one of whom is in middle school. The other children in the family attend high school or university at Legacy but are usually in primary school at Arche. More than 80 percent of the parents are French born. The survey contains no questions about race or ethnicity. However, to the researcher's eye, parents included persons of North African and Asian origin. Many parents have lived in their town at least five years, but a few are long-term residents of over 20 years. Especially at Arche, most once lived in Paris or around Paris.

Most respondents identify to the left and center of French politics, not unsurprising given that their children attend public school. Parents at Arche place themselves more often on the political left; parents at Legacy place themselves more to the political right, but the differences are small. Notably, the 2007 elections made politics salient during the time of those interviews. Because a candidate outside the traditional party structure won the presidential election, parents may have not identified to the right or left as much as they otherwise would have at another time.

2.4   Language of Interviews and Transcripts

The fourth issue is language. It entails problems both in interviews and transcripts. The interviews occurred in French. All interviews were then transcribed in French to prevent loss of meaning through translation. A lengthy, time-consuming component of the work was preparing and analyzing transcripts because of the language differences. I used the auto-transcription service of French company, Authot, which does academic transcription for French social science research centers and faculties. The benefit of such a service is that it provides a base text. The quality of the resulting text varies depending on the respondent's speech patterns and interview conditions, including background noise. Some transcripts required extensive editing. I edited the transcriptions in three passes to maximize accuracy. In the first pass, I formatted interviews into respondent and researcher, corrected speech gaps, and removed excessive filler words. Most editing took place in the second pass that focused on the overall reliability of the transcript data. In the third pass, I hunted for errors in transcription evident from problems in word structure and meaning. I used an application, Microsoft Translator, in parts not well transcribed (set French to French from voice to text), and occasionally deleted indecipherable words or phrases.

2.4.1   *Transcript analysis*

The qualitative analysis focuses on parental accounts within the "thick description" of the places in which parents live their lives and in which the school marketplace operates (Geertz 1973; Weiss 1995; Ball 2003; Lamont and Swidler 2014). In my analysis, I am not as interested in the semiotic content of the parental interviews as I am on themes, how parents account for and justify their lives within the social structure and ideological frameworks in which they interact (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

Inductive analysis required three stages. The first stage began with a thorough reading of interview transcripts. In the second stage, analysis focused separately on each of the three frames of the interview schedule. The focus in this stage was on thematic coding, grouped by the four sets of questions in the interview schedule: How parents go about choice; the importance of social mix, academics, and discipline in schools; the effects of global risk; and on race in French society in comparison to the United States. The final stage of the analysis linked the thematic coding across the four sections. Coding occurred in French using the qualitative analysis software Nvivo12. I compiled the codes into four large spreadsheets in Excel, which then enhanced visually the process of categorization and the linking of resulting categories.

Translation occurred only of the excerpts to preserve meanings that might be otherwise lost in conversion to English. The researcher translated the excerpts but called on a native-speaker, if necessary, for translation accuracy and language subtleties that might be missed.

With the Nvivo analysis complete, the study then integrated the contextual data on the town and school, as well as the post-interview schedule, notes from the interviews, and incidental respondent information. The attempt here is to reduce assumptions about the responses in the process of coding that may arise from close knowledge of the interview site and of the respondent. As such, the contextualization of the thematic coding concluded inductive analysis.

The focus in the analysis is primarily on thematic accounts rather than on the language of the respondents. Analyzing the semiotic content of another language is hazardous for a non-native speaker because the analyst may miss or misinterpret language with culturally embedded meanings. While means such as grounded theory are important tools of qualitative analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1994; LaRossa 2005), they may introduce error in transnational research. Meanings that are clear to researchers using grounded theory in their own language may not be

so clear in another language. Unintentional misunderstandings may also arise from the cultural framework in which the respondent language is embedded. In addition, the focus in this study is mainly on attitudes and behavior and only partly on what the use of language itself may discover or disclose about respondent attitudes and behaviors.

2.5   Place of the Researcher

The fifth issue is the position of the investigator who is embedded in the culture, social structure, and sociology of one society and who does research in a second society. This difference in placement has implications on data collection and analysis that can produce weaknesses in the work. It means that the investigator has the responsibility to be aware of distinctions between the societies. Reflexive awareness is necessary in situations in which the researcher and the researched are strikingly different in culture, gender, and power (Altheide and Johnson 1994). I contend that reflexive awareness holds for all transnational research regardless of the magnitude of the societal differences, including between supposedly similar researchers and researched in developed Western countries, such as in this study. Social and cultural distinctions exist between the United States and France that are not always directly noticeable.

I am reasonably well immersed in French culture through time spent there, and from extensive reading, and am able to bridge most cultural differences. In my time in France, I affected as much as possible the behavior and appearance typical of the French middle class.

The most obvious cultural difference is language (Fontana and Frey 1994). I am not a native French speaker, a language largely acquired through extensive tutoring. I am not thoroughly proficient in conversational French, but my comprehension of written French is good. Difficulties did occur in interviews when both I and the respondents became confused because of

language. This confusion was often offset by sharing the interview schedule and by the fact that many respondents had a knowledge of English, which I and they sometimes slipped into during interviews. In the end, the interviews produced good and usable accounts without much missing or lost data that would affect analysis.

The strength of transnational research is that the interviewer is outside respondents' societal and cultural framework, an asset in data collection. The interviewer as a remote outsider reduces respondent social desirability bias because answers are perceived as less likely to bring direct judgment than with a native researcher (Blanchet and Gotman 2010). Simmel (1950), for example, notes that the "stranger" is both a source of objectivity and recipient of openness. In practice, however, this positioning is more complex and multidimensional than a simple duality of roles (Sarangi 2003). Not all the middle-class sample is an "insider" to my "outsider." A few are foreign-born or from foreign-born families finding their way into French society.

My status as an outsider appeared to allow respondents to talk more freely and to answer in ways that they would not with French researchers, a not-insignificant advantage given the study's sensitive and controversial nature. Additionally, in line with Bourdieu (2002), I contend that an outsider status means that the researcher is apt to collect and view the data in ways that escape a researcher encased in their own field of production, that is, in France, though only if the researcher does not frame concepts and conclusions within their own field of production, that is, the United States. As an outsider I may see things that an insider may not, though of course, I may also miss things obvious to an insider.

Finally, I taught mathematics in an American middle school for five years, and so am conversant in many issues of schooling, especially among adolescents, which was helpful in my contacts with administrators, teachers, and parents and provided for shared experiences.

2.6   Ethics Review

A difference in national ethics policies affected the study design. As a researcher affiliated with a U.S. university, this study required the prior approval of an Institutional Review Board under U.S. federal regulations. The Georgia State University IRB effected the primary strictures for the conduct of the study, including the number of sites and interviews. France has no ethics review for social science research. Such reviews only apply to biomedical and human genetic research and are conducted through regional boards, not institutions. On the other hand, France has restrictive privacy laws about personal data, though they do not require prior, official approval of the research. The expectation is that researchers as professionals will comply voluntarily or they will risk prosecution for complaints if violations are egregious.

2.7   Timing of the Study

The timing of the study was not originally part of the study design. As the research project moved forward, several major events occurred in France and I had concerns. The events and their aftereffects may make it more difficult to conduct the research. As it turned out, did not. Indeed, as I discuss below, the events are important to the research, creating as Swidler (1986) contends an unsettled cultural period.

Foremost among these events were three agonizing, deadly episodes of international terrorism in the two years before the study commenced and the subsequent declaration of a national state of emergency that extended over the time of the interviews. Inspired or directed by an extremist organization waging civil war in Syria and Iraq, they included the killings of 17 persons in an attack on the staff at a French satirical magazine in January 2015 in Paris (Erlanger and Bennhold 2015) and the mass shootings of 120 people at a popular, crowded concert hall and

in nearby cafes and on the streets in Paris in April of that year (Judkis and Witte 2016). The second episode led then President François Hollande to declare a state of emergency, limiting some civil liberties and putting French troops on the streets of Paris (Breeden 2016). Encountering armed military patrols was a daily occurrence in the fall of 2016 when I stayed in a mixed neighborhood of northeast Paris. Finally, before that fall wave of interviews, a driver of a large truck deliberately mowed over and killed 86 celebrants during the national celebration of the founding of the French republic, Bastille Day, late in the night in the southern city of Nice (Rubin, Nossiter and Mele 2016). Other terrorism occurred during the study or between its waves, including the execution of a French priest at a village church in northern France (Olive 2016) and the killing of a national policeman on the Champs-Élysée, the well-known boulevard in central Paris (Chrisafis and Smith 2017).

The last event, the killing of the police officer, occurred a week before the first round of the two-round French presidential election. (French elections are held in two rounds to screen out minor party candidates.) People feared that the terrorism would swing France to the hard-right politically in a wave of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment (Erlanger and Bennhold 2015; Nossiter 2017). The episodes did lead to a far-right candidate entering the second round, Marine Le Pen of the National Party (Rubin 2017a). But a week before the second wave of interviews commenced, Emmanuel Macron, a leader of an emergent centrist movement, defeated her by a wide margin (Witte, McAuley and Stanley-Becker 2017). The National Assembly elections occurred a month later, during the second wave of interviews, and solidified that political shift, putting Macron's movement in control of that legislative body (Hoyo and Chandler 2017).

Before and during the French presidential campaign, Europe itself faced a major crisis because about 2.5 million asylum seekers entered the continent in 2015 and 2016 (Kingsley

2016; Connor 2017), many crossing the Mediterranean Sea by boat, risking death, or walked

hundreds of miles by land to the borders of the European Union (Henry 2015), the largest global

population displacement since World War II (UNHCR 2015). Many had fled to escape war and

violence in Syria and northern Africa, and others to escape famine and natural disaster in

northern Africa (EC 2015; Henry 2015). France took in about 110,000 refugees in 2015, though

not as much as Germany, which accepted 540,000 (Connor 2016). However, those who managed

to slip unofficially into France were visible. Not far from where I stayed in northeast Paris during

the first interview wave, thousands of migrants twice encamped in public spaces for weeks

before city authorities took them to temporary housing where they were screened for refugee

status. Thousands of new migrants reestablished the encampment during the spring wave of

interviews, not far from the previous two encampments.

And finally, in a major global conference in Paris sponsored by France, 196 countries

concluded a treaty in December 2015 on the global environment, COP 21, whose enactment

France celebrated the next year in Paris as an advance in controlling climate change (Mooney

and Dennis 2016). The winner of the U.S. presidential election, Donald Trump, later repudiated

the agreement, drawing intense criticism in Europe and France (Shear 2017).

These events make more salient what are understood as global risks, but more

importantly, the events appear to have led to an incipient situation that Swidler (1986) refers to

as an unsettled cultural period. Swidler holds that the influence of culture differs between settled

and unsettled cultural periods. In settled periods, the effect of culture on action is independent,

providing a rich storehouse of mixed repertoires which individuals utilize without much discord.

In unsettled periods, however, ideologies move to the forefront, becoming explicit, competitive,

and directly influential. In these bursts of ideological activism, people "formulate, flesh out, and

put into practice new habits of action" (1986, 279). These events correspond to an unsettled

period. Theoretically, then, the timing of this study is opportune, rather than difficult. The

interviews should capture more facilely the middle-class parental struggle over schooling

criteria, including racial, as they appear to have.

Table 2:1 Demographic and Social Characteristics of Respondents by School

	Legacy	Arche	Haven	Total
Respondent sex				
Male (Number)	1	5	2	8
*Respondent age**				
Pct. ages 35-44	8%	58%	60%	38%
Pct. ages 45-54	92%	33%	20%	55%
Mean number of children				
Children living at home	1.91	2.17	2.00	2.07
Mean number of children in school†				
Primary school	0.25	0.75	0.20	0.48
Middle school	1.10	1.25	1.20	1.21
High school	0.25	0.17	0.20	0.24
Occupation of employed respondent and partner				
Pct. upper level	67%	50%	40%	55%
Pct. other white collar**	25%	25%	20%	24%
Pct. partner upper level	58%	75%	20%	59%
Level of education of respondent and partner				
Pct. college degree	75%	67%	58%	66%
Pct. partner college degree	58%	50%	40%	60%
Residency and nativity				
Pct. 5 years or less in home	42%	33%***	--***	28%
Pct. moved locally††	58%	83%	60%	69%
Pct. French born	83%	75%	100%	83%
Mean score on political scale				
1-10 (Far left to far right)	4.6	3.2	4.0	4.0

* Other categories of under age 24, ages 25-34, and ages 55 and older are not shown.
† Difference between the mean number of children at home and the total of mean number of children in school is children who are in an early education program or at university.
** Other white collar includes middle-level management and professionals, business owners, and employees, but not manual workers.
†† From Paris or other parts of Paris region, including same town.
*** Residence in another town is excluded from town data.

3 THE PLACES AND CASES OF SCHOOL CHOICE

School choice has gained impetus because of a confluence of three factors around Paris despite the national policies that restrict school choice. The factors are middle-class migration into the suburbs, the relaxation of school sector policies, and the repopulating of working-class suburbs with immigrants. As well as these three factors, this chapter describes the towns and schools where I interviewed parents, providing context to the places that the parents inhabit and the cases of school choice in which they are engaged there (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

The Paris region is sizable, with 12.5 million people in 2015 (INSEE 2018). At its center is the city of Paris, surrounded by extensive and populous suburbs. In its inner suburbs are towns that are relatively well-to-do, towns with large ethnic and immigrant populations, and towns in transition from working class to middle class (Préteceille 2006; François et al. 2007; François et al. 2011; Grzegorczyk 2013). An extensive transit system gives their residents access to business, government, and cultural institutions in central Paris that employ much of the middle class (Berrior et al. 2007). These suburbs also contain public and private middle schools that run from high prized, high-achieving schools in wealthy towns to less reputable schools in towns that have many immigrants and ethnic groups (van Zanten 2007b; van Zanten 2009; van Zanten 2012).

3.1 Three Factors Providing Impetus to School Choice

In this section, I first discuss middle-class migration, school policy changes, and immigration, the factors that give impetus to school choice. . In the next section, I describe the three towns and three public middle schools selected for study.

3.1.1   Middle-class migration to the suburbs

The changes in French urban geography are dissimilar to those in the United States. One major difference is that after the middle of the 20th century, the urban cores of most U.S. cities were minority and impoverished places, but the urban cores of French cities in this same period were often pleasant quarters that housed the bourgeois (Wacquant 2007; Andreotti, Le Gales and Moreno Fuentes 2013). On the other hand, the French working class once dominated the suburbs where they labored in industry just at and beyond the city limits, not the middle class as progressively became the case in the United States (Wacquant 2008; Viguier 2011). Some Parisian suburbs were known as the *banlieue rouge*, the red suburbs, where voters backed France's once powerful Communist Party (Stovall 2001). During that period, the Communist towns built many, large public housing projects to accommodate the workers because of a housing scarcity (Wacquant 2008; Blanc 2010; Verdugo 2011).

Deindustrialization that followed in the 1970s and the emergence of a post-industrial economy redrew the maps of both American and French cities. In the case of France, what was left of the industrial working class abandoned the inner suburbs for the outer suburbs (Le Goix 2016). Housing projects began to fall vacant, which the national government then opened to immigrant families (Wacquant 2008; Viguier 2011). Their arrival transformed many towns. They ceased to be working-class strongholds, becoming instead ethnic enclaves. They acquired a reputation among some of the French public for violence, unemployment, and drug dealing, a reputation not always justified (Wacquant 2008; Viguier 2011).

The core city changed in Paris, too. Notwithstanding its tourist image as the City of Light, Paris is a global city facing many of the problems of post-industrial world cities, including rising housing costs (Préteceille 1995; Sassen 2001; Augustine and Virot 2012; Bacqué,

Charmes and Vermeersch 2014). As with such global cities, Paris attracts many professionals,

often singles and couples between the ages of 20 and 29 years (Baccaïni 2007). In Paris, young

professional couples typically live in two-room apartments, a main room and a bedroom. These

young families need more space as they have children. Unless they spend an inordinate sum on

rent, they then find it hard to stay in the city because of high housing costs (Préteceille 2007;

Augustine and Virot 2012; Bacqué et al. 2014). Some families gentrify the city's less pricey

northeast where a few larger, less costly apartments still exist (Préteceille 2007; Clerval 2010;

Rey-Lefebvre 2017). Most head to the inner suburbs, however, where housing is less cramped

and more affordable (Préteceille 2007; Augustine and Virot 2012), a movement that increased

migration rates in recent decades (Baccaïni 2007).

This middle-class migration into the suburbs is unlike that in the United States. The

outward migration of the U.S. middle class is justifiably termed "white flight" because it departs

minority-laden urban cores to settle in white havens (Rathelot and Safi 2014). In Paris, the

middle class quits a city where fewer minorities live for suburbs where many minorities live.

More importantly, the middle class leaves behind highly esteemed public schools inside Paris for

suburban schools whose reputations are precarious, unlike in the United States where the better

schools are not in the city but often in the suburbs (van Zanten and Obin 2008).

3.1.2   Changes in French school policies

Issues around schooling thus became important to middle-class parents as they migrate

into the suburbs. The legal change in 1963 that required children to go to the middle school in

the school sector in which their parents lived made decisions about where parents lived more

crucial in their children's schooling (Ben Ayed 2015). Wealthier parents stayed in Paris or

relocated to costly suburbs with more reputable schools, leaving the ordinary middle class to juggle affordable housing against reputable schools as best it could. Subsequent policy changes, then eased the pressure on middle-class parents by providing ways to get around the local school.

The national government adopted a set of policies more than a decade ago meant to give school principals more leeway in developing school programs, improving relations with parents, and forging ties with local communities. As part of a drive for more decentralization, the manifest goal was to give principals the flexibility to offer programs in languages, arts, and sports to meet local educational needs (Duru-Bellat 2000; Mons 2004; van Zanten 2012).

Additionally, the government relaxed the rules on school sectors. Through exemptions, parents can enroll their children in a public school outside the school sector for a limited number of reasons. The rules for exemptions are stringent and hard to obtain (Durand 2004; Felouzis et al. 2005). The center-right government under Nicholas Sarkozy relaxed the strict attendance rules in 2007 (Merle 2011). The center-left government of François Hollande in 2015 changed who received priority for exceptions, but the relaxed policy is still in place (Duru-Bellat 1996; van Zanten and Obin 2008; Merle 2011; Le-Monde 2013).

These policy changes promote school choice. Entrepreneurial principals in ethnically and socially diverse sectors, for example, can start programs that attract "better" middle-class students, and middle-class parents can legitimately in turn seek an exemption to a program to escape an undesirable school (Broccolichi and van Zanten 2000; Ball 2003; van Zanten 2007b).

This is not assured, however. Who is the principal at the school matters. A principal can decide to start, modify, or end existing programs with a relatively free hand, as well as create new ones. The parents and towns have no control over the appointment of principals, which is in the hands of the education ministry. It regularly rotates principals, usually every six years. When

a change occurs, parents may not know who the principal is until she or he arrives right before the school year. Academic programs that benefit the middle class may appear and disappear according to the disposition of the principal, which also contributes to the precarious reputations of suburban public schools.

The changes in national policy are much in line with Ball's argument that in the education marketplace, schools become sellers, which then see the middle class as prized customers. Having middle-class students in a school, as it is, raises academic results and improves discipline, enhancing its reputation and marketability (Ball 1997; Ball 2003).

3.1.3   Changes in immigration

In the suburbs, immigrants have largely replaced the native working class and often populate public schools. The growth of the immigrant populations is felt most strongly in the Parisian suburbs. France ranked fourth globally in the number of immigrants in 2017, a ranking which United States leads (UN 2017). Ethnic populations are newer in France than in the United States, though immigration has been part of the French experience since the late 19th century (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Lewis 2011). Through the first quarter of the 20th century, immigrants largely came from linguistically compatible neighbors, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, as well as Poland (Bouvier 2012). North African men were the first major non-European minority to enter France, recruited as temporary workers to ease a labor crisis after World War I. The war had devastated France, killing or maiming millions and the country desperately needed workers to rebuild the country and work in industry (Lewis 2011).

The second major wave of immigration came after World War II, a wave that was much more diversified than previously. France again recruited guest workers but this time because a

rapidly expanding post-war economy demanded more labor than was available (Bouvier 2012). The guest workers were largely men from North African and sub-Saharan colonies. It was not until decades later that the government allowed their families to join them. After the politically divisive Algerian war for independence in the 1950s and 1960s, many naturalized French citizens there, the *pied noir*, fled to France (Lewis 2011). France curtailed labor migration in the 1970s because deindustrialization had struck the country hard. Today, France admits most non-European immigrants under family unification programs or as refugees (Bouvier 2012).

Most immigrants are from former French territories in North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, or the Sahel (Bouvier 2012). The largest by nationality are North African, including Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans, totaling nearly a million residents in 2013 (INSEE 2016e). About two-fifths of them live in the Paris region (INSEE 2016d). The second largest category are from the African Sahel, such as Mali, a former colony, as well as other parts of Africa (INSEE 2016e). More than half of this second group, about 560,000 persons, live in the Paris region (INSEE 2016d).[7] Others are from Haiti, Turkey, and the Congo, as well as from Asia, including China and other former French colonies (Bouvier 2012).

3.2   The Suburban Towns and the Middle Schools

The towns I selected for this study reflect the migratory and immigration trends in the Parisian suburbs. The middle schools also reflect the schools into which middle-class parents often route their children because of policy changes. Known by pseudonyms, the three towns are Riviereville, Petiteville, and Centreville. Riviereville is a well-off, relatively homogeneous place with desirable public schools. Petiteville is a close-in, diverse suburb in transition from working

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[7] In comparison, nearly a fifth of France's population, about 12 million, lives in the Paris region.

class to middle class; and Centreville is an ethnically diverse edge city suburb.

Selected in each town, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a school typical of public middle schools in the Parisian suburbs (Broccolichi and van Zanten 2000; van Zanten 2007b). The schools are Legacy, Arche, and Haven. Legacy is a relatively homogeneous, traditional school in Riviereville considered academically superior. Arche is a heterogeneous school in Petiteville with more modest test results, but which tracks students into elite bilingual and language classes that often separates middle-class children from their working class and ethnic peers. Finally, Haven, is a heterogeneous school in diverse Centreville whose classical music program attracts students from outside its sector and whose test results and discipline have recently improved.

3.2.1 *The town of Riviereville and Legacy middle school*

Riviereville is an older, residential suburb next to a large river. I rode the RER, a suburban rail line that is more expensive than the regular transit line, or *métropolitain*, to get to my interviews here. With four stations in the town, the RER links residents to major corporate and institutional centers in and around Paris. Walking through the town from the stations, I pass through village-like quarters with grocers, bakeries, cafes, florists, banks, and other traditional shops, as well as a few trendy boutiques and eateries and a small number of chain stores. Lareau (2014) in the United States and van Zanten (2009) in the United States both claim that such amenities and lifestyles that go with them are more important to middle-class parents with school-age children in choosing a place to move than is specific information on local schools, though schools are a concern. Riviereville clearly is an appealing place for the middle class, regardless of its schools, which are good.

The town's quiet streets are lined with single-family houses, sometimes of stone,

sometimes of brick, and sometimes of plaster. They sit on small lots, surrounded by the modest

walls and flower gardens typical of middle-class houses in France. Though single-family homes

dominate the streetscape, low-rise apartment buildings house about two-thirds of Riviereville's

residents (Table 3). Housing costs are lower here than in Paris, but housing is not inexpensive. In

the windows of local real estate agents, of which there are many, I checked the advertisements

for houses and apartments for sale or rent. My informal survey found larger houses listed at

about $1.13 million and smaller ones at more than $500,000.[8] Apartments sell for less, and

apartment rents generally average $1,300 a month. Low-cost housing is scarce, and it is so

intentionally. Riviereville has resisted a national policy adopted in 2000 that requires larger

towns to have 25 percent of their housing stock in public housing by 2025 (Serafini 2018). It

instead pays a fine annually to keep a low level of low-income housing (Parny 2016).

Ethnic minorities are less common here than in the greater Paris region[9] or in France

(Table 3). Immigrants account for nearly one in eight of the town's residents, compared to

almost one in five for the Paris region. Similarly, non-citizens are less than one in every 11

residents, compared to about one in eight in the Paris region (INSEE 2016c). Of the town's 9,528

foreign-born, about a fourth are from Europe, higher than in the Paris region (INSEE 2016d).

Not many of the foreign-born here are from the Sahara or the Sahel (INSEE 2016d).

White-collar households predominate (see Table 3). About a quarter of them have a

worker in upper-level managerial or professional occupations. Another fifth held intermediate

management and professional positions; about a sixth are lower-level white-collar workers.

Residents here are well educated. Nearly half of persons age 15 and older possess some type of

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[8] Based on exchange rates current in June 2017 of one euro to 1.13 dollars.
[9] The Paris region is the Île-de-France, which includes Paris and six other departments.

college degree, higher than in the Paris region (INSEE 2016c). High educational attainment, combined with private sector employment, mean high earnings. The town is one of the top 25 in France in the number of households that pay an overage tax on higher incomes (Le-Journal-du-Net 2017). The top decile of households had a median income of about $64,400 in 2014, compared to about $52,500 in the Paris region (INSEE 2016c). The poverty rate and the unemployment rate are comparatively low.

Riviereville is firmly on the right of French politics. In the 2014 city elections, *Les Républicans* (LR), a conservative party, captured the city council (IM 2017c). In the 2017 presidential election, a third of voters in the first round backed the LR's candidate, François Fillon, who was eliminated (IM 2017b). In the second round, voters overwhelming choose the centrist candidate, Emmanuel Macron, over Marine Le Pen, the far-right candidate (IM 2017b). Weeks later, the LR candidate won the local seat in the National Assembly (IM 2017a).

3.2.1.1   *Schooling in the town and Legacy middle school*

Many of Riviereville's students attend the public and private schools in the town, as Table 3 shows. All private schools here are under national contract and are Catholic (Créteil 2017). The middle school that is the site of the interviews, Legacy, was built in 1965. It sits near an elementary school and a pre-school in a residential neighborhood. It is nearly at capacity, with so many students that they must eat in shifts for lunch, typically a meal that is an important and unhurried part of the French day. About 90 percent of these students are local, according to school records.[10] Exemptions are few, mostly for children of school staff and local municipal workers who cannot afford to live in the town where they work. The number of students between

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[10] References to school records indicate information and data shared by school officials.

ages 11 and 14 living in Legacy's school sector, based on the 2013 census, is less than the number of students enrolled in the school that year (Table 3).

As at Riviereville's other schools, Legacy's students have high passage rates on the *brevet*, the national test at the end of middle school. Legacy's passage rates are consistently in the upper range, according to media rankings (Legout and Mandry 2017), usually 10 points above the national average (Saillard 2017). The middle school offers four modern languages, English, German, Spanish, and Italian, as well as Greek and Latin. The teachers stick around here: The average years of service and age of teachers exceeds that for the administrative district.

The census data in Table 3 show the adult population in Legacy's sector are more educated and are more likely to be in high-level managerial and professional occupations than in the rest of the town. The school records data in Table 3 show about two-thirds of parents of Legacy students are in high-level managerial and professional jobs, nearly three times the average for other middle schools in the same national administrative district.

Parents are aware that the town is a privileged place. A mother who lives in a newly renovated home and who has recently moved to Riviereville, describes the town:

> *Mme. Fetique[11], a business employee with one child at Legacy*
> RESPONDENT: Riviereville is an expensive enough town. Here, there are
> apartments that are expensive, houses that are expensive, and so forth, all is
> expensive. So, to live here, it is expensive. One must have the means to live in
> Riviereville.
> INTERVIEWER: So, it is limited?
> RESPONDENT: Limited, there it is … It is a social class that is a little elevated
> without much mix … It is an expensive community.

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[11] I use the French conceit of identifying parents by their last names, which of course is a pseudonym, and identifying the gender by Mme. for *madame* and M. for *monsieur*. These after all are French parents who expect to be identified in culturally appropriate ways.

Students here are by no means needy Few of Legacy's parents receive a supplement (*bourse*) to assist financially with schooling (Table 3). Though no official data exists, social or ethnic mix is minimal among students. I made many visits to each of the three schools, and it was evident that the students here are more homogeneous than at the other schools.

Despite the school's admirable academic profile, disciplinary problems erupted during the school year when I interviewed. In a particularly troubling incident, a knife fell out of the backpack of a student, a student who was known to hold a grudge against another student. Such an incident, with its implication of physical violence, is shocking in a French school, especially this school. The incident came at about the same time as two reported incidents at two high schools elsewhere in France, a student riot and a student shooting (AP 2017; Samuel 2017).[12] Three students at Legacy were permanently expelled and a number of other students were suspended during the year. In the previous year, the school had no expulsions or suspensions. Most incidents were more mundane. In one case, a few boys devised a ploy to skip their final classes regularly. Other incidents involve cell phone usage, improper clothing, and inappropriate internet access. A school association president blamed the problems on lax parental supervision. The principal, however, as well as some teachers and parents, said the loss of a longtime staff person the previous school term was responsible for the breakdown in student discipline. Because no permanent replacement was available, the ministry assigned a temporary employee

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[12] Physical violence is much less prevalent in French schools than in American schools, but it is difficult to quantify the rates without comparable official and survey data. About 4 serious physical incidents per 1,000 students (minus the more common serious verbal incidents) were reported in 2015-2016 in French middle schools, according to official data (Juillard 2016). About one to two percent of U.S. 7th and 8th grade students in 2015 say they were physically victimized in the last six months at school in a national probability survey (Musu-Gillette 2016).

ith limited experience who was unable to manage students effectively.[13] The academic year after

the interviews, a new staff member restored discipline.[14]

Teachers and parents identify the large class sizes as a problem. Classes average 29 to 30

students, nearly at the legal limit of 32 students per class, compared to the national average of 25

students in middle school (Auduc 2013). Some parents and teachers in interviews and in off-

hand conversations also say friction between parents and teacher is intensifying. Some teachers

protest that parents have begun to infringe on their instructional prerogatives and are becoming

overinvolved in their children's school work. French teachers are highly independent, in which

involvement with parents is kept minimal. Some parents at Legacy complain that teachers do not

communicate adequately and give out poor quality and insufficient homework assignments.

Three school associations represent parents. They are first PEEP, an acronym for a

century-old national organization aligned with the political right. Its chapter is the largest with

about 50 members. Another is FCPE[15], a local chapter of a second national organization formed

after World War II, that is aligned with the political left. PEEP that year held most of the parents'

seats on the school's administrative council and the FCPE had two seats. The third is a new,

local parents' association. It first recruited members in the fall of 2016 and captured two seats on

the council. Local associations are becoming more common across France. They eschew the

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[13] French schools do not hire their own personnel. Because it is a centralized school system, teachers and staff are assigned to schools by the Ministry of Education through its administrative region. Contract staff, or temporaries, are not held to the same standards as permanent staff. They are hired and assigned when regular staff is not available, usually for a school year.

[14] Another incident occurred before the present principal arrived a few years ago. Three youths broke into the school in the middle of the night and wrote insults on the walls directed at the previous principal, according to a published news report (Le-Parisien 2014).

[15] They are acronyms for *Parents d'Elèves de l'Enseignement Public* (PEEP) or Parents of Public School Students and *Fédération des Conseils de Parents d'Elèves* (FCPE) or Federation of the Councils of Parents of Students. To protect the school's identity, I do not name third association.

political alignments and national agendas of the centralized older associations, focusing instead on the interests of parents at local schools (Gombert 2008).

3.2.2   The town of Petiteville and Arche middle school

A compact town, Petiteville borders Paris. Emerging from the town's train station is to confront a jumble of buildings and people. Both new and old office buildings and apartments, high and medium-rise, border the expansive, heavily trafficked main avenue. Walking along a bustling sidewalk through a mélange of pedestrians on the way to interviews, I pass cafes, tobacconists, and grocers, some selling ethnic goods, interspersed with large, modern complexes housing major retailers, chain restaurants, and American fast-food outlets. In comparison to Riviereville, the town has few amenities or the lifestyles that readily attracts the middle class.

The town is small, a third of the size of the other towns (INSEE 2016b). Public institutions, including a large medical facility, fill part of the town. Besides the one stop of the *métropolitain* (usually shortened to *metro*), an underground system cheaper than the RER, the town has regular bus service into Paris and other suburbs. A new *metro* line with a station is under construction beneath the town and is expected to open in a few years. With 25,700 residents in 2014, the town's population is a third of Riviereville's (Table 3). Except for a minor drop from 2009 to 2014, the town has grown over the past three decades. Mix here is pronounced and easy to see because of the street life. In 2013, about a fifth of the town's residents were immigrants and about one-eighth of its residents were non-citizens.[16]

Single-family homes are few (INSEE 2016b). Nearly everyone lives in an apartment,

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[16] Detailed data on immigrant origins is not available because the national census agency does not distribute that data for small towns, such as Petiteville, for privacy reasons.

usually rented (Table 3). Apartments large enough to house families with children are affordable here, an informal survey of several real estate windows shows. Paris is a short physical distance away, but housing prices are many dollars away, typically priced between $230,000 to $335,000 a unit here, much less than in Paris. About a third of housing is public or publicly assisted, a higher proportion than in the Paris region (INSEE 2016b).

Petiteville's economic, social, and educational complexion is changing. About a quarter of the town's households include a person in upper management or in a profession, a proportion that has increased since 2008 (INSEE 2016b). Around two-fifths of residents age 15 and over hold some type of a post-secondary degree (Table 3). That, too, increased between 2008 and 2013, and the proportion without high school diplomas decreased (INSEE 2016b). The percentage of working-class and lower middle-class workers also fell slightly from 2008 to 2013 (INSEE 2016c; INSEE 2016b).

Though the middle class is growing here, the working class and the poor are still numerous. Despite the town's changing occupational and educational levels, household income is not high (Table 3). The median income of the top decile of households, about $45,400, is lower than in Riviereville, despite comparable occupational and educational profiles. Petiteville is home to less well-paid governmental, educational, research, and cultural professionals and managers rather than to professionals and managers in the private sector, as in Riviereville. About a ninth of workers were unemployed (Table 3). Income is at poverty level or below in about one in six households.

Petiteville's politics are solidly on the left. Its political legacy includes a Communist mayor after the World War II, though the town was never truly part of the *banlieue rouge*, the Communist suburbs. In 2014 city elections, a coalition of leftist parties won most municipal

council seats (IM 2017c). A far-left presidential candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, did well here in the first presidential round, but in the second round, with Mélenchon eliminated, Emmanuel Macron received four-fifths of the votes (IM 2017b). Macron's National Assembly candidate then defeated Mélenchon's candidate (IM 2017a).

3.2.2.1   *Schooling in the town and Arche middle school*

Arche sits on a corner of a residential block, surrounded by apartment buildings and a metal grate fence. It is one of Petiteville's two public middle schools. Many students do not attend school in the town (Table 3). A private Catholic school under national contract at the center of the town also absorbs some of the town's students (Créteil 2017). The flight from public schools is evident in Arche's school sector. More children between ages 11 to 14 live in Arche's sector than attend the public middle school, 624 children in the 2013 census compared to about 400 students enrolled there that same year (Table 3). The sector's population, which also increased from 2008 to 2013, resembles that of the town, with many college degrees and white-collar workers, as well as numerous immigrants and non-citizens. School records show that nearly a third of students are from households with parents in upper-level professional and managerial positions. On the other hand, 30 percent of students live with working class or unemployed parents (Table 3). Nearly a third of students are in households that receive a supplement to assist with schooling, the *bourse*. The principal describes Arche as having much social and ethnic mix, and my visits to the school, few as they were, confirm that description.

Middle-class parents here are keenly aware of the unequal situation between the two public middle schools and a split between the upper and lower town that works to their advantage. A mother of a first-year male student describes the school situation:

Mme. Mani, a mid-level professional with one child at Arche
There are two middle schools in Petiteville, which are nearly side by side. You
have Arche, which draws on the sector that makes up the lower town--you have
the lower town of Petiteville, and then you have upper town of Petiteville. I find
this is an inequality. It appears to me that if Arche takes all the students in the
lower town and the other school takes all the students in the upper town, then
almost all the middle-class students end up at Arche. Then you have the giant
sector of the other school where there are disadvantaged populations … In this
part of the town, the children go to the other school. That does not mean that there
are no good teachers in the other school, and all that, but I actually think we
should perhaps review the sectorization if we want to promote diversity in the two
colleges of Petiteville, to do a cross-fertilization.

Arche actually sits inside the school sector of the other middle school. Children in the
apartment buildings around Arche do not ordinarily attend that school. Despite the student
outflow from the town and into the private school, Arche retains and draws middle-class students
through its tracked, elite bilingual course. Students who qualify academically for this challenging
course use two languages, one non-native. Other than English and Spanish, the school's
languages include German, one of the bilingual languages, and ancient language classes that
enroll many middle-class students (Créteil 2017). The school's test results are mixed. Its *brevet*
passage rate has been in the mid-80 percent range in recent years (Table 3), slightly below the
national average, but in 2016-2017 year reached 96 percent, a surprise result. That is much
higher than at the town's other public middle school and is close to that of the private school.
The turnover rate of the school's 29 teachers is similar to that of the administrative district.

A recent self-study of the school characterizes student misconduct at the school as
habitual but not unusual. Several behavioral incidents require official disciplinary action every
year. Permanent expulsions are rare, about one each year, but temporary expulsions are common,

ranging from three to four dozen a year.

Parental representation at the school is split between the FCPE, aligned with the political left, and a large citywide independent and nonpolitical parent association that has existed for several years. PEEP, aligned with the political right, has no active chapter at the school.

3.2.3 The town of Centreville and Haven middle school

Centreville is a sprawling edge city punctuated with office developments, government offices, large warehouses, shopping complexes, medical facilities, and a major university. I found it easier to get around the town by bus because of its size and sprawl. A major, limited-access expressway cuts through the town's southwest side. Medium and high-rise apartment buildings tower over broad, multilane boulevards, their medians lined with trees. The town has retail centers and fast-food outlets more typical of an American suburb. Four *metro* stations connect the town to Paris, one of which provided me access to the middle school.

Centreville is among the most populous Paris suburbs, with 91,000 people (Table 3). Its population continues to grow as it has since the late 20th century (INSEE 2016a). Few people live in single-family homes, though ownership is higher here than in Petiteville (INSEE 2016a). A search of local real estate web sites (it is hard to find street-level real estate offices in this town) shows apartments suitable for families for sale at around $226,000. About 40 percent of the town's housing is public or publicly assisted.

As in Petiteville, the population is mixed. Nearly a quarter of residents are immigrants, and the non-French residents account for a sizable minority of residents (Table 3). Of the 20,747 foreign-born residents, many are North African and some are from other African countries (INSEE 2016d). Unlike the other two towns, Centreville has few households with professional or

upper management workers, though it has many places locally in which they may work. It has a higher proportion of working-class households than the other two towns, for which many jobs also exist locally. The town is not as well-educated as the other towns, with a smaller proportion of adults with a college degree (Table 3). Consequently, households are not as well off as in the other two towns. The bottom 10th of households earn about $10,700, less than in the Paris region (INSEE 2016c; INSEE 2016a). About a ninth of workers are unemployed, and the income of about a fifth of households is at the poverty level or below.

Centreville leans toward the political left. Its Socialist mayor was first elected in 1987. In the 2014 elections, a coalition of leftist parties captured the city council (IM 2017c). In the first round of the 2017 presidential election, a large bloc of votes went to the far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon. In the second round, Macron defeated Le Pen by a margin of more than four to one (IM 2017b). Macron's candidates later won both National Assembly seats (IM 2017a).

3.2.3.1   *Schooling in the town and Haven middle school*

The building that Haven occupies was originally built to house the regional educational administration, now located in two tall office buildings several hundred yards away. The school is on a busy two-lane street squeezed between the elevated thoroughfare on one side and a business district on other side. It is one of 11 middle schools in the town, eight of them are public (Table 3). The private schools are all under contract, and two of them are Jewish.

Though about one in six of Centreville's students attend school elsewhere (Table 3), Haven's small sector had fewer children between ages 11 to 14 living there, 334, then the number of students enrolled in the school, 413, in 2013. The building is underutilized, with 446 students in 2015-2016. A new transit station is under construction nearby, and school officials

are anticipating that the sector's population will increase as the result of new housing.

Census data show the sector's population resembles that of the town with its diverse ethnic composition, middling educations, and low-level occupations. From my multiple visits to the school, many students appear to be of ethnic or immigrant origins. Many students live in households where the parents are working class or unemployed, according to school records (Table 3). About a third of households receive the *bourse*. A handful of students live in a *ZUS*, a French acronym for an urban poverty zone, according to school records, of which there are several in Centreville. As a parent describes both the town and school:

> *Mme. Bauge, unemployed with one child at Haven*
> In Centreville, there are many, many families from poor neighborhoods and many
> Africans and Arabs in what is extreme mix. So, I think there is much, much social
> mix … It's important in this *collège*. That's fine. And, uh, that's it … it's good.

School records show that nearly a quarter of students live outside the school sector, more than at the other two schools. The school's classical music program, run in conjunction with a well-respected public conservatory, attracts students through exemptions. Based on school records, 88 students took part in the program during the past year, spending two hours a day at the conservatory. The music students are in a tracked class at each grade level and move together between classes. The regional educational administration caps exemptions at 30 students in each grade. That still totals about 120 students, or about a quarter of the students.

The school's perceived safety appeals to parents. The principal reports major gains in student discipline over the past few years, which is reflected in school records. The school finished the past year with no expulsions, a dramatic change from several years ago, when it expelled 17 students. The principal attributes the decline in disciplinary actions to programs put in place after his arrival five years ago. The programs include an effort to clarify school rules and

rights to students, parents, and teachers, and the creation of activities to occupy students when

not in classes. Parents say a reason for the better discipline is much improved communication

between the school administration and parents. The behavior that the researcher observed at this

school, however, is not nearly as good as it is at Legacy. I observed much extraneous talking,

trivial disruptions, and minor distractions during classes. The hallways are especially noisy, with

occasional knots of students stopped and engaged in loud conversations.

Until recently, the school had middling scholastic results. About three-quarters of its

final-year students passed the *brevet*, well below the national average (Table 3). That rate rose to

87 percent in 2016 (Legout and Mandry 2017), almost the same nationally (Saillard 2017). For

the 2016-2017, the period of the interviews, however, it fell back to 72 percent.

Teacher turnover at Haven is a problem. School records show that about 45 percent of

teachers leave after two years, though a quarter have been there for eight years or longer. The

school principal attributes some of the turnover to teachers shared with other schools out of

necessity because of the school's small size. Their school assignments change annually, based on

school enrollments, and that generates some of the turnover at Haven. On the hand, teachers stay

here longer than on the average in this district, about six years. Also, more teachers in the past

school year were permanent teachers than previously. About 9 percent were contract teachers,

compared to about 20 percent in 2014-2015, according to school records.

Only the FCPE, aligned with the political left, represents parents on the school's

administrative council. Though the association president says parental participation in the

association and school is good, the dispersal of parents because of exceptions seems to limit

"school-gate" networks, which are never that strong at French schools (van Zanten 2009).

3.3   Summary

In my commutes during the fall of 2016 and the spring of 2017 to visit schools and interview parents, I stepped into three distinct worlds. The towns reflect the varying situations of the French middle-class and the varying contexts of French school choice. More heterogeneous Riviereville is an expensive town with a village-like character and many employed in business. Despite its bustle and energy, Petiteville is a town cleaved physically between new middle-class arrivals employed in the public sector and its largely working class and immigrant residents. With all its social mix, Centreville is a complex, mixed town with various public institutions and industrial and business complexes spread over its terrain.

To enter the middle schools in these towns, however, is to walk into places whose interiors, procedures, and personnel are the same, unsurprisingly in a country where schooling is highly centralized. What differs among the schools are their academic programs, as well as the teachers and students who fill their halls and classrooms. Legacy in Riviereville is a traditional school that is desirable academically but faces problems with discipline and parent restiveness. Arche's challenging, elite, tracked bilingual program separates middle-class students from an otherwise mixed student body. Haven offers a classical music program that attracts some students from outside its small sector, and the school has become an increasingly safer space. As the next chapter addresses, the middle-class students who inhabit these schools do not necessarily have parents who share common ideologies and attitudes but fall into four distinct types according to those ideologies and attitudes.

Table 3:1 Social, Economic and School Data on the Three Towns and Interview Sites

Town	Riviereville	Petiteville	Centreville
Profile	Village-like, quiet	Bustling, built up	Large edge city
Households			
Pct. couples with children	27%	25%	30%
Pct. single parents	9%	11%	14%
Pct. professional	26%	24%	14%
Pct. intermediate	16%	18%	18%
Pct. working class	7%	10%	12%
Pct. poverty rate	8%	16%	20%
Top decile median income	$64,400*	$45,400*	$40,500*
Persons			
Population	75,300	25,700	91,000
Pct. college degrees	47%	43%	34%
Pct. Immigrants	13%	21%	23%
Pct. French citizens	91%	87%	86%
Pct. unemployed	7%	11%	11%
Residences			
Pct. owner occupied	62%	25%	35%
Pct. public housing	6%	34%	40%
Schools			
Public middle schools†	5	2	8
Private middle schools†	3	1	3
School	**Legacy**	**Arche**	**Haven**
Type of school	Traditional	Tracked classes	Program
Enrollment 2016**	750	420	450
Sector ages 11-14††	631	624	334
Pct. students leave town	29%	40%	25%
6-year median pass *brevet*	98%	84%	73%
Pct. sector professional class††	27%	31%	17%
Pct. sector white collar class††	28%	31%	22%
Pct. enrollment professional**	71%	23%	15%
Pct. enrollment working**	6%	30%	33%
Pct. get student assistance**	4%	32%	34%

SOURCE: 2014 data from the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies. Population numbers are rounded to thousands. *College educated* is any degree past secondary school. Household occupation is for primary person in household. *Pct. students leave town* includes all people age 2 and older who attend any level of schooling from nursey school to college outside of the town where they reside. *Brevet* is the national test administered at the end of middle school. Percent is median rate of passage at school from 2011 to 2016. *Sector* is the population that resides in the census geography that most closely matches the boundaries of the respective school sector. *Pct. enrollment* is from school data in 2016 on the parents of enrolled students.

* Based on exchange rates current in June 2017 of one euro to 1.13 dollars.

† Ministry of Education data.

** School records. †† 2012 French census data release.

4 PROCESSES IN SCHOOL CHOICE

The towns and schools in Chapter 3 are typical of the places and institutions in which middle-class parents raise and enroll their children. But the middle-class parents that I interview in those schools consider and decide on schooling differently. Some adhere to the law requiring enrollment in the school sector, while others earnestly avoid the local school. For Mme. Bartillon, a Riviereville parent, it was "out of the question" that her children would go to a public school in the mixed town where she once lived, so the family moved.

> *Mme. Bartillon, a business manager with one child at Legacy*
> We lived just on the other side of the river in the next town before … It's complicated. So, my children were already at school in Riviereville, a private school, and then when we moved to Riviereville, I put them back in public school. There, they are in the best public school because Riviereville, it's like a fairly protected city. One has a level … of people who live in Riviereville … middle level executives, upper executives. The class is better I would say, okay? So, there was no risk at least as to the level of schools. That's good. I told myself that, it is useless to continue to put them in private, the collège is public. So that's it.

As with Mme. Bartillon, parental accounts are sometimes complex. Their considerations and decisions on school choice are filtered through ideology, what is best for society, and attitudes, what is best for children. Moreover, individual dispositions also shape their actions and beliefs, along with prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology. They stick with the language of social class rather than use that of ethnicity or race, the language Mme. Bartillon employs to explain why Riviereville is so much better.

In the previous chapter, I explored the demographic and policy dynamics that have given impetus to French school choice and affected the towns and schools that make up the education marketplace of this study. Building on the work of Ball (2003), I investigate here the processes by which middle-class parents engage in school choice, that is, how they go about it. How

parents sort through schools is pertinent to this study's research question, given the tie in the United States between school choice and racial segregation.

I first explain how school choice works in France. Drawing on parental accounts, I then explore five facets of the school choice process. The first facet is the degree of agency which parents employ in the process of school choice, which leads to four empirically grounded qualitative types of parents (McKinney 1969; Kluge 2000), the important contribution of this chapter. The other four facets I explore are how parents get information on schools, especially from social networks, options parents consider in schooling, their feelings of satisfaction, and then their sense of compromise evident among parents over their children's school.

4.1 Making Choices on Schools

School choice is not a given in France. In many ways, it is ideologically unacceptable, if not officially limited. France falls in the second category of countries that Felouzis et al. (2013) describe as the quasi-market, in which the state oversees curriculum, teachers, and institutions, allowing a limited range of choice. A 1963 law requires children to attend the middle school in the sector where the parents reside (Ben Ayed 2015). Nevertheless, choice happens. It happens through parental decisions about where to live, by enrolling children in private schools, through winning exemptions for other public schools, and by using unofficial means (van Zanten 2006).

The migration of the middle class into the suburbs has triggered the first form of school choice. Middle-class parents have the necessary financial capital and experiential knowledge to grant them residential options. But the middle class also faces constraints. Suburbs with the most attractive amenities and lifestyles, if not the best and least precarious schools, are expensive, affordable only to highly paid private sector executives and professionals. They are also places

that are politically on the right that the middle class from the less lucrative public sector who are usually on the left politically avoid (Oberti and Préteceille 2004; Oberti and Préteceille 2011)

The second form of school choice is the private school (Felouzis et al. 2005; van Zanten 2006; Grzegorczyk 2013). Private schools are more homogeneous and generally considered better academically than public schools (van Zanten 2003; Felouzis et al. 2005). Because France partly subsidizes private schools, much of the middle class can afford the tuition (Limage 2000; Felouzis et al. 2005; Bowen 2008). Nearly all the private schools are Catholic, but they cannot admit students based on their religion. Other than from religious families, which are not numerous, private school enrollment is increasingly made up of higher performing students who leave public schools, as well as learning-disabled children for whom public schools offer few programs (Héran 1996; Fridenson 2002; van Zanten 2006; Battaglia 2017).

The third form of school choice is through the exemption, or *dérogation*. Parents are granted a means to enroll their children in a public school outside the school sector for limited reasons (Durand 2004; Felouzis et al. 2005). The decision of the Sarkozy government to make exemptions much more possible in 2007 relaxed the policy on school sectors (Merle 2011). The Hollande government in 2015 reprioritized exemptions but much of the exemption policy is still in place (Duru-Bellat 1996; van Zanten and Obin 2008; Merle 2011; Le-Monde 2013).

The fourth form is through unofficial means, or cheating. For example, parents may use the address of a relative or friend living in the sector of a good school, or pay an address holder in a desirable sector to use their address as if it is their own (Raveaud and van Zanten 2006). This hidden form of choice is subject to official penalties, including expulsion of the student.

The decentralization that the French education ministry promoted about two decades ago increased the possibility of a public school having a sought-after academic program (van Zanten

2002; Mons 2004). Parents may agitate for such programs to responsive principals. Instead of switching schools, parents instead "colonize" them (van Zanten 2009). The programs may require an examination which the education ministry administers, controlling how many students take the examination. French middle-class parents cannot work around the examination as their U.S. counterparts do through private testing services, a common strategy in the United States (Lewis-McCoy 2014; Lewis and Diamond 2015). The education ministry blocked the child of one Riviereville parent I interviewed from taking a music examination because too many students had already taken it.

These programs also lead to the tracking of middle-class children into elite classes separate from the general student population in mixed schools (van Zanten 2006; van Zanten 2012). Parents have little say over which classes the school assigns their children, unlike in the United States, where demanding parents engage in opportunity hoarding by pressuring administrators to place unqualified children into high-level classes (see for example Lewis and Diamond 2015). Though the French middle-class parents are not opportunity hoarding, *per se*, they are the ones most interested in classes and their children who usually pass the examinations. But not all do. The child of a parent at Arche I interviewed did not qualify for the bilingual course and was consigned to a regular class.

The education ministry rotates principals regularly. A program that one principal initiates, a new principal may drop and replace with one less amenable to the middle class. Parents at both Legacy and Haven commented that the arrival of the new principal at those schools a few years ago was a positive turning point in reputations of those schools. A year after my interviews, the principal retired at Arche in Petiteville, leaving up in the air if the elite bilingual class there would continue. At Haven in Centreville, the new principal, who arrived the

year after the interviews, questioned the necessity of a classical music program, instead promoting a second language and a sports program. This regular rotation is a factor in the precarious reputations of suburban middle schools for the middle class.

4.2   Four Types of Parents Emerge from Analysis

According to the agency that parents demonstrate in their accounts on school choice, I place the 29 parents into four empirical types, qualitatively grounded (McKinney 1969; Kluge 2000). Table 4.1 at the end of the chapter shows the four types that emerge from parental accounts from two aspects of agency, action and reasoning, each comprised of two dimensions, respectively, enrollment and residence, and ideology and attitudes. By ideology, I mean the comprehensive set of explanations, often cultural, that uphold and justify a way of life, and by attitudes, I mean values and beliefs that reflect largely personal judgments of reality (versus those that are emotive). These types are in line with the culture in action model of Swidler (1986) in which action and ideology interplay in social resistance and change. The study's scope limits the generalizability of the types, which do not include parents at private schools. They are only a means to explore school choice and related matters among the interviewed parents.

Table 4.1 shows the composition of the types. Within agency, the dimension of action is made up of two parental behaviors, enrollment, the placement of children in school, and residence, the choice of residence by parents, whether done recently or in the past. The dimension of reasoning is made up of two parental considerations, expressed as ideology, what is best for society and as attitudes, what is best for children. Parents in the two types at the top of table mostly express ideology, and parents in the two types at the bottom mostly express attitudes. Reasoning and actions of course correlate. Parents stay in the local school because it is

best for society or they change schools because it is best for the child.

The types are Adherents, Assenters, Appraisers, and Avoiders. The actions and reasoning of Adherents reflect strict adherence to the French model of schooling. Their children stay in the local school as required under the 1963 law. Assenters also stay at the local school but view doing so more as a normal process rather than out of ideology. They offer comments about the local school, something which Adherents do not do. Appraisers make many comments about the present school, and four of the parents won exemptions for their children to attend school elsewhere. Avoiders volunteer many comments, but they are mostly negative ones about where their children would have been in school. All Avoiders won exemptions, moved at some point, or used unofficial means for their children to be at the school where I interviewed the parent.

Adherents and Assenters differ in tone and language in expressing ideology. Adherent parents speak with a tone and use language that is adamant about being at the local school. Tone and language differences are highly subjective, of course. I reviewed the interview transcripts and recordings as many times as necessary to ground empirically the two types (Kluge 2000). Because these types are tied to social and political ideology, such as the Republican model of schooling, and to personal attitudes, such as valuations about school quality and "fit" for children, the types are predictive of factors associated with school choice processes. As I discuss in Chapter 5, they are not as predictive of parental criteria because the types' underlying ideologies and attitudes are related to broader social and political ideology and political attitudes that have their own independent effect.

4.2.1   *Adherents: School choice is not possible*

In explaining how their children came to be at the school where I interviewed them, the

parental response is short and to the point for Adherents. It is the school they must attend. They

did not volunteer other reasons (see Table 4.1). A public-school teacher is the sole exception,

who says that her children must attend the local school because of her employment. Typically,

responses went as with this one:

> *Mme. Boudet, a business employee with one child at Legacy*
> It is the middle school of the neighborhood, and he is to be there. One lives in the
> sector, and one has to enroll our children in the middle school of the sector. One
> has to enroll in the middle school of the sector.

> In the interviews, six parents, 20.6 percent of the sample, indicate through tone and

language that going to the local school is an absolute obligation. On the action dimension, not

only do their children attend the local school, most of the parents are long-term residents of their

towns. Two of these parents live in Petiteville; four live in Riviereville.

4.2.2   Assenters: Local school is an automatic process

All Assenters stayed put within the school sector. In answering the question about how

their children came to be at the schools, parents who I label as Assenters are not as adamant as

Adherents. To them, the enrollment is an automatic process that comes at the end of primary

school, not an ideological statement, as in these responses:

> *Mme. Bossuet, a doctoral student with one child at Legacy*
> It is the sector, yes. One has no objection in fact to this, that he has to be in this
> middle school, so, naturally, one enrolls.

> Assenters also volunteer comments about the desirability of the local school, a mean of

0.88 comments per parent. The comments reflect attitudes about their comfort with the school.

> *Mme. Halphen, with two children at Arche, an Assenter*
> Our son goes here. It's a small college. So, uh, here we are, we decided to enroll
> our daughter in this middle school, of course, to the public school in this public

zone, nothing more.

As with this parent on the school's small size, the parents also volunteer comments about the school's safety and proximity. Two parents say their children's friends are enrolled there. Three of the eight parents recently moved to where they now reside, having arrived in the past five years. This type includes eight of the 29 respondents, or 27.5 percent of all the sample. Four live in Riviereville. Two are in Petiteville and two are in Centreville.

4.2.3   Appraisers: Assessing the merits and fit of local school

Appraisers differ noticeably from Adherents and Assenters on the reasoning dimensions because they provide many comments on the merits of the local school. These comments usually reflect attitudes about the quality of the school and the fit of the school for their children.

> *Mme. Renou, a stay-at-home mother with one child at Arche*
> So, I'm free to try the middle school, the sole condition that it is in the German
> and the bilingual class. The bilingual class, which is a good class, has good
> students. I knew from other parents' experiences that the bilingual class was a
> very good class, so that's it. It was a custom for those entering this middle school.

The bilingual course attracts middle-class parents, not only because of its educational value but because it brings in "good" students. The attitudes expressed here more often picture the school as academically best for their children, rather than as a school with whose size and safety they are comfortable, as with Assenters. Unlike Assenters, none say they are there primarily because of the school sector, though they acknowledge its existence. The parents offer a mean of 1.3 comments per parent. The comments that parents most often make are on the academic program (5 times) and the reputation of the school (3 times). Notably, on the action dimension, four parents won exemptions to send children to the school where I interviewed the

parent. Appraisers made up 10 of the 29 respondents, or 34.5 percent of the sample. Four live in Petiteville; two live in Centreville; and two live Riviereville

4.2.4   Avoiders: Leaving behind an undesirable situation

Five parents are Avoiders. They are primarily distinguished on the dimension of action. All Avoiders have switched schools, by winning exemptions, moving sometime in the past, or using unofficial means (Table 4.1). They have left another place or school on purpose.

Avoiders volunteer negative comments about the school their children would have attended or the place where they once lived. They appear to feel they faced circumstances, such as the student mix, that grants them the right as individuals to change schools. The school their children would have attended is in a town or school with social or ethnic mix or in a school with mix or behavioral problems, as evident in the excerpt from Mme. Bartillon at the beginning of the chapter. These parents are trying to get away from a bad situation more than trying to find a better school. For example, a father living in a town near Riviereville says that when it came time for his youngest daughter to go middle school, the local school's social and ethnic mix had become too great. They won an exemption, saying they intended to move to the new sector.

Not only mix but behavior plays into the decision to leave a school. A single mother who moved to Riviereville explains that what motivated her was that student behavior in the schools where she had lived previously had become unacceptable. Avoider motivations are sometimes complicated, however. A public-school teacher won an exemption for his two children to attend a middle school other than where he taught as a compromise with his wife. The school where he taught had behavioral issues, and she wanted the children in private school.

Parents volunteer many, diverse comments on why their child is at the present school, a mean of 1.8 reasons per parent. The five Avoiders are 17.2 percent of the sample. Two Avoiders live in Riviereville, two in adjacent towns (with children at Legacy), and one lives in Petiteville.

4.2.5   Social and demographic characteristics of types

Table 4.2 shows social and demographic data for the types from the post-interview survey. One key difference among types is that Assenters and their partners hold less prestigious occupations and are less educated than other parents. In addition, one well-educated parent is single, and another is juggling graduate school and a job, as well as parenthood. Their social positions may contribute to their lower degree of agency and to a sense of being less empowered to act on and speak contrary to the Republican model of schooling. They also could have been less forthcoming in the interviews. Faced with a foreign interviewer, better situated middle-class parents are potentially less worried about social desirability. The fact that three Assenters moved recently, more than any other type, appears more related to their financial situation than to schooling itself, given their low awareness evident about the local school in their accounts.

From an extensive and earlier study of school choice in four Parisian suburbs[17], van Zanten (2009) constructs a typology of middle-class, middle-school parents. That quantitative typology uses the type of occupation and tier of employment of the male householder of the interviewed family to form four categories of parents. The typology reflects the traditional division of the French middle class into commercial and intellectual classes split by the tier of employment, such as manager versus employee. The four types are technocrats, intellectuals, technicians, and mediators. Technocrats and technicians are commercial; intellectuals and

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[17] Not the same towns in this study

mediators are intellectual. Technocrats and intellectuals hold higher tier jobs; technicians and mediators hold lower tier jobs. The author finds the types engage in schooling strategies that reflect their occupational needs, if not class cultures. My qualitative types are not a replication of that typology. Mine are from parental actions and reasoning evident in accounts. However, some association between the types exists. Half of Adherent types would qualify as technocrats, and half of Appraiser types would qualify as intellectuals. Most who would qualify as technocrats live in Riviereville (75%), and many who would qualify as intellectuals live in Petiteville (42%). I am unable to place them by tier of employment because of data limitations.

4.3 Sources of Information and Social Networks

I turn here to an important facet of the school choice process, information seeking. When middle-class parents obtain information about a school, the research evidence is that they turn to their social networks more than to official sources (Schneider et al. 1997; Ball and Vincent 1998; Holme 2002; van Zanten 2009; Felouzis et al. 2013). In France, official information about schools, other than rudimentary data on staff, enrollment, programs, location, email address, and phone number, are not readily available. The education ministry posts no data on test scores, completion rates, or any other measures that gauge school quality, data commonly and officially supplied to U.S. parents. This increases parental reliance on unofficial sources and social networks (van Zanten 2009). French public schools may have web pages, which I viewed as part of this study. Their content is sparse and sometimes out-of-date. They may include contact information, the school calendar, lunch menus, and pictures of the school. In addition, media outlets release rankings of secondary schools, the controversial *palmaires*, that they compile

tenaciously from passage of the *baccalauréat* at the end of high school and the *brevet* at the end of middle school (van Zanten 2009; Chauvel and Clément 2014).[18]

Felouzis et al. (2013) contends that unlike official sources, social networks supply information loaded with parental perceptions and judgments about schools, including contextual assessments on race, ethnicity, and social class, and discipline. As result, information from social networks is more than mere information: It comes with claims about what schooling choices are the right ones for parents (Ball and Vincent 1998; Ball 2003). Ball and Vincent (1998) describe the information acquired from social networks as "hot" knowledge, rather than the "cold" knowledge of official sources. Holme (2002); Lareau (2014) and Posey-Maddox et al. (2014) demonstrate that social networks are fundamental to schooling decisions among U.S. middle-class parents. Parents there actively construct and participate in these networks for the very purpose of getting school information, if not for assembling a "critical mass" of middle-class parents to lobby administrators to meet parental demands (Billingham and Kimelberg 2013).

This study partially extends that research by tracing parental sources of information in school choice. The topic is well researched in the United States (Holme 2002; Lareau 2014; Posey-Maddox et al. 2014), but not so much in France (Le Pape and van Zanten 2009; van Zanten 2009). I am concerned with what sources parents use to find information because of what information that the sources may convey, especially through parental social networks.

The types are predictive of information seeking. Adherents and Assenters do not need information because they conform on the school sector, but Appraisers and Avoiders require information on which to base their assessments and decisions. Adherent parents even deny they

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[18] Though they do not publish test scores, the education ministry does release publicly the names of students that pass. Tests scores and grades are considered public information in France, unlike in the United States where they are held to be private and are protected by law.

had information sources. A Riviereville parent claims she needed to know few specifics about the school when she enrolled her children. After I asked about what prior sources of information she had about the school her child attends, I then probed further, bringing on this exchange:

> *Mme. Jullien, a business employee who had one child at Legacy, an Adherent.*
> RESPONDENT: No. Nothing.
> INTERVIEWER: The sources, friends, the internet?
> RESPONDENT: No. Nothing.
> INTERVIEWER: No?
> RESPONDENT: Not that it was looked at, no …

Nevertheless, as Table 4.3 shows, 69 percent of the parents did obtain information about the local school from their friends. The French refer to this process of information seeking as *bouche-à-oreille*, literally, mouth-to-ear, though I translate it as word of mouth. The social networks that Ball describe and the U.S. literature portrays in relation to school choice appear to be more affable and accessible than those among parents here. In the U.S. literature, parents actively construct school networks through wine-and-cheese parties and recruitment sessions, and through the internet and social media (Posey 2012; Stillman 2012; Billingham and Kimelberg 2013; Cucchiara 2013; Roberts and Lakes 2014). The difference between France and United States appears to be cultural conventions around affability. The French may limit the sharing of important information only to close contacts rather share it with casual acquaintances (Druckerman 2012). I construe the French term *bouche-à-oreille* to mean from more closely held, or intimate, sources, equivalent to, but not necessary the same as, "strong ties" in U.S. sociological literature (Granovetter 1977; Granovetter 1983; Schneider et al. 1997).

Other sources of information, such as teachers, other parents, contacts, neighbors, and students, I construe as weak ties that are more specialized in their information. That may not be the case for the parent associations, to which parents also turn for information, too, because

membership implies a degree of militancy on the part of the parent. Six parents cite a parent association as a source. Five of those parents live in Petiteville, the heterogenous town, where the school has two associations, an independent, unaligned citywide association, and the FCPE, politically aligned with the left.

> *M. Serre, a business executive with two children at Arche, an Appraiser, speaking in English*
> My wife is also part of the local parents' group, the independent … so, first with the elementary school, now with the *collège*, so when she was enrolling in the elementary school system, she was able to get feedback, too, from parents whose kids were either in [Arche], and they were to say this is positive and this is negative, and also getting feedback from parents who would never put their kids at Arche, and who say, oh, no, you shouldn't go there, or yes, it's better actually than the private system, so you know.

Parent associations play a role in distributing information. Though seemingly "hot," their information appears to be qualified because the associations are officially tied to schools and to the success of the schools as attractive places for middle-class parents, who, as it is, comprise most of the associations.

A few parents use "cold" sources, the internet (14%) and news media (17%), to garner what they can, usually unsuccessfully (see Table 4.3). One parent moved to where she did because of a radio report about an incident at Legacy that met her liking for strict discipline.

> *Mme. Trudeau, a government employee, with one child at Legacy, an Avoider*
> [I learned from] from the radio, but it was not planned. There was a teacher who was punished for giving too severe punishments to students at Legacy. So, it was amazing. My kids were not in *collège* at that time. But that gave me the image of a *collège* that can be a little of the old game where authority was very important.

Assenters are prone to information seeking, unlike Adherents, acquiring part of it from friends, but also from less personal contacts, such as teachers, other parents, and neighbors.

Though they seek out media and internet sources, they find them useless, possibly because they

do not contain information relevant to these parents, as with this single parent.

> *Mme. Lambert, an engineer with a child at Arche, an Assenter*
> RESPONDENT: Then, I looked on the internet. I found very little information,
> eh. I had done a search, but the site was, the *collège* site was not great, so there
> was not much information on the internet, and that's why I asked people,
> neighbors, and the keeper of the building, the director of his old school.
> INTERVIEWER: So, official or unofficial information?
> RESPONDENT: Official. Anyway, there was not much. Official information,
> there was not much.
> INTERVIEWER: Okay.
> RESPONDENT: It was, it was, we had very little information. I was even
> disappointed [there was] not an open house for the young parents that is normally
> done at the *collège*. The students went to visit when they were in fifth grade.
> Students went to visit their *collèges*, but not we the parents. [It] does not have an
> open house … no.

On the other hand, Appraisers are predictably prolific seekers of information (Table 4.3).

They tap multiple sources of information. They utilize the internet and the media, and some

official information. But the most prolific information seekers are Avoiders. Their information

sources are less far-ranging, possibly because they are not privy to as much local information

because of having to move or by living in another town.

In a few interviews, I probed for how parents obtained information from their social

network. Did they ask around or was the information generally known from everyday

conversations? Some parents did in fact ask friends and contacts. For most parents, however, the

information is from what is generally known, what is in the "air" from non-purposeful, regular

conversations and interactions. The evidence, though limited here, is that parents do not turn to

social networks uniformly. For some, embeddedness in an intimate group with protected

information may render compliance to its consensus, but for others, without membership with such intimacy, they interrogate ties and contacts critically without acquiescence to the consensus, much in line with Ball and Vincent (1998).

In addition, the parental social networks appear less purposeful than the networks of U.S. parents, which exist primarily for schooling and amassing "critical mass." Petiteville is perhaps the exception. The situation there is consistent with the idea of the "colonized" school, in which, according to van Zanten (2009), parents work to encourage school administrators to have academic programs and language courses that middle class desires. The networks have gaps. They spread rumors effectually on the precarity of a school's reputation, as happened at Legacy when a false story circulated during the school year about how students from another town would be sent to the school, changing its mix. Yet, in the second interview wave, a few parents there did not know about this rumor when I inquired about it.

Finally, van Zanten (2009) contends that gender differentiates the process of information seeking. Women depend more on social networks, getting "hot" information, and men turn more often to forms of media, getting "cold" information. In this study, men and women engaged in the same forms of information seeking. Among this admittedly small sample, women checked the internet and media as much as men. Men turned to official information about four times more often than do women, however, suggesting that gender plays some role in information seeking.

4.4   Schooling Options Parents Consider

Social networks supply information that bears on decision-making. Weighing those options is another part of the school choice process. In the interviews, I ask parents if they had contemplated possibilities for their children other than the local school. About half of them had

considered other options; about half of them had not. But when I probed for what they had contemplated, the line that divides active and no consideration is blurry, as with this parent who had at first firmly said she had considered no options.

> *Mme. Devereaux, a marketing executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent, speaking mostly in English*
>
> Uh, so moved, no. Uh, to enroll in a private school and obtain a *dérogation* or to enroll in a private school, hum, we have not considered it, but in the sense that we have not made an attempt to go to inquire about it. Obviously, that is part of the possible choices and possible options, as for example, for the second child who is not yet in *collège*. It is possible that we would think about it. For the moment, I do not think so ... I think very often of the comparison between the private schools and the *collège* of my daughter. For example, her friend who is here today, her friend, she is in a very famous private *collège*…

As the parent talks, her response slips from "no" to an admission she has given thought to private school. The types are again predictable in their responses. As Table 4.4 shows, Adherents and Assenters more often say they never considered an option. Appraisers and Avoiders most often say they consider options. Adherents and Assenters cohere to ideology about what is good for society, while Appraisers and Avoider cohere to attitudes about what is good for children, which then means finding the right schooling.

More than half of respondents reject the option of a private school. These public-school parents voice many concerns about private schools. One concern is that they are full of parents who are "afraid" of mix. Avoiders are more likely to say no to the private school. Given that these parents chose the public school through moving, exemptions, or unofficial means, that response is predictable. The parents who would have chosen private schools simply are not in this study's population of interest, which is parents of public-school children. Left in the sample are those parents who choose the public school because they do not like the private school.

4.5   Satisfaction with the School

Choice is not a one-time event but is contingent, always up for reconsideration. In the conceptual framework I build of school choice and processes from Ball (2003), parental choices are reconsidered because of what parents experience or encounter at the school after enrollment. They regularly weigh the costs and benefits of the school, not one time. The reputations of suburban schools are more precarious, and therefore, parents are watchful. To understand parental contingency, I ask parents about their satisfaction with the present school and the compromises they feel they made to have their children at that school.

For the most part, these parents are satisfied with the school their children attend, even at mixed schools, such as Arche with in its tracked classes, and where middle-class parents have the most reasons to be nervous or contingent over the school.

> *Mme. Renou, stay-at-home mom with one child at Arche, an Appraiser*
> RESPONDENT: Good. So, my son spent his last year here, and, uh, it went very well. He always had good teachers, he has a good level, he's uh going to high school next year, and my daughter who will go in sixth grade. I have not even thought to go elsewhere, I've registered here for next year.
> INTERVIEWER: Are you happy? (In English:) You are happy?
> RESPONDENT: Yes, yes. There are very good teachers who really keep good contact and who are interested in children. So, uh, in my son's class is the bilingual class, there are no worries. That's no problem, but I, I myself as a parent of a parents' association, I did a lot of class assistance and I have seen other classes and teachers who are very attentive, with children who have difficulties, trying to reach parents. They try to understand why the child has difficulties…
> INTERVIEWER: Nothing negative?
> RESPONDENT: Uh, no. There is what was said, there are children who disturb and problem children, uh, but everywhere there is … it's not what comes out when I talk about the *collège* because the reason my daughter will go to the

collège. So, a lot of parents who have children who are going to come in sixth, they asked the question, what do I think about this college, I say on the whole, it's good *collège*, is a good team …

In this instance, with her child separated from other students, and school monitors doing their job, the parent feels secure about the safety of her child. No parent states out-and-out dissatisfaction with their children's school, as Table 4.5 shows. Parents volunteer numerous school items as points of satisfaction—and some points of dissatisfaction. Parents most often mention items I theme as school quality, school relationships, and feeling of safety.[19]

Appraisers are highly satisfied. They volunteer many items with which they are satisfied. It is perhaps expected of parents who are the most engaged with the quality of the local school and its fit for their children. They simply would not be there otherwise. Mixed responses are more common among Avoiders. They volunteer more items with which they are dissatisfied. Avoiders appear to have a heightened critical engagement with schools. That led to their changing schools in the first place. All in all, responses are in predictably in line with the types.

4.6   Compromises to Attend the School

I ask parents if the present school entailed making compromises. As Table 4.6 shows, 72% of the parents said no. For parents who felt that they had made compromises, most of what they cite are problems associated with students at the present school, a red flag for parents, and the personal inconvenience that the school creates. Parents with exemptions most often cite the latter item because of the need to get their children to the school, which is sometimes distant.

M. Silvestre, with one child at Legacy, an Avoider with an exemption

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[19] These themes include multiple reasons, as for example, with school quality, the teachers and administrators, test results, the class their children are in, the vision of the school, and lunches.

RESPONDENT: In fact, it is the travel time. If she had gone to *collège* here, she would have walked there in five minutes, so we have to take her, normally a trip on a scooter.

INTERVIEWER: The distance?

RESPONDENT: Yes, the distance is two, three, four kilometers, and two, three, four kilometers to come back. Uh, but with a motorcycle, we are there in seven minutes, with a car that is a quarter of an hour, with a bike, it's a quarter of an hour to 20, 20 minutes, and with the bus, the public transport, which remains the easiest for a child normally, it's three-quarters of an hour. So that's long, and it can be, uh, an aspect, we'll say negative for the situation.

For this Avoider, the compromise is the inconvenience of getting her daughter to school because they live in another town. This is not a compromise that involves social values. Ball (2003) claims that even progressive parents are apt to compromise their social values on equality and diversity when it comes to their children. None of the items that parents volunteer indicate that they had compromised values. In fact, in a few interviews in which I probed about values, the paramount social value parents hold is that their children should attend a public school, a place where social equality is supposedly promoted, and in which their children would experience at least some children from outside their social and cultural background.

Appraisers are least likely to claim compromises (see Table 4.6). The level of contingency among these parents is low despite their high level of agency because, again, they otherwise would not be there. The most critical of parents, Avoiders, predictably most often say that they had compromised, in fact, four out of the five parents. Avoider parents cite themes such as other students at the school, including their mix and conduct, the red flag issues that drove them to another school, and the inconvenience the present school has created, including having to move and travel time to school. Their responses are in line with the idea that these parents are more critical of schools than are other parents.

4.7   Summary and Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the processes of school choice, the ways by which parents go about school choice, from the conceptual model I develop from Ball (2003). I look first at the degree of agency in which parents engage in school choice. Then, I turn to other facets of the school choice process, how parents get information, what options parents consider, the degree by which parents say they are satisfied with the present school, and the extent of compromises made for their children to be at that school.

This chapter's important contribution is the conceptual types that arise from their agency as expressed in action and reasoning. I label the parents as Adherents, Assenters, Appraisers, and Avoiders. This placement is from parental accounts of how their children came to be at their present school, in one of two forms. The first is action, with two dimensions, what the parent did regarding school enrollment and residency. The second is reasoning, with two dimensions, how the parents talk about the necessity of the local school, or ideology, and parental explanations on the quality and the fit of the school, or attitudes.

The six parents I place as Adherents are adamant that choice does not exist in the French model, an adamancy reflected in language and tone. It is an ideological response. Their children are enrolled in the local school. The eight Assenters are not nearly as adamant. They find comfort in a few features of the school. The 10 Appraisers talk more extensively about the present school, responses that reflect attitudes about school quality and "fit" for children. Four won exemptions for their children. All Avoiders have their children in a school different from the one where they would have attended if they had not won exemptions, moved, or used unofficial means. Their comments are less about the quality or fit than about the school or place they escaped, often mixed or with behavior issues.

Other key processes of school choice are seeking information and weighing options. About two-thirds of parents obtain information about the school their children attend from their groups of friends, mostly intimate ties. Some use individual contacts, such as teachers, neighbors, and other parents. A few tap media and the internet or official information. Adherents are reluctant to say that they had collected information. Most parents appear to have learned about the school from their social networks through ordinary social interactions rather than having deliberately sought information. The evidence here is that social networks, especially intimate ties, play a pronounced role in the school choice process, as in the United States. The nature of such networks among these parents is different than those that are apparent among U.S. parents, which are more purposeful and constructed. Of all the options, the private school is thorniest for these public-school parents, most of whom see public education as valuable.

When it comes to parental contingency, always an issue in the suburbs, most parents are satisfied with their present school, with none saying they are out-and-out dissatisfied. Predictably, Avoiders reflect dissatisfaction. Most parents feel they made no compromises for their children to be at the present school and most compromises are inconveniences, not of values. Again, Avoiders cite the most reasons for feeling they have compromised in schooling and often these are "red flags" warnings about mix and behavior to these parents. Moreover, in considering how parents sort through schools, Avoiders appear to come the closest to attitudes found among white parents in the U.S. literature about school choice and race.

In subsequent chapters, I follow how these types relate to another aspect of school choice. By types, the parents align themselves with the Republican model of schooling, what is best for society, or the parents express attitudes about the "fit" of the schooling, what is best for children. In the next chapter, I turn to school choice criteria, the aspects of schools that parents value for

the education of their children, following the model I develop from Ball (2003). Importantly, the

reasoning of parents here is tied to social and political ideology and political attitudes that

underlie the types, which have their own independent effect on criteria, and are not from how

parents act on schooling.

Table 4:1 Four Conceptual Types

Type	Dimensions of Agency			
	ACTION		**REASONING**	
	Enrollment	Residence	Ideology	Attitudes
Adherents (6)	All children attend middle school in the sector where parents live.	Long-term resident. (5)	All parents are adamant in language and tone children must attend in school sector.	Volunteer only one comment on school their children attend.
		Recent mover. (1)		
Assenters (8)	All children attend middle school in the sector where parents live.	Long-term resident. (5)	All parents are not as adamant, sector is more of a process of enrollment for children.	Volunteer few comments on school their children attend.
		Recent mover. (3)		
Appraisers (10)	Children attend middle school in the sector where parents live. (6)	Long-term resident. (8)	All parents are not as concerned with the school sector as a factor in their schooling decisions.	Volunteer multiple comments on school children their attend.
	Parents have exemption. (4)	Recent mover. (2)		
Avoiders (5)	Children attend middle school in sector where parents live. (2)	Parents reside in sector and moved there sometime in the past. (2)	All parents are concerned with getting options to school sector for schooling their children.	Volunteer negative comments on former sector or town, they have too much mix or school has discipline problems. (5)
	Parents have an exemption. (2)	Parents do not live in same sector. (1)		
	Parent used unofficial means. (1)	Parents do not live in same town. (2)		

Table 4:2 Demographic and Social Characteristics of Respondents by Type

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number	6	8	10	5	29
Gender					
Male (number)	--	2	4	2	8
Respondent age*					
Pct. ages 35-44	17%	37%	50%	40%	38%
Pct. ages 45-54	83%	63%	30%	60%	55%
Children					
Mean number living at home	2.00	2.13	1.90	2.40	2.07
Mean number of children in school†					
Mean number primary school	0.67	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.48
Mean number middle school	1.17	1.25	1.20	1.20	1.21
Mean number high school	0.00	0.38	0.10	0.60	0.24
Occupation of employed respondent and partner					
Pct. upper level position	83%	38%	63%	60%	55%
Pct. other white collar**	17%	25%	25%	40%	24%
Pct. partner upper level	83%	63%	78%	100%	59%
Level of education of respondent and partner					
Pct. college degree	67%	50%	70%	80%	66%
Pct. partner college degree	50%	50%	67%	67%	50%
Residency and nativity of respondent					
Pct. 5 years or less in home	17%	38%	20%***	0%***	28%
Pct. moved locally††	83%	63%	90%	80%	69%
Pct. French born	83%	88%	70%	100%	83%
Mean score on political scale					
1 to 10 (Far left to far right)	3.58	3.63	4.39	4.38	3.98

* Other categories of under age 24, ages 25-34, and ages 55 and older are not shown.

† Difference between the mean number of children at home and the total of mean number of children in school is children who are in an early education program or university.

** Other white collar includes middle-level management and professionals, business owners, and employees, but not manual workers.

†† From Paris or other parts of Paris region, including same town.

*** Residence in another town is excluded from type data but not total.

Table 4:3 Parental Sources of Information about the School

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Intimate forms of information					
Friends	50%	75%	70%	80%	69%
Other forms of individual information					
Teachers	50%	25%	20%	60%	52%
Other parents	67%	63%	60%	60%	38%
Contacts	0%	13%	30%	20%	10%
Neighbors	17%	13%	10%	0%	7%
Other students	0%	0%	20%	0%	7%
Total*	**83%**	**75%**	**90%**	**100%**	**86%**
Forms of non-individual information					
Media	0%	0%	10%	80%	17%
Internet	50%	13%	30%	60%	14%
Total*	**50%**	**13%**	**30%**	**80%**	**62%**
Official information					
Sought official information	17%	0%	50%	20%	24%

* Percentages do not equal total because parents cite multiple sources.

Table 4:4: Considered Other Options for Schooling Children

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Response to interview question on schooling options					
Yes, considered options	0%	38%	80%	80%	52%
No, did not consider options	100%	62%	20%	20%	48%
*Said no to following options**					
Enrolling in private school	50%	63%	40%	80%	55%
Moving elsewhere	0%	13%	10%	0%	7%
Getting an exemption	0%	25%	20%	0%	14%

* Not all parents cite reasons why they did not consider these options.

Table 4:5 Satisfaction with Present School Children Attend

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Level of satisfaction from interview by percentage of parents*					
Very satisfied	17%	38%	30%	40%	31%
Fairly satisfied	83%	0%	40%	0%	31%
Mixed response	0%	62%	30%	60%	38%
Reasons given in interview for satisfaction and mean number per parent**					
Quality of school	0.50	0.63	0.70	1.40	0.72
Relationships with school	0.33	0.00	0.50	0.20	0.28
Safety of children	0.17	0.13	0.50	0.00	0.24
Involvement with school	0.17	0.00	0.10	0.20	0.10
Structural reasons	0.00	0.13	0.20	0.00	0.10
Total number of reasons	**1.17**	**0.88**	**2.00**	**1.80**	**1.48**
Reasons given in interview for dissatisfaction and mean number per parent**					
School reforms	0.17	0.13	0.00	0.20	0.10
Student behavior	0.00	0.13	0.10	0.20	0.10
Other miscellaneous	0.00	0.13	0.10	0.40	0.14
Total number of reasons	**0.17**	**0.38**	**0.20**	**0.80**	**0.34**

* Themed levels reflect degree of satisfaction expressed in interview with school.
** Decimal represents number of comments by theme divided by number of respondents.

Table 4:6: Parental Compromises Made to Attend This School

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Percentage of respondents who expressed in interview making compromises					
No compromises	83%	75%	90%	20%	72%
Some compromises	17%	25%	10%	80%	28%
Mean number of compromises expressed in interview by respondent*					
Type of students at school	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.83	0.21
Inconvenience of school	0.17	0.13	0.10	0.60	0.21
Instruction at school	0.00	0.13	0.30	0.20	0.17
Other compromises	0.17	0.13	0.30	0.20	0.24
Total	**0.33**	**0.38**	**0.80**	**2.20**	**0.83**

* Decimal represents number of comments by theme divided by number of respondents.

5   CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

Parents cited numerous, diverse, and specific criteria when it comes to schooling. For example, this Petiteville parent cites two sets of distinct criteria related to what I theme as academic quality and school context, as do many other of the interviewed parents.

> *M. Serre, a business executive with two children at Arche, an Appraiser, speaking in English*
>
> Maybe one of the criteria, not in order, but one of the criteria was the fact that rules applied during the year at Arche, meaning we were not scared about having our daughters being, you know, in quarrels and fights or things like that because … we knew that the management in place is actually running the *collège* the way it should be run. That's one thing which was important for us to know, that our kids are in a safe environment, safe as possible. It's still real life, but it's safe place. That's important for us. The fact that the teachers were all good teachers from the feedback we had here and there. So, for instance, both of our girls are doing bilinguals, both English and German, which requires more from them, and also the teachers have to provide more. They are also doing Latin, so you need to find proper teachers for that. So those are the basic criteria, first safety, then the academic level provided by the *collège* itself.

In this chapter, I address the criteria that middle-class parents employ in school choice, which are the aspects of schools that parents value for the education of their children. The important contribution of this chapter is in providing more concrete understanding of the packages of varying criteria by which parents evaluate schools. I find that parents possess numerous, diverse, and specific criteria. They disagree on the relative merits of the criteria. Nevertheless, two themes arise inductively. One of the themes is criteria about the academic quality of schools; the other is about school context. Parents also highly rate mix, behavior, and teaching as school criteria, but social, ethnic, and cultural mix is problematic for parents, with its potential relationship to the question on race. They are divided on the relative merits of this

criterion, as well as on that of the quality of teaching and pedagogy, but not on that of behavior. The reasons for the divide are because of the independent effects of prevailing cultural conventions and social and political ideology attached to the types, limiting deviation among them, except for Avoiders, for whom clear differences emerge.

5.1   Approach to Parental Criteria

I approach parental criteria from two directions. Early in the interviews, I ask what criteria the parents see as most important from what they knew beforehand about the school their children attend. Later in the interviews, I ask a set of three questions that requests parents to rate the importance of mix, behavior, and teaching as criteria. I then probe for why they consider the criteria important. The first question asks specifically about the school their children attend, and the parents themselves volunteer the criteria; the next set of two questions asks about schooling generally and focuses on three selected criteria that literature holds as important.

5.1.1   Parental criteria for the school their children attend

In the school choice literature oriented toward rational choice, the assumption is that parents focus primarily on academic quality in selecting a school (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe 1990; Felouzis et al. 2013). Other qualitative literature suggests instead that parents are concerned about the school context, of which the race and class of students are no small part in that concern (Mickelson et al. 2008; Cucchiara and Horvat 2013). Academic quality and school context are two general competing explanations for how parents judge schools.

The themes that arise from parental accounts largely match much of the school choice literature but with two caveats. The first caveat is that what parents volunteer as first-order

criteria from the information that they thought most important about the present school are distinct and varied, rather than broad and limited as the second-order concepts of academic quality and school context would imply. The second caveat is that the question draws multiple replies. The mean number of criteria that parents cite is 2.98. The multiple replies suggest that parental criteria are composed of heterogenous packages of what constitutes a good school rather than a homogenous sets of similar criteria about academic quality or school context.

The two major themes are nearly as important as each other in the minds of the parents. Overall, 83 percent of parents offer criteria considered academic quality and 76 percent of parents offer criteria considered school context. The major themes are not discrete; parents often cite multiple criteria that crosses over the themes. The parents often intertwine the criteria, as evident in this excerpt below. When asked what was important about the school, this parent cites criteria tied to the minor themes of teaching and reputation (within academic quality) and atmosphere and students (within school context).

> *Mme. Allard, one child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> The fact that there were good results, as it is the point of the *collège*… It
> translates, one can think, it translates into a good teacher pedagogy, to good level
> of teachers. Also, *collège* is calm. It has not the reputation of being a *collège*
> where there are many difficult children. The children are secure and safe, and uh,
> they come there to progress and find their place…

These four criteria are practically in the same breadth. As with M. Serre at the beginning of the chapter, for 18 parents of the 29 parents interviewed, overlap exists among themes. Seven parents had responses categorized only as the major theme of academic quality; four parents had responses categorized only as the major theme of school context. This parent cites criteria entirely tied to students and atmosphere within the major theme of school context but volunteers nothing about academic quality.

Mme. Castex, an architect with one child at Legacy, an Appraiser

RESPONDENT: The type of people. Yeah, yeah. But above all a collège where children are well watched, therefore, a population where parents seem...

INTERVIEWER: The population, yes.

RESPONDENT: ... the parents are involved. I really hope it is not a population where children are left to fend for themselves. (Speaking in English) You understand that? It's a population, yeah, a quiet population, tranquil. It's a collège there is no, there's no problem, violence...

INTERVIEWER: Violence ...

RESPONDENT: ... of violence, that's it. It is tranquil, tranquil.

Of the four types, all five Avoiders cite criteria related to school context, as Table 5.1 indicates. As I present in the previous chapter, the social networks of Avoiders are less useful for gaining information because they have switched schools through exemptions, moving, or unofficial means, and thus have fewer ties near the schools or friends and neighbors whose children attend the school. The criteria they cite do not so much explain why they change schools, which is largely to avoid difficult schools, as the criteria reflect how information about academic quality is generalized and unspecific. Not much variation exists among the other types.

The major themes are in sync with much of school choice literature that holds that parents judge schools by measures of educational quality (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe 1990; Felouzis et al. 2013) or parents evaluate schools by their context, including the race and ethnicity of students (Mickelson et al. 2008; Cucchiara and Horvat 2013). As they arise inductively here, both major themes are more complex and less straightforward than either set of the literature would suggest.

5.1.2 Academic quality involves multiple criteria

Within the major theme of academic quality, two minor themes that are prominent are criteria tied to quality of teaching and academic reputation. The quality of teaching at the school includes diverse responses such as being able to talk with teachers, using traditional teaching approaches, knowing teachers are experienced, and having teachers regularly present. Though parents do not have much inside information of what occurs in the classroom in the French schooling system, they gain ideas about teaching quality from the schoolwork and grades their children bring home, the homework they are assigned, the comments of children, and from infrequent meetings with teachers. They also learn about it because if the school's academic reputation is good and if the students and the community are acceptable, then the quality of teaching must be good. Parents believe these aspects of the school are related. As this parent conveys, the link between the character of town and the quality of teaching is not to be ignored.

> *Mme. Boudet, an airline executive with one child are Legacy, an Adherent*
> That's what I said before, because when you're in this *collège*, it is very good in general at teaching … it's in a good area that does not have a problem at its base, does not have any real problems, troublemakers, or worries about kids who are not properly watched. We are in this, a privileged environment where all the children speak French, and in general with parents to help them. No differences sociological here … We have chosen a suburb a little privileged precisely so that our child can have good influences, and that you have public education without worry, with good prospects at the end.

The connection between teaching, which this parent rates as "very good," and the character of the town, which this parent describes as "privileged," is not incidental. Who lives in the town is important to the quality of the teaching because having good teachers is not a given in French public schools. Suburban schools generally have working-class and immigrant students who are perceived to be more troublesome and often difficult to teach because their upbringing,

culture, and environment (van Zanten 2003). As a result, they also have the most difficulty in attracting and retaining experienced teachers, usually having newer, inexperienced teachers (Viguier 2006). Through the promotion system, teachers gravitate as they can to schools perceived as having better students, which usually are in privileged towns. Parents know that schools in privileged places escape most problems of teaching quality. This is the case at Legacy. As this parent notes, it is the students who make for the teachers.

> *M. Silvestre, a business professional with a child at Legacy, an Avoider.*
> Well, first of all, the quality of education is a paradox in France. Since all education should be egalitarian everywhere, but we know, we notice that the best teachers are not always in the right places, and one can speak also of the amount of effort that goes into teaching. The quality of the teachers is essentially tied to quality, high socio-professional students and then to the quality of life of the sector. In France, that's what lets one be in conditions conducive to an education.

This parent draws a direct link between students and teachers, not because good teachers attract good students, but because good students attract good teachers. Parents also cite other criteria related to academic quality categorized under the minor themes of academic reputation, types of programs, and other strengths. For one parent at Legacy, the academic quality of the public school brought her to remove her child from a private school and put her in a public school when she moved to Riviereville to leave a nearby, highly mixed community.

> *Mme. Bartillon, a business manager with one child at Legacy, an Avoider*
> The important criteria for me is the level of the students, and I heard that the level is good, the *collège* is leading in results. It's very, very important. It's true that I heard how the *collège* was organized, the fact that they are paying attention to children, the kids who are late, and that parents monitor what is done … It's huge. My kids now walk to school because we live right next to the *collège*, but it is

really the results and performance [that counts].

Notably, one criterion that the parent cites, that her children can walk to school, is part of school context as location. Felouzis et al. (2005) contend that the primary criterion for parents is the proximity of the school. Though that appears among these parents, only some parents volunteer it, perhaps because the closeness of the school is simply a given because no selection has taken place. Academic programs are another criterion that are important for parents. For this Appraiser, what made palatable the sudden move of his son because of his child's debilitating illness to the school where he teaches is the school's language program.

> *M. Fresnel, a teacher with one child at Haven, an Appraiser*
> It was for family reasons [the move was made]. That is to say, to take care of my son. Then, there was the possibility of having this option of languages from the sixth grade. So, from the start of collège to be able to do foreign languages, uh, foreign languages, from the start, especially English. Yes, it's important, but he is equally able to do German. I think it makes sense to do German in a European context, since German is our first political partner, the first economic partner. It seems important to me that the children do at least as much as with English.

Other than types of programs, academic reputation is also important. One indicator of academic reputation for parents is the average passage rates on the brevet, the test that students take at the end of middle school. For others, however, the indicators of quality are more general, referred to less specifically as the "level of schooling" or "level of success."

5.1.3   *School context involves several criteria*

The school context theme includes the minor themes of students, location, atmosphere, administration, relationships, and structure. As Table 5.1 shows, these minor themes are

composed of responses that range from the conduct of students (Students) to parental evaluations of the principal (Administration) to whether the school is public and small (Structure).

Notably, Avoiders cite few criteria related to school context, largely because many of the criteria in these themes are likely to be unknown to them because they changed schools and their social networks are not able to supply the more specific contextual information about a school in another town. The most important criterion for Avoiders is the town and sector of the school, including for Mme. Bartillon in her account. When most other parents refer to the school's location, they mean it is in walking distance, as did Mme. Bartillon, and this parent.

> *Mme. Devereaux, a marketing executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent*. An important criterion for me is the distance … My husband and I were lucky enough to have had in our childhood schools that were close to home. I have been working at home. I am very close to my children. And I did not see the point of putting them in a remote place without a very obvious reason. So, knowing that the *collège* here is nearby, two minutes by walking.

Replicating her own upbringing, the parent cites the criteria of location because in her case being close to the school is convenient for her work and her children. About a third of parents cite criteria related to location, and about a quarter cite criteria related to students in the school. Some variation exists among the types (see Table 5.1). Appraisers make up the totality of parents, five, who consider forms of relationships with and within the school important. The frequency of these responses suggests that Appraisers attend the most to having ties to parents, teachers, and administrators because they rely on diverse sources of information about the school. The emphasis on relationships is thus unsurprising. For example, this parent on the school council reflects on her need for personal access, intertwining criteria of academic quality and school context.

> *Mme. Bauge, an unemployed parent with one child at Haven, an Appraiser*

What you need is there must be much rigor in the *collège*. It must not be far from home, either. It is important. There also must be teachers, for me, with who we can also discuss, with whom to have a dialogue. It is important. I'm a parent representative of the FCPE [parent association]. So, it's important for me, life in *collège*. It's important for me to be able to speak to the principal, the assistant principal, the teacher. It is also important to be able to talk with the staff of the school.

Not only are relationships important to this parent but the fact that she lives near the school increases her access to the school.

I make three points on the major themes. The first point is that though I arrive at the major themes through an inductive process from coding and theming the interview transcripts, the result belies the considerable distance that exists between what parents say, as first-order concepts, and the themes I finally conceptualize, as second-order concepts. The second point is what the parents cite as criteria are often specific and concrete, such as "teachers use traditional methods," rather than higher order, abstract, umbrella concepts such as "good academic quality." The third, related point is that parents have criteria that are not singular but are a package of criteria (an average of about three) that falls over different themes. When it comes to criteria, they are not an either/or consideration but a both/and consideration.

Furthermore, the major themes are not discrete. In France, contextual criteria are indicators of academic criteria, and are not necessarily founded on parental aversions about the composition of schools and communities, though of course such aversion does exist (van Zanten 2003). Having a town and a school sector with well-behaved, middle-class children suggests that the local school attracts better teachers because of how the teacher promotion system is set up, regardless of how parents themselves feel about social and ethnic mix. Experienced teachers do not ordinarily seek positions at schools perceived to have problematic student behavior, and the

least qualified and inexperienced teachers usually end up at those schools (Viguier 2006). This study suggests that these French middle-class, middle-school parents do not perceive academic quality and school context as separate factors, but as part and parcel of intertwined criteria.

Finally, parents knowing about a school is problematic in France. As I discuss in the previous chapter, the schooling system provides little data helpful in school choice. Information on a school mostly comes social networks and contacts, largely judgments about the school's reputation. Attentive parents can judge teaching quality through school work their children bring home, the homework they are assigned, the grades they receive, and the comments children make. The other source is the character of the local town. The mix of the town and school are evident to the eye, and parents can easily pass along their judgments.

These parental accounts are more in line with the global perspective of Felouzis et al. (2013) about school choice and the model built here from Ball (2003) than they are with the rational choice thesis derived from the foundational U.S. school choice literature. What is desirable in schooling to these parents are packages of criteria that are varying and multiple, if not conflictive. Societal and cultural values drive what is appropriate in schooling more than what appears to be a pure cost and benefit calculation about schooling.

As a final note, despite the parental emphasis on location, students, and atmosphere in this major theme, only twice did parents volunteer mix in this interview question as a criterion (aggregated under the theme students in Table 5.1).

5.2   Parents Consider Mix, Behavior, and Teaching as Important

On a rising scale of one to 10, nearly all parents rank mix, behavior, and teaching highly. This ranking is unsurprising given these are the criteria that the literature says parents consider

important (Duru-Bellat 2002), and which is why I ask about them. Despite its absence among volunteered criteria in the earlier question, mix appears the most problematic to the parents as a criterion in school choice, ranked at 7.9 out of 10. The average rankings on behavior and teaching are higher and do not differ much at 8.6 and 8.8, as Table 5.2 shows.

Two questions in this part of the interview require explanation. The question on mix asks about a combination of social, ethnic, and cultural mix. When I probe further in a few interviews for differences among the items, parents refuse to rank the items separately in importance. No form of mix appears to be differently valued or concerting. Mix is just mix to the parents. The question on teaching asks parents to rank the importance of teaching and pedagogy, integrally linked in the French classroom. In a few interviews, I probe if parents rank differently teaching and pedagogy. After some thought, parents rank the two items either the same or nearly the same. (In cases when they ranked items differently, I took the mean of the two numbers.)

5.2.1 Oppositional themes on mix

For the criterion of mix in this question, two themes arise that are in opposition, each of which is comprised of two minor themes. For some parents, mix in schools is in a sense mandatory. The school should reflect the mix of the nation or town. To the probe of why she ranked mix as she did, this parent replies that mix should be the same as it is in the town.

> *Mme. Landry, with two children at Arche, an Appraiser*
> Why? Because when we leave the *collège*, when we are in the street, when, when [where] we dwell, social mix exists, especially in our city. In addition, I really think it is, that it's important to, it's important to live together. It's better that I think for children, too. It opens them to something else, that is to say, to be able say to themselves that they have a home, but there are other children who do not have one, who do not live the same way …

For other parents, however, the reason mix should exist in schools is that it is good for children. It builds social connections among people and provides opportunities and experiences to learn from others. It is useful to have, rather than obligation to impose on the school.

Mme. Halphen, with two children at Arche, an Assenter
You must learn to live with others in this *collège*. There is a mix that is very important, there are all nationalities. One can meet Africans, Asians, Maghrebians, French, Russians, immigrants who arrive here. They are welcomed. Refugees, too. It's talking about real life, real life, and that's done. And it allows one to have an opening to others in society, also to societies that are different.

For other parents, mix is neither mandatory nor good. These parents do not necessarily oppose mix but are more reserved about it. Mix is fine if it does not bring problems to schools, such as failing to integrate, breeding social and religious strife, and impeding academic progress.

Mme. Boudet, an airline executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent
RESPONDENT: So, I'm going to be, uh, politically incorrect. The mix is possible if all the children really work. If children who do not work in this way who can afford to work that way…we have a quality of education that is inferior. It's my point of view. So, it will always be the same principle in a privileged suburb, here. We know that the level will be supported. So, uh, mix, um, I'm very, very bothered to answer (laughs) because, for me, I was schooled in Paris, in the 18th [a northern district of Paris proper], and we had really a good experience, a very great social mix with there, the *bourgeois*, the workers, and all, and it was happening very, very, very well. And when I look now, it is going well. So, I know that it can happen, and it's okay, but it's not the case, it's not of the left [politically]. I'm trying very, very hard to answer. (Laughs).
INTERVIEWER: Okay.
RESPONDENT: You have my answer [using the familiar form of you, *tu*, as if speaking with a child].

As the preceding excerpts indicate, parents struggle with the issue of mix, as Raveaud and van Zanten (2006) contend in a study of middle schools in France and Britain. Among some parents, mix is considered a social and individual good when I conducted these interviews in 2016 and 2017, unlike in Raveaud and van Zanten's earlier study, in which they do not. For some of these parents, mix is necessary so that schools reflect the society at large, a collective response, and it provides connections, experiences, and knowledge, an individualized response. Nevertheless, tension exists for parents over the desirability and workability of mix and for the academic outcomes for their children. These parents believe too much mix hinders education because it slows down teaching and their children do not get the breadth and depth of lessons they desire. Of course, as everywhere, all parents care about the educational progress of their children, but the question of equality, one of the paramount French social values, arises among these parents when their children get less than students in homogeneous schools. Finally, the parents do not characterize one type of mix as more detrimental than another type. Even "politically incorrect" Mme. Boudet, who says that the social class mix in her childhood was not a problem, demurs from saying that the cultural and ethnic mix time is now somehow worse. Its relationship to race and school choice is not readily apparent in parental accounts, moreover.

Two major themes thus emerge from parental accounts. The first theme is "Mix necessary and good" and the other is "Mix brings problems." The first major theme includes a minor theme of "Must have mix" as with accounts such as that Mme. Landry above, and a minor theme of "Good to have mix," as in the account of Mme. Halphen, because it builds social ties. The other major theme, "Mix brings problems," includes accounts such as that of the politically incorrect Mme. Boudet, who claims mix affects the quality of schooling. Importantly, these parents do not believe mix should be considered bad itself, but they are just wary of its effects.

More parental accounts fall into the first major theme than into the second major theme, (see Table 5.2). Parents go one way or the other in their accounts. Of the 29 parents interviewed, only four cite criteria that fall under both themes. School mix is an issue in which polar differences exist among parents. In the first major theme, moreover, the two minor themes are themselves nearly discrete. For some parents, the emphasis is on the collective, "Must have mix," and for the other parents, the emphasis is on the individualized, "Good to have mix." Of the 20 parents with responses in this theme, only three cite criteria in both minor themes.

5.2.2 *Parents not divided over behavior*

Parents rank behavior highly at an average of 8.6. Two major themes emerge from the reasons given by parents for the importance of behavior as a criterion for schools. The parents are not sharply divided here, and considerable overlap exists among parental reasons. The numerous and varied reasons that parents give are mostly personal. Some parents, for example, cite behavior highly (a mean of 8.6) because it improves schooling and learning.

> *Mme. Rodier, a professional with one child at Arche, an Adherent*
> I think if nothing you have to be more disciplined to learn, you have to have a
> class where you do not talk, and you do not get disruptions, and you listen to the
> teacher, for being able to keep with the teacher. We must, we must behave, but
> not only that, it also comes from my education. Myself, I had a rather strict Asian
> education. So, uh, I think it's important to have some discipline in the classes so
> that students can learn properly.

 The parent is from southeast Asia where schools are highly disciplined. She connects discipline to the quality of schooling. It is an individual disposition. For other parents, the importance of behavior as a criterion is because it protects children from physical and emotional harm. This respondent, a teacher, talks about his experiences at the school where he teaches.

M. Hartel, a public-school teacher with two children at Arche, an Avoider
Yes, it's true that in our *collège* violence has decreased a lot. I arrived here with a
lot of violence. I could not cross the yard, a hallway, the stairs were blocked by
brawls, especially boys who had a lot of machismo picking on girls. I interposed
myself physically a good, uh, many times to avoid violence, which I have no right
to do, and because in theory, the students today are sacred as royal people. You do
not touch them, but I'm going, I'm going to help someone who is in danger, to
intervene when there are no adults who can intervene. The halls are often poorly
supervised by monitors who chat with well-behaved students, and do not see what
happens. I see what happens and I intervene …

This teacher won an exemption to place his children in a different school. This account
also shows unusual conduct for a teacher. French teachers are responsible for behavior in their
classrooms, over which they have a relatively free hand to control in teacher-centered
classrooms. School monitors are responsible for maintaining discipline in the hallways, the
lunchroom, the playgrounds, and the holding rooms (Viguier 2006). This teacher has broached
those boundaries by taking action in the hallways and staircases himself.

For some parents, the emphasis on student behavior is not to protect students physically
and emotionally, as above, but that students need to follow rules, a disposition. When they do
not, it reflects negatively on the school's reputation. This parent, a school council representative,
describes what she and a friend found waiting for the school to open one morning.

Mme. Mani, a middle-level professional with one child at Arche, an Appraiser
I go to school meetings. Sometimes I'm here at eight o'clock in the morning, and
once even I was here with a friend to drop off children. The behavior, uh, outside
waiting for the opening of the doors of *collège*, before the school gate, it is to say,
not possible in itself. More than that, it was 6th grade pupils! So, we did not
expect to have that kind of behavior … It is not possible. It is not possible. So, I
give much place, uh, and importance to the behavior of students, and elsewhere
we talked about it. Then … we went to see [the principal] and we pointed

out…the problem we had, okay, we had seen that morning and told him it's not normal. He was told you should maybe place a good monitor who stands in front of the gate before it opens or get them into the college indoors … so that there's no such behavior outside *collège*. He tells us, yes, but not in the *collège* [now] … but meanwhile, in front of, *collège*, it can happen … I do not know if you saw the *collège*, you saw the narrow street on which the cars go by, and the kids who are there, and on the sidewalks, insulting one another … I give [behavior] much importance. I wish they were at 10 …

This reason is not an individual disposition. The parent wants to protect the reputation of the school because the misconduct is visible to passersby.

Two major themes emerge from parental accounts. The first theme is that good behavior improves schooling, either by creating a better environment for students or leading to better academic progress in classes, as with Mme. Rodier. The second theme reflects defensive strategies centered around either protecting students, as with M. Hartel, or pushing the necessity for rule enforcement, as with Mme. Mani, in this case to protect the image of schools. Parents are nearly evenly split on the importance of these two major themes, "Improves schooling" and "Defensive measures" (Table 5.2). These are not discrete themes.

The relationship between types and these themes is unclear. More Adherents are concerned about defensive measures in student behavior, feeling perhaps that the Republican model of schooling should protect children. More Assenters express reasons for behavior related to improved schooling, especially the school environment, perhaps related to their need for a level of comfort with the school, as discussed in the previous chapter. Half of Appraisers, five, give reasons that tie behavior to better academics, a concern related to quality.

In the French literature, middle-class parents often attribute misbehavior to working class and immigrant students (van Zanten 2003).[20] In the U.S. literature, parents often draw a connection between student diversity and discipline (Farkas et al. 1990; Lewis 2003; Lewis-McCoy 2014; Lewis and Diamond 2015). However, a correlation between accounts on mix and behavior is unobserved here. Parents who favor mix either as mandatory or good also feel that behavior is almost equally important or unimportant in schools, nearly the same split that exists among parents who feel that mix brings problems. It is important to note that the second set of parents ("Mix brings problems") are not opposed to mix, they are merely wary of its effects. Instead they point to other parents who they believe are opposed to mix only because it is mix, especially private school parents. Given the right parenting, family socialization, if not social class, they believe then parents have no objection even to ethnic mix. A few parental accounts reflect implicit anxiety over both mix and behavior (one parent exclaims "Mo! Behavior!" after she cites potential problems with mix), but it is difficult to find it in extended excerpts. I did not ask about a link between mix and behavior, a question that may have led parents might to elaborate and produce more explicit accounts. Nevertheless, many of the reasons for the importance of behavior are dispositional, protecting students and improving learning, and not tied to cultural conventions and social and political ideology.

5.2.3   *Teacher criteria are important but divisive*

In the earlier open-ended question about criteria at the school that their children attend, parents volunteer quality of teaching more than any other criterion. In this later, general question,

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[20] Interestingly, van Zanten (2003) also points to the widespread popular psychological and sociological information employed among middle-class parents on disadvantaged students. In a few interviews in this study, too, parents gave reasoning that they attributed to sociological work.

parents rank teaching at 8.8 on a scale of one to 10. As with mix, parents are divided between two camps on the criterion of teaching, with little crossover in their accounts. The cleavage between parents follows the long-standing divide between French parents, expressed through the two national parent associations, one of which on the political left (FCPE) takes a stance supportive of teachers and their work and the other of which on the political right (PEEP) maintains a stance that is more critical of teachers and the national system (Gombert 2008).

Some parents stress the role that teachers and pedagogy play in the process of cognitive development, learning, and career preparation. This parent explains why that matters.

> *Mme. Jullien, a business employee with one child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> [They are important] because that's how the young, the students, they progress, arrive at, and acquire knowledge, a thinking for understanding the world around them, to analyze and not believe right away, to stop and to hesitate to reason, to get information on things. So, for me, the pedagogy is to teach them to reason, and to form an opinion, not believing the first, the first thing that comes and is told to me…it is to have the critical spirit.

For this parent, teaching and pedagogy are important in the development of critical reasoning skills. Other parents are judgmental of teaching and pedagogy, either highlighting problems that come with French teaching and the pedagogy or suggesting how teaching and the pedagogy should be improved. For some parents, the criticism arises from experiences with their children's teachers, as with this parent who recalls an encounter.

> *M. Serre, a business executive with two children at Arche, an Appraiser, speaking in English*
> RESPONDENT: So, pedagogy something for us which is important, and the first part was…
> INTERVIEWER: the teaching…
> RESPONDENT: Yeah, the teaching itself, yeah, so very important for us to attend to the teaching. We, we had some issues with one, I mean the kids had issues with

one teacher…

INTERVIEWER: An example?

RESPONDENT: …of a German, German teacher. She was coming back from Africa, she has been, had been teaching her entire career in Africa in a *collège française* [French language middle school], though with a very different type of children, and the way she taught our kids, it's was like for instance, for our elder, she started German in 6th grade, and so she [the teacher] didn't know they knew nothing of German and the teacher was expecting them to be already fluent in German…

INTERVIEWER: Okay…

RESPONDENT: … so and, and for two years this teacher had been very tough for the kids, so we fought … to let the teacher know that it was not proper for the kids because when my daughter was coming back from the German class, she was crying … saying I'm crap, or I'm bad. Blah blah blah. So that's not what they are all supposed to be. They are supposed to be in a safe environment, make their brain and memory work and, and, move forward. So, for, in one instance, and this, this case we had to push this … otherwise the teachers are good to brilliant and sometimes they are not perfect, but they are just human beings ...

The parent suggests that teachers need to be more student focused, though that would be unusual in French classrooms which are teacher centered. Other parents are more broadly critical of the system of teaching rather than cite specific instances or experiences. They take on teaching training in France, for example, which for secondary schools is subject based rather than pedagogically based. Secondary school teachers learn to teach by teaching. Other parents are not as critical of teachers as they are suggestive of different practices and methods for teachers and pedagogy. Finally, for another small set of parents, the problem with teachers is that they are behind the times, either in the way they approach teaching or in the technology they use.

Two major themes again emerge: "Improvements needed," comprised of two minor themes, "Perceived problems" and "What schools need" (Table 5.2). This major theme includes

conflicting items as teachers need to be rigorous or they need to be liberating. Complaints such as about the teacher system fall under "What schools need." The other major theme, "Helps student outcomes" are accounts that emphasize what good teaching does positively.

The first major theme, "Improvements needed," is thorny for parents. The parents are more likely to cite reasons that reflect problems with teaching and pedagogy in their accounts than to give advice that qualify instruction as positive for student outcomes. These two major themes are largely distinct. While 12 parents see instruction as essential to learning, gaining knowledge, or preparing for the work life, as above with Mme. Jullien, 12 other parents point to problems in teaching, the teacher system, and pedagogical methods, among others, as above with M. Serre. Thirteen parents had responses that reflect suggestions, saying that a school and its instruction needs to be interesting, open, rigorous, expert, liberating, or competitive. Only three parents cite reasons that fall both into the first theme, "Improvements needed," and into the second theme, "Helps student outcomes," though most parental accounts fall into the first major theme. Notably, Avoiders, the most critical of the four conceptual types, only give reasons that fall into the first theme, which in itself is more critical than the second theme, keeping with their level of uneasiness and contingency with schools, as discussed in the previous chapter.

This split between parents is in line with what Gombert (2008) describes as the historical division between the two national parent associations, the FCPE on the political left, and PEEP on the political right. The advice giving is correspondence with the attitudes of the business class, which promotes reshaping education to fit the needs of global business, rather than to the needs of the intellectual classes, of which secondary teachers generally are a part, and around which schooling has been historically shaped (Gombert 2008; van Zanten 2009). The division between parents on these two themes is evidently unrelated to the division around the themes in

mix. Both thematic divisions are ideologically inspired but perhaps inconsistently in the national ideology, with its emphasis on equality and integration, have no logical link to one another.

5.3   Summary and Conclusion

This chapter addresses the criteria that middle-class parents use in school choice. I approach criteria in two directions in the interviews. I ask first a question that focuses on the criteria most important to the parents from what they knew of the school their children attend and in which the parents volunteer criteria. I ask later questions directed toward three general criteria that are held important in the literature, that is, mix, behavior, and teaching of schools. These questions ask the parents to rank the criteria on a scale of one through ten, and then explain the reasons why the parents give it that rating.

Despite the emphasis of the school choice literature on two sets of criteria that influence parental decisions in school choice, I find that these parents cite criteria that are not only multiple but are specific and diverse. The two major themes that emerge from the inductive analysis, academic quality and school context, that are in line with the school choice literature (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe 1990; Mickelson et al. 2008; Cucchiara and Horvat 2013; Felouzis et al. 2013). The evidence here is that parents cite a package of multiple intertwined criteria rather than a singular criterion. It is not a matter of either/or as it is a matter of both/and for the parents when it comes to criteria. The parental accounts speak more also of judgments based on ideological and attitudinal values than they do of a cost/benefit calculation, consistent with Felouzis et al. (2013) and the model I build here on Ball (2003).

In the second set of questions, the parents rank all three criteria highly. However, social, cultural, and ethnic mix is less highly ranked and is more problematic. Two major themes

emerge that are nearly discrete. The first theme is comprised of minor themes on mix as a collective and an individualized value, that schools must reflect the society and that it is good for students. The second theme is not in opposition to mix, but that of wariness about it. The relationship of such social, cultural, and ethnic mix to race and school choice found in the United States is not as readily apparent in these parental accounts, moreover.

Parents intertwine their comments on behavior. On one hand, behavior is important because it leads to better student learning and a better academic atmosphere in the classroom, and on the other hand, behavior is important because it is necessary to protect students physically and emotionally and it is important for a school to enforce the rules. These themes are not discrete. Parents often give a combination of reasons that fall into both themes. Moreover, the reasons parents often cite are dispositional and generally unconnected to any larger ideology.

But when I ask about the quality of teachers and pedagogy, the reasons that parents give for their importance again give rise to two nearly discrete themes. These themes match the historic divide between national parental associations on teachers and their mission, as well as the emerging emphasis among the commercial middle class for education that better fits a globalized economy and its neoliberal influences (Gombert 2008). Notably, the two themes around mix and teachers arise from the same social and political ideology, but they are not logically connected. As van Zanten (2002) observes, French parents face paradoxical gaps between national ideals and practical realities, though they maintain faith in that ideology.

The conceptual types do not predict criteria well because prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology underlay the types with independent effects. Some variation does emerge. For example, Avoiders are more often critical of teachers or suggest changes in teaching, possibly because of their more critical attitude toward schools.

What materializes from this confluence of conceptual types, prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology, and now, the appearance of individual dispositions, is that school mix is not a social bad, but neither is it a social good. Only twice is it mentioned when parents are asked to volunteer criteria about the present school, and those parents had children at Arche and Haven, mixed schools. In response to the later, general question, parents indicate some problems may arise from mix that affect the school and the education of their children. Parents to this point have not differentiated what mix is, reflexively referring to social class when they do, in line with national ideology about legitimate differences. Race never appears as an element of mix, but then again, I have not asked about it at this point.

The two chapters that follow turn to the motivations behind school choice, global risk and race. Before taking on race in the following chapter, the next chapter takes a necessary conceptual detour to address social class and global risk, which Ball (2003) contends, based on Beck (1992), has led the middle-class to embrace school choice with ferocity. In this thesis, as I build on Ball, the result is that they trample over others to reserve the best schooling for their children, blind to the working class and minority children they displace in that process.

Table 5:1: Criteria for Present School Considered Most Important by Respondent Types

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
*Academic quality by percent of parents**					
Quality of teaching	67%	63%	50%	20%	52%
Academic reputation	50%	25%	20%	80%	38%
Types of programs	17%	25%	40%	40%	31%
Other strengths	0%	0%	10%	60%	17%
Total	**83%**	**75%**	**80%**	**100%**	**83%**
School context by percent of parents†					
Location	33%	13%	20%	60%	31%
Students	17%	38%	40%	0%	28%
Atmosphere	33%	25%	10%	20%	21%
Administration	0%	38%	10%	40%	21%
Relationships	0%	0%	40%	0%	14%
Structure	17%	25%	0%	0%	10%
Total	**67%**	**88%**	**80%**	**60%**	**76%**

Percentages do not equal total below for either school academics or school context because of multiple parental answers.

* Themes for academic quality are as follows: "Quality of teaching" refers to positive evaluations of stature and work of teachers; "Academic reputation" refers to good test results and positive appraisals of school; "Types of programs" refers to academic courses and programs school offers; and "Other strengths" are attributes such as school pushes and develops students.

† Themes for school context are as follows: "Location" is where school is situated; "Students" refers to composition of students and their behavior; "Atmosphere" refers to evaluation of schooling conditions; "Administration" refers to positive evaluation of management and administrators; "Relationships" refers to positive contexts between parents and administrators, staff, and teachers; and "Structure" refers to essentialist qualities of school such as small size.

Table 5:2: Importance of Three Criteria in Schools

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Ranking of importance of social, ethnic, and cultural mix					
On scale of 1 to 10	6.3	8.3	6.6	8.4	7.9
Main and minor theme responses by percentage of parental interviews*					
Mix necessary and good	50%	88%	70%	60%	69%
Must have mix	*50%*	*38%*	*50%*	*20%*	*41%*
Good to have mix	*33%*	*63%*	*20%*	*40%*	*38%*
Mix brings problems	50%	50%	40%	40%	45%
Ranking of importance of student behavior					
On scale of 1 to 10	8.9	7.6	8.6	9.8	8.6
Main and minor theme responses by percentage of parental interviews†					
Improves schooling	33%	100%	80%	40%	69%
Better environment	*17%*	*75%*	*40%*	*20%*	*41%*
Better academics	*17%*	*25%*	*50%*	*20%*	*31%*
Defensive measures	83%	50%	60%	60%	62%
Protects students	*67%*	*38%*	*30%*	*60%*	*45%*
Enforce rules	*33%*	*13%*	*40%*	*20%*	*28%*
Ranking of importance of teaching and pedagogy					
On scale of 1 to 10	9.6	8.4	8.5	9.2	8.8
Main and minor responses by percentage of parental interviews**					
Improvements needed	33%	75%	70%	80%	66%
Perceived problems	*17%*	*50%*	*40%*	*60%*	*41%*
What school needs	*33%*	*38%*	*40%*	*60%*	*41%*
Helps student outcomes	67%	38%	50%	0%	41%

Percentages do not equal total theme percentages because of multiple parental responses.

* Major themes and minor themes are as follows: "Mix necessary and good" comprised of minor themes "Must have mix" because country or town is also mixed and "Good to have mix" because it brings positive relationships and experiences; and "Mix bring problems" because mix is not good if problems arise in such areas as with integration, academics, and secularism.

† Major themes and minor themes are as follows: "Improves schooling" comprised of minor themes of "Better environment" referring to school atmosphere and openness, and "Better academics" referring to better classroom learning; and "Defensive measures" is comprised of minor themes of "Protects students" referring to enhancing physical and emotional wellbeing of students, and "Enforce rules" referring to emphasis that school rules must be followed.

** Major themes and minor themes are as follows: "Improvements needed" is comprised of minor themes "Perceived problems" referring to aspects of system of teachers and pedagogy or teaching that parents do not like and "What school needs" refers to parents suggesting improvements that would enhance quality of teachers and pedagogy or of teaching; and "Helps student outcomes" referring to results from teaching and pedagogy that improve student learning, work, and knowledge.

6   CLASS ANXIETY AND SCHOOL CHOICE

During the preliminary wave in spring 2016, I met with an assistant principal at a school that I was considering for inclusion in this study. While we talked in her office, a prospective parent walked through her open door and interrupted our conversation. I did not fully understand the verbal exchange between the assistant principal and the parent, but their physical posturing was unmistakable. The well-dressed mother was asking for a favor, and the assistant principal was putting her off. As the assistant principal later explained, the parent did not want her child to be assigned next year to one of the first-year classes that would have no grades (under a policy directive of the education ministry). The assistant principal said she told the parent that they would place her child in a class the same way they would place any child in a class. The mother had retreated quickly and quietly. The assistant principal then confessed that the school may lose many middle-class children next year because of the ungraded classes. I did not pick this school for the study, fearing few middle-class parents would be left there to interview.

This bold parent sought privilege, breaking cultural conventions in the process, though the attempt is understandable. Good grades are credentials that certify students as adept, enabling them to progress academically and vocationally. The education ministry issued the policy directive to reduce unnecessary competition and encourage fairness. But that policy rubs parts of the French middle class wrong, who want grades, and for whom competition over educational credentials recently has intensified (van Zanten 2003).

The interaction is about more than grades and social class. The interaction is potentially an example of middle-class anxiety over children's future. Drawing on Beck (1992), as well as others, Ball (2003) maintains that the middle class has become anxious because it fears heightened economic risk is eroding its ability to reproduce its class position for the next

generation, leading them to enforce social closure. Middle-class parents embrace school choice as a legitimate means to reserve the best schooling for their children, leveraging their economic and social capital in the process to push aside the working class.

This chapter takes a conceptual detour to examine an explanation other than race for school choice, middle-class parental anxiety. Two reasons make the detour essential. The first is that social class is considered in France the legitimate form of social stratification, not ethnicity or race. I thus need to understand how class is related to school choice before preceding to race. The second reason is that anxiety would appear to be highly relevant given the multiple events, as it came to be, that took place in France during the time of the interviews. Terrorism, economic malaise, political stagnation, and immigration may have increased parental anxiety, potentially changing middle-class schooling plans.

I approach this inquiry by asking how major events couched as global risk affect the parents and their schooling plans for their children. I am particularly interested in events with global implications in line with Beck (1992) that involve the economy, terrorism, environment, and politics, as well as one other, immigration. Building on Ball (2003), what I now want to know is whether middle-class anxiety translates into the trampling of minorities in blind pursuit of the best schooling. To that end, I split the inquiry into three parts. I want to know the effect of events on anxiety; the effect of that anxiety on parents; and the effect of anxiety on school plans.

This chapter produces evidence that anxiety, as defined here, does not lead to the blind trampling of the working class, or of minorities. Events produce graduated levels of anxiety among the parents. Anxiety as it exists usually results in the taking of ordinary, pragmatic steps. In response to environmental concerns, for example, parents sort recyclables carefully and remember to turn off the lights. Though they worry about the next generation, parents mostly did

not change their schooling plans. Though global risk may be reshaping national societies, as

Beck (1992) contends in his modernist, subjectivist theory, some national societies, at least as

evidenced among these parents, contain resilient cultures and ideologies that mediate such risk.

The progression toward the individualistic, the self-concerned, and the ambiguous, as Beck's

thesis would require, is but perhaps halting. These parents espouse a piece of an idea here but not

a piece there, resist this action but not that, or they accept nothing at all from this modernist

advance. Finally, and importantly, the parental accounts reveal individual dispositions that fall

on three spectrums. The first spectrum is from the philosophical to psychological; the second

from the collectivist to individualistic; and third is from the resolute to uncertain.

6.1   *Global Risk and School Choice*

Global risk is an amorphous concept that is difficult to operationalize concretely. To

Beck, modernity produces a risk society in which globalized events haunt national societies and

transform them structurally, following three axes of conflict, the environment, the financial

system, and terrorism (Beck 1992; Beck 2002). As Beck (1992) describes it, this form of modern

risk requires consciousness or awareness of otherwise hidden or nonspecific harms that occur

along the three axes. As a proxy for global risk, I ask instead about global, European, national,

and local news that parents may have heard that make them anxious.

At time of the interviews, much had happened in France. The interviews came after the

last major terrorist incident, the attack in Nice on National Day in July 2016 in which 86 died. A

series of terrorism included 17 deaths at the office of the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine in

January 2015 and the killing of 120 persons in northeast Paris that November (Erlanger and

Bennhold 2015; Judkis and Witte 2016; Rubin et al. 2016). The interviews also came before and

after the contentious French presidential election in which an antiimmigrant far-right candidate made it into the last round (Rubin 2017b). Elevated rates of unemployment continued to plague a difficult French economy (Horobin 2017). In December 2015, 196 countries concluded the COP 21 treaty on global warming, whose enactment the French celebrated the next year in a major Paris event (Mooney and Dennis 2016). Not only do these events bear on the global risks that Beck (1992; 2002) describes, they represent an incipient situation that Swidler (1986) refers to as an unsettled cultural period, as I propose in Chapter 2.

I became apprehensive about this line of inquiry on anxiety after the first interviews in fall 2016. The question *(One hears much about world, European, national, and local events. Do certain events make you anxious?)* elicited few specifics from respondents despite the events. In subsequent interviews in that wave and in the second wave in 2017, I added five probes. Three of the probes are the environment, the economy, and terrorism, following the axes of conflict of Beck (2002; 1992). I added the political situation because Beck (1992) points to it as an effect of the three axes, and because it was then also highly salient in France. I also inserted immigration, highly pertinent, too, but it is not one of Beck's axes. Immigration also is tied to the main research question of this study, race.

6.1.1   Anxiety over risks is graduated

With a qualitative study, I am of course interested in conceptualizing inductively from the accounts of the parents, not testing a hypothesis or theory. The global risk thesis serves to frame this qualitative inquiry from which I then conceptualize from parental accounts. It is not tested by the accounts. Ball's thesis as I build on it has three parts that direct the inquiry. The first part is the generation of anxiety. The second is the effect on individual lives and sense of security, and third part is the effect on parental schooling plans.

As far as the first part of the thesis is concerned, five themes emerge from parental accounts. The themes run from parents who feel much anxiousness to parents who feel none. The most anxious among them voice fear, as does this parent who talks about the terrorism.

> *M. Silvestre, a business executive with one child at Legacy, an Avoider*
> RESPONDENT: Yes, as we discussed earlier in the introduction, the terrorism today ... it's a real subject in France.
> INTERVIEWER: Explain?
> RESPONDENT: Because it's, it's in places … that are the foundation of the French Republic, school, because that's where you learn, where you are taught a certain number of things about time, about behavior, about the rules, uh, about subjects. So that, it conditions the future of our children, and so, in all that we see the degradation of society, and especially in France, the attacks. It's possible that someday something happens to children. What we have seen this summer for example in Nice, it is, it is families who have been affected who are absolutely, innocent from the point of view of the causes from which [the attack] ensued. And we are a bit helpless … We, we wonder.

Concerned about children, the parent has a tone of uncertainty ("wonder"). A sense of social breakdown and loss of trust also arises in this account that is at once psychological and individualistic ("helpless" and "disturbs me"). To Beck (2002), terrorism is an "uncontrollable risk" because it is politically constructed, lying outside of social boundaries. It erodes trust in fellow citizenry, non-nationals, and the political system. The idea that terrorism has frayed the social fabric is by no means universal in the accounts. In the second theme, equally anxious parents instead express resilience or resoluteness, as this parent, who begins to shift toward collectivist ("one") but remains more psychological ("scary").

> *Mme. Rodier, a professional with one child at Arche, an Adherent*
> So, one learns to live with it, but, uh, it's not easy, it's always, uh, it's always scary.

In the third theme, some parental accounts appear to be uncertain or ambiguous if events have raised their anxiety and they shift toward collectivist and philosophical dispositions. In the fourth theme, parents feel anxiety, but they dismiss it as minor. Events are not problems greater than any other, as with this parent.

> *Mme. Devereaux, a marketing executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent, speaking in English*
> I have read recently there is some research done in your country, and in Sweden, too, which highlights that the world is currently safer, much safer than it used to be. So, this is what I still want to hear and to take into account … I am much more afraid that my girls have a car accident or something like that than being shot down by a terrorist, which can also happen, but everything can happen, you know.

This parent is philosophical, collectivist, and resolute. She worries more about car accidents killing her children than terrorist gunfire. Anything is possible, and she has the scientific evidence. Finally, in the fifth theme, some parents feel no anxiety. Their accounts instead convey a sense of militancy, an abrupt, overt rejection of any effect, the same way that some parents greet the idea of school choice. Their responses are for the most part philosophical, collectivistic, and resolute. This response is in keeping with what would be expected from an Adherent, already adamant about having no school choice.

> *Mme. Jullien, a business employee with one child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> RESPONDENT: Eh, no. It's not anxiousness. I am more revolted, not even anguished.
> INTERVIEWER: Terrorism, immigration?
> RESPONDENT: No. No. I do not have anxiety.

The five graduated themes into which I rank the levels of anxiety range from "Created anxiety" to "No anxiety at all" in Table 6.1. Of all parental accounts, 59 percent express some level of anxiety and 27 percent reflect little to no anxiety. Given the differing ideological and

attitudinal roots of the conceptual types, the expectation is that adamant Adherents and Assenters would feel the least anxiety and less certain Appraisers and Avoiders would experience it the most. In fact, seven of the 11 parents who express some level of anxiety are Appraisers and Avoiders. Five of the eight parents who reflect little to no anxiety are Adherents and Assenters, whose ideological adamancy thus appears to carry dispositionally into resisting social fears. On the other hand, Appraisers cite a variety of events, including that of a pedophile who had hung out near one school, that are consistent with their valuation of practical conditions helpful to their children (or unhelpful here). The accounts suggest that parents respond to events in distinct ways, along spectrums of individual dispositions, reworking their effects on daily lives and in the larger society, as the types makes evident. The cultural thesis of Swidler (1986) is a cogent explanation. It holds that in unsettled periods, people "formulate, flesh out, and put into practice new habits of action" (1986, 279), as here, and the effects on ideology and action become clear.

6.1.2   *Probes for specific events draw varied responses*

Once I probe for specific events that this reworking of events is most visible. Parental accounts take several forms in response to the probe about anxiety over terrorism, for example. Here again, accounts range from the philosophical to the psychological, from the collectivistic to the individualistic, and from the resolute to the uncertain. The response of this parent is initially toward the psychological, individualistic, and uncertain.

> *Mme. Mani, mid-level professional with one child at Arche, an Appraiser*
> Terrorism, so, well, I'll tell you. It's true that it's anguishes me. I will say in all sincerity why. I am of Algerian origin. I lived during the decade of terrorism in Algeria, in the 90s. I escaped three times from bombs. I escaped an abduction by a terrorist. So, when there was … the attacks of 2015, one goes on and they become events that I managed to forget. To forget it, it's not the term … So, if you want,

the next day, the attacks of the month of November 2015, in fact, I took 24 hours, I stayed 24 hours in the house. I did not want to go out. I did not want to let my husband go out. I did not want to let my children go out. It's very, very scary. It took me, it plunged me back into what I had lived … So, I was scared for my kids. I was scared for me, too. I was afraid for my husband … but then I said, no. I managed to go forward. I have to live, it must be that my children live. We have to go forward because if that's what the goal of terrorism is, to terrorize me, to prevent me from living, I will not let these people stop us from living … and we will continue.

Concerned with family and children, the account at the end becomes resolute ("We will continue"). Other parents rework terrorism philosophically. As with Mme. Jullien earlier, this parent is resolute in tone, speaks collectively, and repudiates the individualistic and psychological as the parent recalls terrorism from the past.

Mme. Trudeau, a government employee with one child at Legacy, an Avoider. Terrorism, yes, it is. I was born and lived in Paris. So, for me, it's not something new, because in 1986 there was one bombing every two days in places I was visiting at that time. And after, in 1995 there were many, many attacks in 1995. In short, I do not remember the places, but it was also in the RER [commuter train], especially in 1995, whereas in 1986, it was in some stores. At that, I would say it is the inevitability. We cannot help it, we will not stop living … In addition, when I was in Paris, and there were bombings in '86 and '95. It was in places where I studied. So, I was quite surprised to see neighbors with children of 16 or 17 years old who did not understand that the school was not barricaded or such. I found their fear really very excessive ... I remember in 1986 there was a bombing on the Rue de Rennes … and I was there the previous Saturday. It continues with the attack of November 13th. On November 10, I was at *Place de la République* [near site of the attacks] smoking on the [cafe] terrace with a friend. So, that's what is.

This parent disapproves of parents who fear that the school is not a safe place ('their fear really very excessive"). Though Beck (2002) claims terrorism shakes social trust, the accounts

suggest that it is undissolved and that the parents are reweaving it on the personal and social level, I contend, more in line with Swidler (1986) than with a modernist, subjectivist perspective.

6.1.3   Anxiety over prospects of children

Economic conditions worry parents more when it comes to their children than when it comes to themselves. The empirical evidence supports that concern over children. The French middle class is more insular when it comes economic restructuring than in other developed countries, though that restructuring is also present in France. The French economy has been sluggish with elevated unemployment. The most severe joblessness is among youth and young adults, not among the middle-aged which these parents are mainly (Horobin 2017). Public policy furthers that insularity. The French middle class derives twice as much of its income from social supports than the U.S. middle class, supports that reduce medical expenses, subsidize child care, and pay for higher education (Charle 2002; Bigot et al. 2012).[21] Nevertheless, a segment of the French middle class believes it is losing ground. More than a quarter feel they became poorer during this century, for example (Bigot et al. 2012).

Of all the events, I would expect that the economic would have the most telling effect on parental schooling plans. And in fact, for some middle-class parents, their children's economic and occupational future does arouse intense anxiety, as with this parent.

> *Mme. Allard, a professional with one child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> On the economic crisis or unemployment (audibly inhales and exhales), we must
> see an end some way. I'm from a generation that has always experienced the
> crisis. [My daughter] has heard of the crisis ever since she is young, that she will

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[21] The argument as it is held to be in France is not so much if people are personally deserving of social supports, but whether their social and economic conditions merit additional social supports than others receive (Lamont 2000b; Lamont 2003; Lamont and Duvoux 2014).

enter a job market in crisis.

Yet, other parents, though interested in their children's plans and concerned over the lengthy effort required educationally, feel that their children will adapt.

Mme. Devereaux, marketing executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent, speaking mostly in English

The economy, the unemployment, *oui*, but I was talking with my mother you know a few weeks ago. She's now 90 years old. She said to me that when she was 13, the age of my daughter, World War II was just beginning. So, the economy, it was ever difficult. Okay, it's not easy [now], but I am confident that my children and all the children that need it will have the possibility to get a good job … I see that there are many parents who are anxious about the future of their children, but one must be confident ... I think that the major fear is that their children will have difficulties earning their living and getting a job. But what I would say, reading some of the research recently, is that young people today expect less from money than we did. They say, I don't need to have a car, I can just get a car with *Autolib*, this kind of service. So, maybe they will adapt and maybe that life may be more difficult than it was for us. But they will adapt…

Here, as earlier, this parent moves toward the philosophical, the collectivist, and the resolute in her response, "they will adapt," drawing again, as it is, on the research.

Parents readily tie their children's prospects to environmental risk. But the link to schooling plans is tenuous. The public consciousness is now about climate change, clearly a global risk and noticeable in weather. French consciousness on climate change is elevated because the COP 21 climate treaty was negotiated and celebrated in Paris, and because of many public policies put in place to reduce pollutants and conserve energy (Mooney and Dennis 2016).

For some parents, the environment is a risk that demands an urgent political response, especially because of their children, as this parent relates during an unseasonably hot day.

Mme. Mani, a mid-level professional with one child at Arche, an Appraiser
I give large place to ecology. Ah, yes. It's very important, I believe. … It's like the economy, that it must be reformed, and ecology, too. We have to do it, we have much to do because it's not normal. Uh, [the weather that day] is no longer like the first of July as of a few years ago, of about twenty years ago. No, it is summer, it's sunny and all that, but really, global warming has revealed its face … there is so much lobbying, there are so many financial issues … but we must, we must, we are at the point of no return here. We are at the corner … I did not like what became of the Paris 21 [treaty]. The United States, which is one of the most polluting countries on earth, also withdraws ... We must think about our children, must. We must not think about how much money it is, and all that. But, no, we must think about our children, we must do something.

Notably, the parent sees the economy and the environment at the same level of risk. Clearly, the response here is collective, steeped in a political resoluteness that borders on the philosophical rather than the psychological. More typically, though, the response to environmental risk is individualized, engaged with through daily life and actions, not through political resoluteness, as with the parent who describe how it changes his life.

M. Fresnel, a teacher with one child at Haven, an Appraiser
I ride my bike, I walk, or ride a scooter, but I'm not, I do not vote ecologist. Well, I have a behavior that some might call ecological, but because it suits me. If it was not inconvenient to use my car, I can use my car … The thing that suits me most is when going to the market is using my scooter or riding a bike because it's more convenient. But it's a pragmatic ecology, it's not a political ecology. And it's for me, I do not say to people, so, you have to do this, or you have to do that. I'm not saying you have to eat organic. … So, I do know in some ways to be environmentally friendly, but it's also, I know, how to say it, it's not a commitment to politicians. It's, it's a pragmatic way of life. It suits me to be an ecologist at times, but at times [I] take my car or go buy a new phone.

The three axes of conflict globally, the environment, the financial system, and terrorism are held to have calamitic effects on the national political system (Beck 1992; Beck 2002). Much in the French political situation corresponds with the political disorder that Beck contends is a consequence of global risk. The political system is paralyzed, shaken by regular waves of change that competing democratic and non-democratic global movements that appear in risk society bring about (Beck 1992). Notably, the contentious French elections in 2017 led to the election of a political independent as president, Emmanuel Macron (Hoyo and Chandler 2017; Rubin 2017b; Witte et al. 2017). Macron defeated decisively a hard-right antiimmigrant opponent, Le Pen (Witte et al. 2017). The parents are clearly pleased with Le Pen's defeat though uncertain about the politics and policies of the victor. But again, the link between the political and schooling is tenuous, and none of the parents make that link in their accounts.

6.1.4   *No anxiety over immigration*

Immigration is not one of the three axes of conflict. I add it for two reasons. The first reason is because of the massive, on-going migration into the European Union from the Near East and Africa. The Syrian refugees who fled civil war and the African migrants who escaped famine constituted the largest global population displacement since World War II (Gerhards 2008; Bouvier 2012; UNHCR 2015). The second reason is that feelings about immigrants are tied to the research question of this study, race, many of the immigrants are from Africa. I assume, too, that immigration would raise concerns about its impact on schools.

Most parents reject that immigration is a cause for anxiety (see Table 6.1). Some even advocate for more immigration, though others are lukewarm in embracing immigrants. Feelings are typically mixed but supportive, even among Avoiders, as with this parent.

Mme. Trudeau, a government employee with one child at Legacy, an Avoider
For me, immigration is inevitable unless the countries of Europe decide to give
much more money, uh, to economic groups that develop those countries, the poor
foreign countries, and not to the governments to expend, for example, in the case
for dictators. Then, for immigration, I myself am of immigrant origin. So, that's
what can be scary. That would be the fact that people do not want to assimilate,
whereas in France, it is something that was very important, that is to say, that
today, or rather before, someone who came to France was very eager to learn
French and to integrate into society. Now, there is a talk by politicians who say
that immigrants do not want to do that, and that they want to stay as they are. I
think it's true for a minority of immigrants, but most want to integrate …

Integrating new people, giving people a chance, but not embracing cultural diversity
underlies many accounts. In addition, many parents point to the economic and political
conditions that cause refugees rather than to problems that refugees supposedly bring to the host
country. Moreover, the accounts are toward the philosophical, collectivistic, and resolute in the
dispositional spectrums. Finally, the obvious assumption is that parents on the political right are
more likely to voice objections to immigration, as well as are parents in homogeneous
Riviereville. The opposite is true here. Politically conservative parents raise fewer concerns than
politically liberal parents, and parents who live in diverse Petiteville speak out more on
immigration than parents in Riviereville (data not shown).

Van Dijk (1993) holds that reservations and opposition to immigration are signals of
European racism, especially for social elites. Social desirability bias may have entered the
accounts here because the parents had voted recently to reject the antiimmigrant stance of far
right, then a hot election issue. Being antiimmigrant and thus racist would not be how many of
the parents would want to be seen in view of the election. Overall, however, immigration is not
seen as major source of economic and social problems. They do not tie immigration to schooling

plans. In a sense, they hold immigration as good because more people will be like us, living the French way of life, but not because it brings diversity and richness to the society.

Not much variation exists in degrees of response to specific events (Table 6.1). When I probe for specific sources of anxiety, the number of parents who say it is both the environment or terrorism is high and is comparable (the responses are inclusive of each other). The economy ranks lower. As might be expected, given their criticalness, more Avoiders identify all three axes, the environment, the financial system, and terrorism, as creating anxiety, as well as more of them are just anxious. Events and risk drive this type more than the others, and not unexpectedly.

6.2   Some Effects on the Lives of Parents

Ball's thesis depends on these anxieties having effects. To feel anxiety about events is one thing, but for them to alter how people live and what they think is another thing. The source of anxiety that most affects these parents' sense of security and lives is terrorism. It causes them to be cautious and avoid places. The other is the environment. They conserve resources and recycle waste. Economic anxiety affects their lives less. Yet, it is the anxiety that is logically linked to parental fears about their children's future and to changes in schooling plans.

The effect of terrorism on children (and families) is prominent in parental accounts. For example, this parent describes a cathartic event that she and her children experienced that relieved some of the emotional impact of events on her youngest child.

> *Mme. Garreau, a service worker with two children at Legacy, an Avoider*
> Yes. We have changed our way of life, the way of thinking about terrorism
> because a year ago we were in Paris not very far from the attacks, at a theater, but
> fortunately for us it was not the theater [attacked]. … My youngest son did not
> want to go back to Paris anymore, but we did, we pushed him and his brother to

return to Paris, to go on the *Place de la Bastille*[22], where many events happened, to try to exorcise this, uh, this fear that he had. We had a rather special moment because, uh, there were many people who put candles there, with many flowers. And above all, there was already those who were there just to give free hugs because in those moments we need to be supported.

They received "free hugs" and lit candles. Notably, the parental account is weighted toward the psychological and the resolute. For many parents, however, environmental concerns are changing their lives and those of their children. Other than personal responses to anxiety, a few parents move to action, not to modify daily activities to avoid terrorism or change household routines to reduce waste, but by signing petitions and through giving money to causes.

> *Mme. Gaume, conservatory music teacher with one child at Legacy, an Appraiser*
> Yes, ecology. I'm careful. I walk, I bike. I'm part of the MAP [a local food producers' group] … I'm signing petitions. I'm careful. I am careful. And I would like to participate more in, to participate more with associations to fight more … I have had trouble finding time for doing more in our daily lives. We pay attention, yes, to the ecology. … Otherwise it's all about ecology, yes, I try, I give money to associations, to help associations. There is, ah, ah! I have been already giving assistance to ATD Fourth World [a global antipoverty organization], Greenpeace, and the third, the Doctors of the World, that's it. I give a little, a little money.

As Table 6.2 shows, 14 of the 29 parents say the global, European, national, and local events have had no effect on the way that they live their lives. Nine of the 29 say the events have altered the way they live. The differences among types are substantial, and again linked to ideologies and attitudes. Nine of the 14 parents who say events affect their lives not at all are Adherents and Assenters, in line with their response to anxiety. Seven of the nine parents who

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[22] The parent may have misspoken. The massacre occurred near the *Place de la République*, where commemorative flowers and candles were placed after the tragedy.

say events alter the way they live are Appraisers and Avoiders, again in line with their response on anxiety, which is generally tied to attitudes. The division between resoluteness (Adherents and Assenters) and uncertainty (Appraisers and Avoiders) is apparent, with Adherents and Avoiders furthest apart, an apparent dichotomy that exists between ideology and attitude.

6.3   Limited Effect on the Schooling of Children

The third and most important part of Ball's thesis is the effect on schooling, and the effect that is most relevant here. They are not much affected. Of the 29 parents, 14 say that they made no change in schooling ambitions, as in Table 6.3. These parents are notably emphatic that events have not affected schooling plans for their children.

Mme. Fetique, a business employee with one child at Legacy, an Assenter
No influence, no ambition educational. In fact, nothing has changed.

Some parents are not as straightforward. The next parent goes to some length to explain to the interviewer why French parents react and think as they do, connecting it to Enlightenment philosophers and French views on child-raising, in responding to the question if schooling ambitions have been changed.

M. Serre, business executive with two children at Arche, an Appraiser, speaking in English
We want our kids to do what they want to do. We would like them to enjoy the future professional life. We know it's not easy, employment is important in France right now…I think just like we did when we were younger they would have to build a future. What we can offer them now is a proper school with good teachers where they can grow and move from there. So, it's more…you know give kids, or us parents give them the … I don't know if we can say the rules of life, but the way to behave as human beings in a proper human, humane environment. I mean

it's going back to Rousseau's and Voltaire's times, what makes people a proper

person in the today's environment …

The first parent responds adamantly, no. The second offers explanation of why it is no.

Notably, for the second parent, M. Serre, the schooling goal is to forge a "proper" person and a

"humane" society. These responses underscore major differences in French and U.S. child-

raising practices. As M. Serre explains, French parents typically do not actively manage their

children's educational careers as do U.S. and British middle-class parents (Reay 2000; Vincent

2001; Vincent and Ball 2007; Lareau 2011; Lareau and Cox 2011). They instead advise their

children, act as sounding boards, and support children's educational and occupational

aspirations. The way the parents engage with children is rooted in French child-raising practices,

founded on forming autonomous and rational children at a relatively early age (Le Pape and van

Zanten 2009; Druckerman 2012). French parents usually do not micromanage children's daily

activities, schooling, and everyday problems, as U.S. middle-class parents are more apt to do

(Lareau 2002; Bodovski and Farkas 2008; Cheadle and Amato 2010; Lareau 2011). At the

playground, for example, French parents do not "hover" over children as U.S. parents do, cast as

overparenting in U.S. media (Gibbs 2009), and characterized as such in some scholarly work

(Sutterby 2009; Bristow 2014). French parents let children deal with their own problems,

scrapes, and disputes (Le Pape and van Zanten 2009; Druckerman 2012). Though French child-

raising practices are evolving, they appear resistant to the diffusion of U.S. and British child-

raising practices (Gombert 2008; Le Pape and van Zanten 2009; Druckerman 2012).

Accordingly, a regular theme within parents' responses is that children should be able to

live their own lives and decide their own careers, "set sail," as with this parental response to the

interview question about schooling ambitions.

M. Fresnel, teacher with one child at Haven, an Appraiser

No, no. The question does not arise. Uh, no, uh, no, no. There is no, there is, there is no influence between the political events, the economic events, and the ambitions that I can have for my child … First of all, it is also the ambitions that he himself can have for him, that is to say. I have a doctorate and my wife is on a graduate level. So, we did a lot of studies. So, we're attached to that, but if my child wants to be a carpenter, work with wood, wants to be a florist…if he gets a profession that makes him happy and that allows him to live properly, well great, but I have no ambitions for my child ... I do not have a plan for the future of my son or, or my daughter, for that matter. First of all, they themselves have to get an education that suits them and in which they manage to be satisfied with it, even if it is very intellectual studies or very manual studies. Me, I do not have any, I do not have, how to say it, scorn. I think that a good baker is better than a bad lawyer. A good painter is better than a bad surgeon. So, that's it. And if he is then happy in his life being plumber and a bus driver, it's better than being unhappy in your life by being a CEO of a big company. So, for me, there is social success, and that's important, but it's less important than family success, family and personal success. That's it.

Children can be happy as plumbers and bus drivers. They do not have to follow in their parents' footsteps, reproducing their social class. Parents do use family resources to widen children's horizons, however. For example, some parents want their children to learn languages and have experiences abroad as a preparation for future life, and careers, as with this parent.

M. Silvestre, a business executive with one child at Legacy, an Avoider

Our daughter had classes, a bilingual, that means that from the middle school, she could learn two languages … and why we want that, it's because we want the ambition actually to open up to the rest of the world … the country, Europe, the continent, the world, it is an opportunity for children. Because we travel, travel a lot, and we have taken our children since they were very little...So obviously, it plays on them. It was very interesting, if I can give an example…when we went to

Africa. It was sub-Saharan, black Africa, under the start of the Sahara. So, we did

visits to the schools to follow the teaching. It's interesting for little children to be

with little children in another context. In school, uh, some students were all sitting

on benches, but your feet were in the dirt...It's things like that that are interesting

for them to see, the luck they have when they come back home. That's it.

The parent then continues that it is not necessarily all hands off, and that parents also

attend to the direction of children's educational progress.

I think in a rather limited way, it's going to make us even more vigilant and be

more demanding with your work, even better to succeed in the school system, so

that you can succeed in life after studies. It is essentially like that, we want more

rigor and more attention.

The parents are "vigilant" and "demanding," seeking more educational "rigor." Parents

strike up general conversations with their children about education, though not to push them into

specific educational or career trajectories. As with U.S. and British parents, they sometimes

engage children with emotional capital, though limited. Traces of emotional capital (Reay 2000),

as well as concerted cultivation (Lareau 2011), appear in this parent's account.

Mme. Halphen, a professional with two children at Arche, an Assenter
That's what influences it, accentuates the discourse that we can have in the fact

that education is very important, but also openness [and] curiosity, understanding

of the world around us. This is very important, and it is highly key to children's

abilities being able to evolve later in the time. … So, concerning my children, for

example, they have skills, that are enrolled in the bilingual class and for English,

German, and Latin. My daughter goes to high school next year. It will be difficult.

She will take the European class and prepare for Sciences Po [an esteemed social

sciences school in Paris with a tough admissions test].

Five of the nine parents whose responses indicate a change in schooling plans are

Assenters, the less empowered parents. Moreover, the accounts of most Assenters indicate that

they stress to their children the need to land good jobs, rather than for the children to do what they might enjoy. This type's weaker social position relative to other parents appears to drive them to hyper-focus on educational and occupational outcomes for their children. For example, none suggest that gaining experiences, through travel or meeting others, is important. Though many claim they have not altered their schooling plans, Appraisers offer little explanation in the way of why. With the exception of Assenters, most parents claim that career ambitions are up to the children and they should live the life they want to live. This response is typical among Adherents, who are adamant about the Republican model of schooling. They appear more confident that life for their children will naturally and positively flow from such schooling.

Following Ball (2003), Raveaud and van Zanten (2006) contend in a study of French and British school parents that anxiety increasingly plays a role in schooling ambitions in both countries. On one hand, parents want their children to be happy in school and learn, yet, on the other hand, they want the school to provide their children with a pathway to a meaningful and satisfying career. In France, educational credentials are highly important in the labor market (Dubet, Duru-Bellat and Vérétout 2010). That alone is a source of parental anxiety, intensifying competition around educational qualifications, especially within the private sector (van Zanten 2003). Lamont and Duvoux (2014) claim that status anxiety among the French middle class has increased, causing parents to engage in strategies to prevent downward mobility of their children. In this study, however, parents juggle parental desires over where in life their children should set sail with traditional child-raising practices that call for children to set sail themselves.

I make four points on parental anxiety and schooling plans. First, despite this unsettled period of French society, the level of anxiety at the time of the interviews cannot be considered exceptional. Second, parental disinclination toward popularized Anglo-Saxon child-raising

practices appears to mediate the effect of anxiety and events on schooling. Third, the heightened level of anxiety among U.S. parents on schooling, at least as based on the literature (Lareau 2011; Cucchiara 2013; Roda and Wells 2013; Lareau 2014), is not replicated to any large degree in the accounts of the French parents. Fourth, and most importantly, though Ball (2003) claims risk permeates school choice, that author's argument appears more relevant to the British and U.S. context than to the French context. Anglophone societies may well have distinct cultural and structural foundations, as it is, but not generally to be found in Francophone societies.

6.4   Summary and Conclusion

Ball (2003) contends that global risk is partly responsible for the ferocity by which middle-class parents engage in school choice. This thesis depends of course on the proposition that global risk does exist, affects middle-class parents, and their schooling decisions. Parental accounts reveal that global risk, as conceived of as news events, does create anxiety among parents. While the accounts reveal that events lead to a level of anxiety for the parents, justifiably so given much of the news, that anxiety fails to translate into changes in schooling plans, despite parental their concern over children. Parental accounts suggest that these parents possess patterns of reasoning and behavior that gravitate toward different dispositions along a spectrum. They are philosophical to psychological, collectivistic to individualistic, and resolute to uncertain. These parents appear in no straight-line movement toward the individualistic, the self-concerned, and the ambiguous that a subjectivist, modernist perspective as Beck's would entail. I contend that the parental accounts are more in line with the culturalist approach of Swidler (1986) in which a conscious reworking ideology and practice is more evident among these parents as they contend with the unsettledness of their situation. Finally, the parental accounts reveal stances on social and political issues that are neither radical nor reactionary, and perhaps more in keeping with

conventional French thought rather than stances that are aberrant.

When it comes to schooling plans, the parental accounts reflect a collective, deeply embedded cultural sense that though anxiety exists, it does not change the importance or value of being educated, of being a proper person happy with their job. The accounts are not overtly reflective of a view that education is a means of social advantage. Though the parents are engaged in social reproduction, it is couched mostly in hopeful language characteristic of French epicurean culture, a satisfactory life, not in the raw language of class struggle or social closure. The respondents invest in children so that they can, in the words of the parents, "take sail."

Though this is not a test of theory, the accounts highlight a problem with Beck's theory. They indicate that among these parents, culture and ideology mediate the movement toward a risk society, as conceptualized here. Though individualization, psychologization, and uncertainty are apparent, as Beck holds will eventually dominate modern societies, the philosophical, the collectivistic, and resolute are too apparent among these parents.[23] Hall and Lamont (2013a) point to this same phenomenon in the effects of neoliberalism on societies that resist or modify its advance. The authors contend that societies possess a "collective imagery" that supplies their members, with beliefs about the society and information about behavior that deserves respect. It may be that such a collective imagery, found in culture and ideology, mediates how French society absorbs global risk and develops as a risk society.

The evidence here is that anxiety has not led middle-class parents to blindly to trample minorities wholesale in pursuit of the best schooling. Yet, parents have sought and won class advantage by what schools their children attend and the courses in which they are enrolled.

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[23] Rasborg (2018) in fact points to this unresolved tension between social reproduction and change in Beck's work that is reflected here through the parental accounts.

Finally, when it comes to risk, variation is evident among the conceptual types. Two are important. Anxiety and its effects on lives is more common for Appraisers and Avoiders than for Adherents and Assenters. The latter gravitate on the dispositional spectrum toward the philosophical, collectivistic, and resolute. Of types, more Assenters are concerned to what happens to their children, perhaps because of their weaker social position, while more Adherents appear to trust the system to deliver their children into worthwhile careers without intervention.

Having made this essential detour into class and anxiety, I turn in the next chapter to the explanation which this study chapter-by-chapter is driving toward—race. Though the topic is not easy to address because of French conventions and ideology, I explore it by examining the use of language linked to race in parental accounts, and by asking if parents believe that France and the United States are similar in racial ideas and in the extent of ethnic place and school segregation.

Table 6:1: World, National, and Local Events in the News That Create Anxiety

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
*Themed level of responses of parents from interview discourse**					
Much anxiety	33%	25%	50%	40%	38%
A bit of anxiety	17%	38%	0%	40%	21%
Uncertain or ambiguous	0%	13%	20%	20%	14%
Really not much anxiety	17%	0%	10%	0%	10%
No anxiety at all	33%	25%	20%	0%	17%
Causes of anxiety†					
Environment	83%	75%	70%	80%	76%
Terrorism	50%	75%	70%	100%	72%
Economy	50%	50%	50%	80%	55%
Political	33%	25%	50%	20%	34%
Other**	0%	13%	40%	0%	17%
Immigration	33%	25%	30%	0%	24%
Immigration not a cause	50%	50%	30%	30%	45%

* Themed levels are as follows: "Much anxiety" is direct yes answer; "A bit of anxiety" is qualified yes or otherwise indirect positive answer; "Uncertain or ambiguous" is answer that is neither positive or negative or doesn't answer question; "Really not much anxiety" is qualified no answer or otherwise indirect negative answer; and "No anxiety at all" is direct no answer.
† Percentages total more than 100 percent because of multiple responses.
** Unspecific, varied answers.

Table 6:2: Events Affect Way Lives Life

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Themed responses if events affected way lives life from interviews*					
Not affected us at all	67%	63%	30%	40%	48%
Altered way we live	17%	13%	50%	40%	31%
Perhaps affected us some	17%	25%	20%	20%	21%
Percentage positive responses on what events affect life**					
Terrorism	33%	50%	40%	60%	45%
Ecology	50%	50%	30%	40%	41%
Economy	17%	0%	10%	0%	7%

* Themed responses are as follows: "Not affected us at all" is a direct no answer; "Altered way we live" are answers in which specific effects are given; and "Perhaps affected us some" are off-hand answers with few specifics. No parent answered that it had no effect on lives.

** Only three axes of conflict shown. Other responses are minor or none.

Table 6:3: Events Affect Schooling Ambitions for Children

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5*	29*
Themed responses on parental schooling ambitions for children†					
Changed our ambitions	17%	63%	20%	20%	28%
Ambitions changed some	33%	13%	20%	0%	21%
No change in our ambitions	50%	25%	60%	60%	48%
Themed responses to views on schooling children**					
Their life to lead	83%	13%	20%	40%	34%
Emphasize good jobs	0%	50%	20%	0%	21%
Emphasize experiences	33%	0%	10%	20%	14%
Other	0%	25%	0%	40%	14%
Devote emotional capital	0%	25%	0%	20%	10%

* One parental non-response for themed response on parental schooling ambitions.

† Themed responses are as follows: "Changed our ambitions" is positive answer or in which parents give examples of how schooling is changed; "Ambitions changed some" is off-hand positive answer with few specifics; and "No change in our ambitions" is direct no answer.

** Responses total more than 100 percent because of multiple answers. Themed responses to views are as follows: "Their life to lead" is let children decide without parental intervention; "Emphasize good jobs" is to suggest to children to focus on job that makes them happy and financially adequate; "Emphasize experiences" is parental attempt to suggest or provide broadening experiences; "Other" is unspecific and minor responses; and "Devote emotional capital" is intensive parental efforts to guide their children to acceptable schools and careers.

7   RACE AND SCHOOL CHOICE

The student stood tall and silently as he was berated. He had not brought his math book to class, and the teacher had launched into a harangue over the student's failure to follow rules. "Why did you not call your mother?" The teacher took the student's agenda, flopped it on his desk, and hastily wrote a disciplinary note in it. This class was like no other that I observed in this study. The teacher was an old-school *professeur*. Decades ago, possibly when this older man had begun to teach, this conduct was not uncommon in French classrooms. He reacted critically to students who answered questions incorrectly. Toward the end of class, when students did not offer any answers, he insinuated the class was stupid. The largely ethnic class was notably disorderly. Students fooled around; they exchanged banter. My field notes contain two other observations about the student subjected to the teacher's ire. He looked older than his classmates, possibly from having been held behind. The student also was clearly of African ancestry.

Researching race in France is not easy. Legal barriers prohibit collecting data about race. Prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology limit what and how race can be discussed. Though culture, religion, and social class are social distinctions in France, only the latter is held to be legitimate form of social stratification. As in the incident above, these limitations and distinctions cloud what is before the researcher. For example, did the incident demonstrate racism in action, or was it an outburst from a frustrated teacher? The teacher promotion system may have stranded this older teacher in a marginal middle school because of his pedagogical pigheadedness, and then the principal has assigned him "difficult" classes. The question in this study of course is not that of race in France, of race in the classroom, or in the school yard, but the role of race in school choice among middle-class parents. Researching that is difficult because a multitude of factors cloud.

7.1   The Approach to Race

This chapter is central to the question this study poses about the role of race in French school choice. In the previous chapter, I took a necessary conceptual detour to examine the role of global risk and parental anxiety in school choice. Though varied somewhat by the four types, parental anxieties largely did not translate into changes in children's schooling plans, following the theories of Ball (2003) and Beck (1992). Instead, these parents exhibit complicated and intertwined patterns of thinking and behavior that fall along three spectrums of individual dispositions, philosophical to psychological, collectivistic to individualistic, and resolute to uncertain. The question that remains is, what is the role of race in school choice?

In Chapter 5, I find that parents only twice bring up mix on their own as a criterion in school choice, though they are split over its importance when I raise it as criterion. In Chapter 6, many of the parents reject the idea that immigrants are a cause for anxiety. Feelings are on immigrants are generally supportive. The evidence at this point is these parents display no ferocity in school choice that suggests that anxiety over class reproduction leads to trampling blindly over minorities to obtain the best schooling. Parents have achieved social advantage, though, by which schools the children attend and in which courses they are enrolled.

The U.S. sociological literature establishes that race has a strong hand in parental decisions about children's schooling (Saporito and Lareau 1999; Goyette 2008; Mickelson et al. 2008; Goyette et al. 2012; Saporito and Hanley 2014). U.S. schools remain highly segregated by race and ethnicity, perhaps even more so than when racial segregation was legally practiced (Orfield and Frankenberg 2014; Reardon and Owens 2014). Racial attitudes affect parental beliefs about what schools are considered desirable (Goyette 2008; Mickelson et al. 2008; Roda and Wells 2013; Saporito and Hanley 2014). I cannot turn to a similar body of French literature,

however, because of prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political

ideology around race limit research and the collection of racial data (van Zanten 2006).

I approach this topic from several directions. Following Bonilla-Silva (2013), I attend to

how the parents see race within the French society, the language they employ on race, and the

explanations they use to explain societal outcomes. The questions are structured, too, to give

parents an opening to explain how the countries have come together on race and segregation

through the diffusion of social ideas in line with Omi and Winant (2015). Given the deeply

imbedded social and ideological limits around race in France, the topic is not one that can be

approached directly because of social desirability. As I note in Chapter 2, I cannot simply ask

parents about the role race plays in schooling decisions or probe too deeply into family behavior.

I approach this topic instead through three open-ended questions that ask parents to compare the

United States and France on attitudes and segregation. I use the phrase *couleur de peau* (color of

the skin) to avoid direct racial terminology, and then refer to ethnicity in the questions about

place and school segregation. Using parents as sociological informants on French society, I take

up the issue of race subtly, listening carefully to how they understand race, use its language, and

to what they attribute societal outcomes.

Despite my approach, parents sometimes hesitated to answer, especially the first question

that asks parents to compare the United States and France on attitudes around the *couleur de

peau*. They use interjections as *pfft* and *wow*. One felt it was still too personal:

> *M. Silvestre, a business executive with one child at Legacy, an Avoider*
> A question like this is very particular when you ask it in France … We talk about
> people, we do not talk about us. It's very general.

Sometimes their responses are inarticulate, perhaps either because the questions are

difficult to answer given prevailing conventions and the dominant ideology or because parents

have no thought-out, pat answers to deliver on issues of race. In addition, a limitation of this research strategy is that parents may not be answering how they see the differences between France and the United States from what they know but answering from negative sentiments they harbor about the United States and its global economic and cultural hegemony (Lamont 2000a; Tin 2008). These sentiments are real in France, often cast as anti-Americanism. However, they are infrequent and not evident to any large degree in the interviews.

Overall, the parents display reasonable knowledge of the United States on racial matters. For example, parents immediately refer to differences that exist between the countries on such matters as the use of official categories of race and the different histories of race.

> *Mme. Bossuet, a doctoral student with one child at Legacy, an Assenter*
> In the United States, it's necessarily much more marked because they define
> people according to their racial origin when filling out forms, while in France that
> does not exist. In France, we are not going to ask if you are of Vietnamese origin
> ... I believe, therefore, that there's already a mentality. I think also there is a
> history of racism … that is very present in the United States. In France, we're not
> going to talk the same way, which does not mean that it's not important. We're
> going to talk about the suburbs, we are going to talk about religious problems, and
> the difference between communities.

The collection of racial data is forbidden in France, not only on school forms, but in the national census and in surveys, which means that racial data are unavailable (Simon 2008b; Tin 2008; Simon 2011). The purpose of the restriction on racial data is to prevent the validation of racial concepts through official categories, as happens in the United States (Simon 2008a). Moreover, the legacy of Marxian philosophy means that social class is the only legitimate form by which social stratification is to be understood (Lamont 2000b; van Zanten 2006; Lamont and Duvoux 2014), and not by ethnicity or race.

In addition, the fact that these parents broach the historical differences between France

and the United States is not to be downplayed. France does not have a lengthy history of

legalized and violent internal racial subjugation as the United States. Since the late 19th century,

and particularly since World War II, public policies have largely worked to stymie racialization,

not to promote it, while the United States has promoted racialization for much of its existence, a

nation that is arguably hyper-racialized (Alba and Foner 2015; Omi and Winant 2015). Social

and political institutions channel the course of racial socialization in a different direction in

France than in the United States where such socialization remains intense and promotes

racialization (Winant 2009; Bonilla-Silva 2013).

This is not to obscure individual or group racism in France or the country's long and

lamentable colonial legacy. France did not permanently abolish racialized colonial slavery until

1848, and though France never allowed slaves inside its boundaries at any point, the country still

profited from when slavery was present in its colonies (Fredrickson 2005). Bonilla-Silva (2013)

contends that Americans use slippery language to evade direct racial references, if not obscure

racism, or what he calls the "now you see it, now you don't" persistence of race. I contend in this

chapter that given the parental accounts and how France and the United States diverge in their

cultural and racial legacies, these French parents do not obscure the existence of race as a social

distinction as much as they are unable to recognize its import as a social distinction. They instead

engage in "how you see it, how you don't."

7.2   Differences Between the Countries on Racial Attitudes

When it comes to addressing how the parents see race in French society, several parents

are not sure how to answer the first question comparing France and the United States on racial

attitudes. While some deny the countries' similarities, others equivocate or dodge by not giving

direct answers. Even as they respond, some flit from one thought to another, hem-and-haw, even if they had been previously articulate in the interviews. This parent slips between French and English in her answer. She is unsure if France and the United States are similar on racial attitudes because it is unclear who is the racialized "other."

> *Mme. Devereaux, a marketing executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> I think, uh, I think ... I think it's, wait, less in France than in the United States no doubt, but we do not have the same story. But in France, too, in fact, it's a criterion that people watch. But it's not so much a question of color ... It's more a question of, uh, *pfft*. It's a blend. In fact, there are people, for example, if there is a child who is Asian at school, it's just normal. Nobody will say, ah, he's a Vietnamese, or I don't know. Okay? But then, if he's from Morocco or from Africa, people will say, *ahhh*! So, this is the problem, it's not a problem of skin color, but it's of specifically targeting some [but not others].

Of all the parents, 34 percent deny the countries are similar, as Table 7.1 shows. Others equivocate or dodge, which I theme as unsure or other. Only two parents say the countries are similar. Two notable differences in responses exist among the four types, which are not otherwise predictive. Five of the eight Assenters deny that France and the United States are similar. The rest are unsure. Assenters also elaborate less in their responses. Either they are less observant on the issues of race or they are less willing to share their observations to an interviewer. Regardless of which way, that aligns with the thesis that Assenters are less empowered than other parents. In addition, no Avoider denies the nations are similar. They are more likely to equivocate or are unsure about the similarity. Only one (and an Appraiser) believes that the two countries are similar. Avoiders appear in a quandary on how to respond given the highly negative assessment in France of the United States on issues of race on one side and given how they themselves perceive the society around them, which tends to be

individualistic and attitudinal, on the other side. This is an issue on which they are edgy. As such, they may be torn between the heavy hand of what is conventionally and ideologically proper and their own sentiments.

The one Appraiser who agrees the countries are similar answers straightforwardly, that color does matter in France. When a person is white, which she carefully makes parenthetical, hewing to language conventions, it has a predictable result.

> *Mme. Mani, a mid-level professional with one child at Arche, an Appraiser*
> I would say that, uh, a white person … in quotation marks. And, lo and behold, you will have more luck, for example, than a person of color for the same job, and all that. For example, finding work.

The parent was born in North Africa but is easily passable as white. The remark hints of white privilege. Other parents, not sharing Mme. Mani's background, do not draw a direct line between color and outcomes, but they instead turn to other explanations of differences in social outcomes. This teacher, who dodges the question, claims color is not a factor locally, and then switches from the effect of color to that of parenting on academic outcomes.

> *M. Fresnel, a teacher with one child at Haven, an Appraiser*
> We have a city that is very multiethnic. So, I think the skin color in the town is, how to say to it, multiethnic, both for students as for teachers. So, I think whatever is the skin color … so maybe there are people, yes, who give importance to the skin color, but I think that are very few. And me, I think that here, in the case of Centreville, I think that, that this question is very minor. This question, the skin color, is because of course we are in a city where there are many ethnic differences. In other cities, it would probably be different, but in Centreville, and I think it is not, it is not. I, as a teacher, actually realize that the skin color is much less important for children than the importance that parents give to their children, if the parents are attentive to the schooling of their children, if the parents care what the school is doing with their children. It is an undeniable factor of success,

whatever the skin color, that the parents are a doctor or, uh, unemployed, that the parents are very intellectual, or the parents are [not]. If the parents are attentive to their children, there is a good chance that they will succeed. I see as a teacher, on the other hand, some parents who are uninterested in schooling, parents who are distant from their children, who have no time to devote to their children. This is what produces many of the difficulties for a child.

Having taught for 20 years, this parent interprets different schooling outcomes as a parenting problem. Though Appraisers do not stand out much compared to other parents (see Table 7.1), more do draw on their attitudes, such as, that good parenting is key to school success.

This Avoider, who dodges the question, similarly draws on first-hand experience, though she responds reluctantly. She relates an incident with racial overtones that she treats as telling, though also as humorous and ironic.

Mme. Trudeau, a government employee with one child at Legacy, an Avoider
RESPONDENT: (Pause.) Difficult to answer this question. Yeah, yeah, okay. (Pause.) I would say that here in Riviereville there is little diversity, though the question arises anyway because there are people who are Indian, there are some Africans, there are some North Africans. (Pause.) There are indeed some people for whom it will be important. (Pause.) Yes, I have a really fun thing to tell.
INTERVIEWER: It's difficult?
RESPONDENT: Yes, but it's interesting. For example, my son told me that in *collège* there was a new education counselor. He came home and said, "Mom, there's a new education counselor," and, "She's very short, and when she stands in the middle of the sixth grade, she seems like a student, does not even stand out." The mother of another child I know told me her son told her that there was a new education counselor, and she was black.
INTERVIEWER: Yes.
RESPONDENT: (Laughs.)
INTERVIEWER: Okay.
RESPONDENT: I did not know what to say. Okay. Okay. So, yes, there's

something in that, it makes a difference when this child noticed that she was
black, and my son noticed that she was very short, without saying she was black.

The nervous laugh suggests that despite the humor of these two interactions, the irony discomforts her. She appears to be juggling an ideological commitment to the non-existence of a racial social distinction, a "collective fiction," with how people around her experience and describe racial characteristics. But as she later relates in the interview, race is there, hidden, but anti-racist attitudes are growing, especially among the young.

We do not see it very much in Riviereville because I think that … I'm going to
talk about people…there are people who are racist, that's for sure, for sure. They
have not shown themselves too much. (Laughs). There are fewer children, though,
who show racism. They get really snubbed now from what my son told me, that is
to say, for the present, it's frowned upon to be racist.

Parents provide only a few other examples of race. This Avoider tells a very different story, however, about how the child of a French-born friend of hers was the subject of racism, but in the sense of "reverse racism" as it is termed in the United States.

Mme. Bartillon, a business manager with one child, at Legacy, an Avoider
I have a friend who lives … north of Paris in Argenteuil. I once lived in
Argenteuil. And his daughter's high school area, it has an average *collège* …
When she got there in her class, she was the only white blonde with blue eyes and
she suffered racism from other kids. So, like, it's two ways for that…

The story is second-hand, and it ignores the power of her middle-class friend to escape such a neighborhood, which she herself has done by moving to Riviereville. Other than to affirm the existence of racism, to propose other factors affecting outcomes, and to provide examples of racism, some parents curtly note that they are not racist, a response that mimic the "not me" response of Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2013), not unlike this Adherent who dodged the question.

Mme. Jullien, a business employee with one child at Legacy, an Adherent.

I am not personally bothered by people's skin color. I even rub shoulders, uh, I have friends of color, and it does not bother me. Absolutely.

Notably, three of six Adherents say they themselves are not racist, half of the six parents who respond that way (Table 7.1). That is of course in keeping with their higher level of adamancy, reflected in their rejection of school choice.

Overall, however, acknowledging racism occurs infrequently in parental accounts (Table 7.1). The answers of these French parents are often unsure, the question is dodged, or they refer to other social distinctions in place of color. Of the parents, 34 percent of parents say others are racist, 24 percent give examples of racism, and 21 percent say that racism is not for them. These middle-class, mostly native-born parents are part of a dominant group that are exempt from effects of racism, much as are their white, middle-class counterparts in the United States. To the extent that the conceptual types are predictive here, it lies in the reasoning related to school choice, that is of ideological adamancy and personal attitudes, or in this case, perhaps, attitudinal confusion. Adherents reject, Assenters are unforthcoming, Appraisers focus on results, and Avoiders are edgy. Finally, Petiteville parents are more likely to deny the similarity in racial attitudes between France and the United States, while Riviereville parents are more likely to dodge the question (data not shown).

For a few, but a very few, race is clear. For most, though, prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology conceal it. I contend that what parents express falls more in line with "how you see it, how you don't" than the "now you see it, now you don't" of the United States. With a few notable exceptions, the parents do not so much obscure the effects of race as much as they are unable to grant it importance as a social distinction. That argument becomes more evident in the parental use of language linked to race.

7.3   Use of Language Linked to Race

In analyzing the talk of parents, I find parents are sparing and judicious in their use of language linked to race, largely in conformity to prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology around race. In fact, four parents never use any language linked to race in the entirety of their interviews, though it is inescapable to any parent that by the end of the interview, it is the subject which I want to address.

Parents use terms that are both substantive first-order and abstractive second-order concepts, concepts on which race as a social construction rest. The terms (of course in French) fall into four categories. They include racial terminology, such as "race," "racial," "racist," and "racism." They include racial description, such as "white" and "black." They include language that specifies places of origin with racialized significance: African, North African, and Asian.[24] Within this category, twice parents also use (referring to others) a phrase best read as "French of the root stalk" (*français de souche*). Finally, parents readily repeat the phrase I employ, *couleur de peau*, sometimes never using any other language linked to race along with it. Also, in the interviews, these polite, educated middle-class parents never use derogatory or derisive words.

The parents employ language linked to race sparingly and judiciously, though the words they use are no different from what Americans regularly say and write in the media, political debate, ordinary interactions, and social science journals, if not speak of in college classroom lectures (Hill 2009). The one exception is this parent who used more language linked to race than any other parent, five terms in 18 instances in three separate parts of the interview, though carefully. (Italics in this section are mine to highlight words linked to race.)

Mme. Garreau, a service worker with two children at Legacy, an Avoider

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[24] I did not categorize terms of nationality as racial terms, however.

RESPONDENT: I do not see him [my son] during school, we are not with children … but where I am present all the time, it is at football, my children are playing football. When they do the matches, the training. Thankfully, one has a *black*, a *white*, and Portuguese, all nations. I do not know about school, but the sport, it allows them to understand that even if you are *black* or *white*, it does not make you any difference in the mind for whom is more bronze and less bronze, but the agreement that even human beings who are *black* or *white* develop in the same way, and if they have access to the same culture, or to the same students who are *white* or *black,* they will get there.

INTERVIEWER: A change from the past to the present?

RESPONDENT: (Hesitates.) I think that in France, even if it is in football, and especially football, we are not very tolerant with *blacks*. Yeah, I think they are more persecuted, more mistreated when they are *black* than when they are *white*.

Second excerpt

I think because if people in the culture, if they go to school to learn different ways of life of everyone who is *black*, who is *white*, Muslim, I think that if people come out of school with many means … it will give them the means to fight with all that is *racism*, especially from their origins…

Third excerpt

So, I can be badly placed for, uh, to be *racist*, since I'm of Portuguese families, and I live in France. For us, the Portuguese, [we] did not have too many problems with the French population, but you've got it all if you're Muslim, and, *African*, *black* Africa. They still have problems with it, the first ones who are victims of *racism* here in France.

This parent, who dodges the comparison question on racial attitudes, repeatedly uses "white" and "black" as racial categories, as well as other terms. The use of those words has become more common in France. The term "black" reappeared in intellectual, if not popular, discourse about four decades ago, previously considered socially unacceptable as a categorical description. The language reemerged largely as the result of African-origin persons seeking

recognition for their existence and experiences through social movements (Tin 2008; Simon 2011). That reappearance is in line with Taguieff (2001), who claims that racial terms solidify in a society not necessarily because of racism but because of societal and political efforts to combat racism. "White" is much problematic. For example, a right-wing political candidate set off a media furor a few years ago that led to her losing her candidacy because she described France as a "white" nation (Ganley 2015).[25] Accordingly, about 41 percent of parents use "white" and 24 percent use "black" (Table 7.2). They are used but not with magnitude. In fairness, too, the phrase about the color of skin I introduce does instill awareness of color in the respondents. Finally, among conceptual types, no substantial difference appears, even among Avoiders who dodged, and Assenters who demurred, on the question comparing the two countries on race.

Though "white" and "black" implies race conscious, the assignment of essentialist qualities apparently does not generally accompany categorization. The parents appear to resist essentialism. They often use the terms as ways to explain how problems affect categories of people in French society, not to blame categories of people for the problems of French society. That contrasts with Lamont and Duvoux (2014), who describe the "blackening" of French immigrants as media portray immigrants negatively because of their birth rates, religious practices, and financial dependency, in accordance with U.S. media.

In addition, the necessity to have words that describe groups subjected to social hostility is partly responsible for the use of language linked to race among the parents. This is the case for the use of racial terms such as race, racial, racism, and racist. As with the racial descriptions above, the words are more common but not widely accepted ideologically, scientifically, and

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[25] The episode parallels that of what Hill (2009) points to as "moral panics" in the media over public racial comments in the United States.

socially, thought of as part and parcel to the "collective fiction" of race (Sabbagh and Peer 2008; Simon 2011; Bessone and Sabbagh 2015). Except for the preamble to the constitution of the Fifth Republic, the nation's current political configuration, these words do not appear in any official documents. Efforts even began during the time of the interviews to strip the word race even from the constitution (Bessone and Sabbagh 2015; Simon 2018).[26]

The 2017 French election is another reason that racial terms appear in accounts. Some parents label the far-right, antiimmigrant presidential candidate and her followers as racist.

> *Mme. Rodier, a professional with one child at Arche, an Adherent*
> Well, you've followed the last presidential elections. In the second round, we had Marine Le Pen face Emmanuel Macron. So, Marine Le Pen, it is a political party that says for me that I should not want to be a refugee country … It's of people who develop rather racist ideas, rather anti-, *pfft*, anti-cultural mix, et cetera. So, it's contrary to our ideas. The problem is that it is a political party that has progressed a lot in France. That's part of my anxiety for the future of my children.

Notably, the fears of this parent are not abstract. She is Asian in origin with children of mixed parentage. Other parents employ racial terms to dispute even if race is germane to French society. This parent, who denies the comparison between the countries, uses the example of a friend to explain how social exclusion has evolved and social boundaries have changed.

> *Mme. Boudet, an airline executive with one child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> I do not know if it is [the same in France]. I would answer that in each period there is the phenomenon of racism or a search for the other, anyway. I have a friend who is 50, and he's the son of an Italian immigrant. So, he told me when he was really young, he was harassed by his school friends because he was Italian. And so, he's even changed his name to sound more French. I think that in our time, we have always had … an economic crisis, and when there is any risk,

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[26] The constitution of 1957 says, "France assures equality for all of its citizens before the law, regardless of their origin, race or religion" (Bessone and Sabbagh 2015).

people are always looking for [the other]. It was the Italian and Polish

immigrants. Now, it's become Muslim. It's a sociological phenomenon. (Laughs.)

The comments of this native-born parent are in line with the theoretical model of Lamont

and Molnár (2002), who describe how social groups erect and re-erect symbolic boundaries

against the "other" and form collective repertoires to justify and defend the boundaries. The

parent pins the boundary-making on a sense of risk. That explanation suggests that risk may not

result in the trampling of minorities, as in a Chapter 6, but a redefinition of who is a minority.

Finally, to hold that race even exists requires the use of racial terms. This parent, who

denies that the two countries are similar, says blaming such factors such as economics, religion,

behavior, or culture for segregation, is hiding the racialized nature of those social distinctions.

> *Mme. Bossuet, a doctoral student with one child at Legacy, an Assenter*
> It's, it's, it's ... I think that, on the [question of the] skin, we're never going to say
> that. We're going to say, uh, like, as I've told you, one has a culture, one has a
> culture, that's the problem of immigration. It's okay, it's going to be the problem
> of immigration, but simply for some communities. For example, there are
> communities that integrate and integrate more easily, and there it does not matter
> to parents. And, and, I think it's just if there is, there is delinquency, or if there is
> violence that the problems appear, but it will never be presented as a problem of
> racism. It will rather be presented as an economic problem or immigration.

Of all parents, 38 percent use of racial terms such as racism, as Table 7.2 shows. The

types are of limited predictive value here. Only two Appraisers use the terms. Their tendency is

to focus on academic quality, not school context, which includes student demographics. In

addition, 41 percent use words indicating place of origin, such as Africa, or in two cases "French

of the root stalk." Most parents slip into the phrase I supply late in the interview, *couleur de

peau*. To these parents, that phrase avoids scorned language, but at the same time, clearly

indicates race. No substantial difference exists among these parents in the use of language by the

town where they live or by their political leanings (data not shown).

Regardless of what words, parents employ them sparingly and judiciously, though they are no different from what appear regularly in ordinary settings in the United States. I contend that these parents are engaged not so much in obscuration when it comes to language tied to race but are unable to see it as an important social distinction. With some exceptions, most parents avoid the terms, even if it has spread, and some refuse to use the terms at all because of prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology. I claim it is not a case here of "now you see it, now you don't," as with Bonilla-Silva (2013), but a case of the incapacity to use racial language, or "how you see it, how you don't."

7.4   Causes of the Social Differences

In line with Bonilla-Silva (2013), I turn here to examine what parents say causes social difference. The focus here is on place segregation and school segregation. The question about ethnic segregation addresses only one effect of social hostility. The other effect is discrimination, of which several parents offer examples of in previous excerpts. I highlight segregation over discrimination because of its direct effect on schooling and because Felouzis et al. (2013) hold it to be a negative effect of school choice globally and in the U.S. literature (Goyette 2008; Mickelson et al. 2008; Roda and Wells 2013; Saporito and Hanley 2014).

Notably, forms of individual and institutionl discrimination exist and are common in France. A national agency, the French Institute for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, regularly surveys French perceptions on and experiences with various forms of discrimination (CNCDH 2017). Because the survey collects no race data, it is difficult to tell if the various categories of discrimination (such as in jobs or housing) is by race. Nationality data

show clear discriminatory patterns, though, especially against North African males and all Turks (Beauchemin et al. 2010; Hamel, Lesné and Primon 2014; Navarre 2017).

7.4.1 Segregation by place

Almost to a person, the parents recognize that France is segregated by place as is the United States. So how is it that the parents explain this segregation? Parents do not readily resort to race as an explanation, as in Table 7.3. They instead offer multiple explanations linked to social class, economics, and public policy, and then to factors linked to ethnicity, such as culture, preferences, behavior, fear, and history. They also tie together place and school segregation, in accordance with the empirical evidence that school segregation is strongly related to place segregation because of residential choices (Grzegorczyk 2013; Safi 2013; Mons 2016).

As for place segregation, however, the empirical evidence is that the Paris region is not as segregated as U.S. cities. French immigrants are not as concentrated or as spatially separated as U.S. minorities, and the data do not generally support that minorities are becoming more concentrated or separated (Préteceille 2011; Shon 2011; Verdugo 2011; Grzegorczyk 2013). The Paris region's dissimilarity index for North African and sub-Saharan immigrants is about half of that for New York City's African Americans (Préteceille 2011).[27] If anything, the evidence is not that the middle class is separating itself from others by class, ethnicity, and race, but that the wealthy are becoming more spatially concentrated and separated from everyone else (Préteceille 2006; Bacqué et al. 2014). The difference between empirical data and parental discourse may be

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[27] A limitation here is that this comparison with the Paris region is with New York, a city in which hyper-segregation exists (Massey and Denton 1993). Préteceille, for example, is also comparing French nationality data to U.S. racial data, which are categorically different.

tied to a rising fear that France is coming apart socially and culturally, rather than moving apart by where people live (Hoibian 2011; Hoibian 2013; Lamont and Duvoux 2014).

Parents blame place segregation by ethnicity on social class and economic factors. Their views align with the deeply embedded French discourse that social class is the primary means to understand social stratification, inherited from Marxian social philosophy, and still encapsulated within much of French social science and public policy (Lamont 2000b; van Zanten 2006; Lamont and Duvoux 2014). For example, in explaining why place segregation exists, this parent, who agrees the United States and France are similar in place segregation by ethnicity, then excludes ethnicity as the primary determinant, preferring social class and Marx.

M. Fresnel, a teacher with one child at Arche, an Appraiser
RESPONDENT: If people have enough money to go to live in a city, or in a comfortable, quiet neighborhood, people will go to live in these houses and in these apartments, whatever the skin color of people. So, it's not a question of skin color, it's not a question of ethnic origins of individuals. It is can I live with my income in a neighborhood where I can live comfortably? I sincerely believe that the skin color is very secondary. It's first a question of standard of living. It's the standard of living of people that determines where they live. We see that among people who have the least money that there are a high proportion of foreigners or people of immigrant origin. So, of course, but it's less a question of ethnicity, but an economic question ... I think that the ethnic and economic question overlap, but I think the ethnic question … is dependent on the economic question. I will give a Marxist interpretation. I think that actually for a few years one has overestimated ethnic issues, and one forgets that economic issues should be put first, though it's [ethnicity] that is more fashionable somehow.
INTERVIEWER: A question of class.
RESPONDENT: Yeah, yes. I do not really like class categorization. I do not really like class categorization, but I think we need more of an economic interpretation than criterion that is ethnic.

The reference at the end on categorization by the parent is to the Marxian concept of class that it forms itself, *class for itself*, rather than is created as an empirical category. This teacher-parent is the most hardline of all in his Marxian take on class and ethnicity.

Some parents blame public policy for segregation. One parent points to lack of affordable housing in Riviereville, where she lives, as the result of public officials who refuse to build public housing, so to maintain the town's homogeneity. The town instead eschews public housing by paying an annual fine to the national government (Parny 2016; Serafini 2018).

Finally, a few parents point to racism. Even then, this parent claims racism plays out differently in France than in the United States. The parent agrees that the countries are similar when it comes to segregation, though the example the parent gives is about schools, not places.

> *Mme. Bossuet, a doctoral student with one child at Legacy, an Assenter*
> In France, there is a different perception … one is not going to ask questions when one is going to enroll a child in a middle school if there is a high proportion of people of color, unless one is in a city. One knows that it is more of a suburban problem, and in the city, it is a social problem … One is going to put it more on the social side, and one is going to say, "I'm not going to go to this *collège* because there are too many problems." But if there is a *collège* with children who are very, very strong, who score 20 out of 20,[28] and they are black and Asian, it seems to me one will say, no problem there. That's why I think there is a different perception.

And in correspondence with Mme. Bossuet's earlier excerpt on how parents perceive the causes of segregation, six parents cite outright racism as the cause. Ten parents link ethnic place segregation to social class, and nine link it to economic factors (see Table 7.3). Additionally, eight parents blame public policy. Other reasons, such as religion, behavior, preferences, fears,

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[28] Twenty is the highest grade awarded in the 0 to 20 French grading system.

and history, are less often cited, from 21 percent to 10 percent of parents. Parents often cite multiple reasons, mingling causes related to social class and economic factors with causes related to ethnic mix. Parents in better off Riviereville are more likely to cite economic and social factors, while parents in highly mixed Petiteville are more likely to cite cultural factors, such as religion (data not shown).

Parents frequently tie place and school segregation together, which the empirical data supports, sometimes with the implicit acknowledgement that they are part of that process of place and school segregation. In all, the case of ethnic place segregation I find is clouded by other distinctions that these parents push forward, in which race is infrequently cited. A not insignificant number do agree that place segregation results from ethnic differences. They may not blame ethnicity itself, however, but they blame factors they link to ethnicity, such as forms of parenting. The parents also tie together ethnic place segregation and ethnic school segregation.

7.4.2   Segregation in schools

School ethnic segregation is challenging to measure in France. Schools do not collect data on ethnicity or race, only age, sex, parental occupation, and receipt of a schooling social supplement. While several studies of the Paris region try to address social segregation (Oberti 2007; Merle 2010; Benito et al. 2014; Ben Ayed 2015), the extent of ethnic segregation is merely common knowledge. An exception is a study of Bordeaux middle schools in which researchers use student names to deduce probable national ethnicity, a massive and time-consuming technique even in a smaller city (Felouzis et al. 2005).[29]

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[29] I tried this on a list of students who had passed the *brevet*, and abandoned it. Even with a comprehensive list of names by nationalities, I found it hard to categorize names because more diversity and spelling variation exists around Paris than in Bordeaux, complicating the process.

All but one parent acknowledge that the United States and France are similar when it comes to school ethnic segregation. Parents offer several, often overlapping, explanations for why schools are segregated, but race is not among them in response to this question (Table 7.3). The most common is that parents are fleeing mix, including by switching from public to private schools, which this study does not include for practical reasons. This parent at first blames segregation on parents fleeing public for private schools because of better discipline.

> *Mme. Rodier, a professional with one child at Arche, an Adherent*
> In France, more and more people prefer to put their children in private *collèges* because in private *collèges*, there is more discipline. More adults monitor the children. There are less behavior problems with the students because there are many adults present … the French state does not put enough money to recruit people [in public schools] … and when children are not in classes they do not have enough supervisors to monitor them, there are always behavior problems … So, these discipline problems mean most parents prefer to put their kids in private schools. Also, I think as you say that in the United States, people prefer to avoid putting their kids in schools because it has a mix or culture. It's a reality in France, too, because when a neighborhood has much cultural mix, it is a rather poor neighborhood, and therefore … we have more and more single-parent families … parents who … no longer have authority over their children. These children who are in public schools … are those children who pose behavioral problems, and so people prefer that their children do not attend schools with much cultural mix.

The parent then switches to bad parenting as a cause for flight that she perceives arises from social and ethnic mix, a regular refrain among the parents and in the French literature. Felouzis et al. (2005) contends that parents pathologize minorities and the poor, substituting the language of inadequate parenting and family socialization as causes, rather than their aversion to them as group. The parents in those studies sometimes draw on sociological and psychological research, as some of parents here also cite in their accounts (van Zanten 2003). From these

accounts, however, I contend that these parents do not outwardly blame such students and parents as much as they believe the social conditions to which they are subjected are inconducive to the proper French parenting and family socialization, with predictable results. In the terminology of Ryan (1976), the parents possess a universalist viewpoint, apprising the social context of the problem, rather than exceptionalistic standpoint, as in the United States in which individuals are seen as somehow culturally or intrinsically in need of improvement.

Integral to the idea of flight is that the lack of balance between quality and mix. That is complicated for the parents, which other studies of French middle-school parents confirm (Benson et al. 2015). It also plays out confusingly, as with this parent.

> *Mme. Devereaux, a marketing executive with a child at Legacy, an Adherent*
> Yes. Also, I think (pause) unfortunately often. I do not know what causes it, if it is the effect of people avoiding schools with a strong mix because they do not think the school is going to be on a good level ... [yet] if all these children leave the school, the level does go down. So, let's say the level is not as before because there is much diversity. There would have been a better mix, so to say, if the people who had means had not left, and the level would have remained good. Or maybe it's the inverse, maybe it's because there is much mix, with many children who are not native French, that it lowers the level. And I think it's a little bit of both. Moreover, when we think that a school is less good, there is much mix, we do not go, but if there are people like us, with their children in these schools, it leads to all the children being able to produce something … So, it's self-directed.

This fatalistic parent wants a good school for her children but is unable to affect the factors that make a school reputably good or bad, such as policy changes, principal rotations, and student mix. They are all potential "red flags" of a precarious school reputation, one of which may affect the other, with the inevitable result that middle-class parents may take flight. Whether the school becomes, stays, or stops being "good" depends on what other parents "like us" do, not

unlike the anxiety and contingency of parents in the U.S. literature, although parents there have

much more voice over what happens in the local school (Posey-Maddox et al. 2014). How

parents react, for example, to policy changes meant to make schools more equitable, as with the

middle-class mother at the beginning of Chapter 6, contribute to this precariousness. In some

regards, it corresponds to "white flight" in U.S. urban neighborhoods. Mere suspicion that a

white urban neighborhood might change, brought on in many cases by real estate agency "block

busting," leads in fact to the neighborhood changing, with those who stayed behind trapped in

devalued houses (Massey 1990; Krysan and Crowder 2017; Rothstein 2017). For example, in

Chapter 4, a "hot" but false rumor spread among Legacy parents that the school would be forced

to take in students from a neighboring mixed town, creating worry. A complex scenario surfaces

in which "red flags" around changes in policy, mix, and principals signal to these public-school

parents through their social networks that the reputation of a school, always precarious in the

suburbs, is in danger, and middle-class flight is possible. The "red flags" become the means by

which institutional policies and individual practices come together to create segregation.

The theme that parents flee public schools as a cause of school segregation also draws on

other reasons for that flight, including public policy, as well as behavior, social class, residential

segregation, and issues with public school students (Table 7.3). However, as with Mme. Bossuet

earlier, this parent contends otherwise, that reasons other than mix are all excuses, not a matter of

perception. It is the avoidance of others, whoever the others are and whatever their effects.

> *M. Delon, a graphic artist with two children at Arche, an Assenter*
> RESPONDENT: I have many friends who have taken their children from the
> public *collège* for the private, on the pretext that the mix is too much. So, but, on
> contrary, I think that it's not as it should be … It is not recognized, it is not said
> like that, in fact. We say, we could pretend that the school is closer, uh, the
> teaching is better, but I think [mix] is still a criterion.

INTERVIEWER: Your experiences?

RESPONDENT: Yes, neighbors, friends who have moved their child from those institutions because, because of too much, because of too much diversity, too many others, Arabs, too many blacks, too many of them, I do not know what.

The types have predictive value on these themes because the themes are related to the process of school choice and conceptions of mix. Adherents attribute school segregation more to residential segregation than to student or reputational problems. More Avoiders are the reverse, blaming segregation on behavior and reputation. More Assenters are unresponsive. Five of the 10 Appraiser parents point to fleeing mix as a cause of school segregation. Once again, Adherents reject, Assenters are unforthcoming, Appraisers focus on results, and Avoiders are edgy. Notably, parents in Riviereville, the homogeneous, affluent town, are more likely to blame segregation on residential segregation. Petiteville parents are more likely to blame it on fleeing existing mix, they themselves with their children in a mixed school with tracked classes.

Nearly all parents admit that place and school segregation is the same in France as in the United States. Many parents assert that ethnic mix is creating an exodus from public to private schools, causing segregation. Most pin the exodus on social mix, social class, and poverty, though a few pin it entirely on ethnic mix and its effects, such as in parenting and socialization, in line with Felouzis et al. (2013) and van Zanten (2003). I contend that the color-blindness does not arise from parents determined to enervate the role of race in social differences such as with whites in the United States who have attempted to put race—conveniently—behind them. It arises from a deeply rooted social and legal stance in France, though perhaps more confused in recent decades (Bertossi 2012b). Prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology block the identification and consideration of race as a factor in social, economic, and political outcomes. Though the parental accounts indicate a level of color

consciousness exists among these parents, they do not indicate a consciousness about the potential effects on persons by the social construction of race. Again, when it comes to race and school choice, how race is not seen is what matters here.

7.5   Summary and Conclusion

I approach the role of race in school choice through questions that ask parents to compare the United States and France on racial attitudes and on ethnic segregation in places and schools. Conventional and ideological conceits around race and racial research shape the inquiry. For example, I use the phrase *couleur de peau* to avoid direct racial language and refer to ethnicity in questions about segregation. I employ the parents to act as sociological informants on French society, and in the process, reveal their own thinking and use of language. I then analyze their accounts for perceptions of race, language linked to race, and explanations for societal outcomes.

This approach is largely successful. Parents are hesitant and sometimes uncomfortable with the questions, but the questions elicit rich and nuanced discourse about race and social distinctions in France. These middle-class parents are often unsure about or dodge saying the United States and France are similar on race. A substantial minority do agree the countries are similar, and a few disagree. Parents use language linked to race, but many prefer to stick with *couleur de peau*. Their language includes first-order and second-order terms on race, such as "racism," commonly used in the United States, but used infrequently and judiciously among these parents. In addressing the U.S. case, Hill (2009) refers to such methods of expression as a "linguistic ideology" that structures white racist discourse, both hidden and unhidden, but the parents here appear to be conforming to French cultural convention more than they are camouflaging racist perceptions, but with a few exceptions, such as Mme. Bartillon, with her

friend's blue-eyed, blonde story of her child at school. While they are race conscious, the parents do not generally append essentialist qualities. They often use terms to explain how people in the society face problems, not how individuals who are white or black cause societal problems. Nearly all parents agree that the United States and France are alike when it comes to ethnic segregation by place and school. They often blame social class and economic factors for it. Some say it is the result of ethnicity, but then qualify, saying it is from effects related to social conditions, such as parenting and behavior, not of the ethnicity itself. To some extent, the parents use the language of social class when it is related to substantive ways of living that direct the valuation of education, the language of economics when it is related to parental constraints on time and resources, and the language of ethnicity when it is related to familiarity with French ways of being and parenting, if not of language competency.

Though this comes close to blaming the victim for their own individual predicaments as Ryan (1976) asserts exists in the United States, two differences between national ideologies in France and the United States operate here. First, French ideology centers on social class, whose structural effects are usually dismissed in the United States in place of individual merit and virtue. Second, and consequently, Americans are more apt to reproach individuals for their own predicaments (Ryan 1976; Bonilla-Silva 2013), and the French are more apt to condemn their conditions (Lamont 2000b; Lamont 2001; Lamont 2003). Moreover, as Davie (2000) and Hervieu-Léger (2000) maintain, a vicarious sense of communalism derived from Catholicism and its parish culture still permeates French society, though very few of the French are now practicing Catholics.[30] Following Ryan (1976), this distinction is between an exceptionalistic

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[30] This religious cultural formation is far afield from what permeates U.S. religious culture (if not of U.S. sociologists), who according to Mills (1943), "gravitate toward the norms of independent middle-class persons verbally living out Protestant ideals in the small towns of America."

orientation to social problems, viewing the individual as in need of improvement, as in the

United States, and a universalistic perspective, viewing the social context as the social problem.

The same deeply embedded perspective that makes social class the only legitimate social

distinction, also makes the conditions to which the social and economic structure subject people

the only legitimate explanation. Thus, Americans blame the victim and the French name the

victim. Relevant here, too, is the stronger social bond that the French middle-class maintains

with the working class and poor than does the U.S. middle class, though that may have eroded in

recent decades in France (Lamont 2000b; Lamont and Duvoux 2014). The French middle class

tends to apprise the conditions in which the unfortunate live, but the U.S. middle class tends to

despise supposed personal shortcomings, in line with Ryan (1976).

Finally, the right balance between academic quality and student mix that makes a school

reputable is a complex scenario. The parents know the "red flags," such as mix, policy changes,

and principal rotation, that spell precarity for the reputation of a school, but which parents cannot

control, and which may cause other middle-class parents to flee the school. Importantly, these

"red flags" are indicative of the ways that institutional policies and individual practices combine

to promote French school segregation.

The overall picture that emerges here is clouded. The accounts of the middle-class

parents indicate that they do not intend to act on race in their everyday lives and in their

children's schooling, but nevertheless, their schooling actions have effects that in combination

with institutional policies that promote racial segregation and inequality in the larger society, as I

contend in the next chapter.

Of the critical and historic theories of racialization reviewed in Chapter 1, the parental

accounts do not easily correspond with the historic, deterministic thesis of Omi and Winant

(2001). These authors hold that race is a fluid concept that follows a global social trajectory into national social and political structures. On that last assertion, parents do not volunteer information on how the two countries have come together on ideas of race, socially or politically, though they admit to similarities, especially in place and school segregation. Of course, too, these authors supply few concrete clues observable discursively in their overarching, abstract theory. They hold the political trajectory draws on neoliberal and colorblind ideologies, from which colorblindness emerges as unstable hegemonic social belief. The evidence in France is that neoliberal ideas have made little headway and are not convincingly evident among these parents (Evans and Sewell Jr. 2013; Hall and Lamont 2013a). To rephrase Simon (2018), it is also difficult to conceptualize how a society can be in the beginning process of racialization and yet able to draw on colorblind ideologies that are inherent to a supposedly post-racial society.

Additionally, understanding the processes and criteria of school choice as a case that constitutes a racial project is likewise not easily supported as a societal event from this study's parental accounts in which racial identity and meaning, much less activity, is not substantively evident. Finally, viewed as an analytical tool, the concept of racial project is unfortunately laden *a priori* with the notion that the process is racial rather than some other form of social, economic, or political process, and whose outcome can be nothing more than some degree of racial. I find it difficult to translate the themes that arise in this study into that of a racial project without forcing a conclusion. Though this study itself is guided by a frame on school choice, I am mainly interested here, more loosely, on how parents account for and justify their lives within the social structure and ideological frameworks in which they interact (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

Bonilla-Silva (2013) contends that Americans now use slippery language to evade direct racial references and obscure racism, what he calls the "now you see it, now you don't" existence

of race in the United States. His forceful critical theory points to four frames in which racism

persists in a color-blind society. The frames are marginally evident at best in France. The level of

neoliberalism that permeates the United States and underscores the frame of abstract liberalism,

does not exist nearly to the same level in France, though it is becoming known (Evans and

Sewell Jr. 2013; Hall and Lamont 2013a; Laurent 2016). It is evident to a small degree among

these parents, some of whom also actively resist school choice, one of its elements. The spread

of neoliberalism has heightened and strengthened this frame of racism in the United States

(Laurent 2016), though in France, neoliberalism is resisted and not apparently influential in a

meaningful way among the French public or French institutions (Evans and Sewell Jr. 2013; Hall

and Lamont 2013a). The other frames depend on a lingering essentialism, blaming the victim,

and ignoring social harms, all not greatly evident among these parental accounts, rather, which in

fact, portray the opposite. These parents do not share the historical and cultural anchors of whites

in the United States. In line with that author, however, this chapter attends to the importance of

racial ideas, language, and effects in the study of race, which Bonilla-Silva valuably pushes us to

do. The picture that emerges on the role of race in school choice is however cloudy. The

evidence of perception, language, and effects that parents are not engaged in shifty language or

obscured racism, but instead in vacillations in recognition, or "how you see it, how you don't."

I contend that these parental accounts are much more in line with the Lamont and Molnár

(2002). Those authors describe how subjugated groups form boundaries against the "other" and

justify and defend those boundaries through collective repertoires. Though the theory explains

the responses of subjugated groups, it also explains the boundary-making and opportunity

hoarding of the potential perpetrators of that racism and discrimination, as Lamont and Duvoux

(2014) have done among the French middle class. These parents perceive an "other" among

immigrant and poor students. They are race conscious. This symbolic boundary is unconnected to the blaming of problems on the "other," the collective repertoire of individual failure that prevails in the United States, but it is connected in France to a collective repertoire in which parental practices and family socialization unavoidably arise from the economic conditions in which these families are subjected structurally. This repertoire is reinforced in parental accounts on immigration in Chapter 6. Parents more often point to the problems that compel persons to seek refuge rather than to problems that refugees cause, the latter dialogue which is tied to racism in Europe (Van Dijk 1993). They name, not blame. Yet, the indication in the sociological literature is that these boundaries and repertoires are in re-formation (Lamont 2001; Lamont and Duvoux 2014). Such change is not possible to measure in this study, and though parents retrospectively indicate change has occurred over time, it is not always for the worst.

In the next, final, capstone chapter, I turn to a conceptual model that pulls together the many themes and concepts that arise from this qualitative study, as it has proceeded chapter-by-chapter, integrating literature, theory, data, and discussions to build the context in which to examine French school choice and race, as well as to address relevant topics. Though France is often misidentified as having a dense set of values that govern social life, French values do compete discursively in complex ways that outside scholars often ignore (Bertossi 2012a). On that basis, I maintain that individual dispositions, social structure, cultural conventions, and ideology, three societal strata with which parents engage with schooling, are tied together in a complex arrangement that shape school choice in France and obscure the role of race within it.

Table 7:1: Comparison of France and United States on Importance of the couleur de peau

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of Respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Percentage response to France like United States on couleur de peau*					
Denies France similar	17%	63%	40%	0%	34%
Unsure if France is similar	50%	37%	30%	40%	38%
France is similar	0%	0%	10%	20%	7%
Other answers	33%	0%	20%	40%	21%
Thematic elaborations on response by percentage of parents†					
Others are racist	50%	13%	40%	40%	34%
Gives examples of racism	33%	13%	30%	20%	24%
'Not for me' racism	50%	13%	10%	20%	21%
Experienced racism	0%	0%	20%	0%	7%
Racism is hidden	0%	13%	0%	20%	7%
Knows racists	17%	13%	0%	0%	7%

Themes of responses to the *couleur de peau* are determined by whether parent gives direct answer, such as yes or no; indicates uncertainty; or provides another answer without directly addressing the question.

The theme elaborations are as follows: Others are racists means parents cite specifically or generally others in the society as racist; Gives examples of racism means parents cite specifically or generally actual or supposed incidents of which they have knowledge that are perceived as racist; 'Not for me' racism means parents say themselves are not racist; Experienced racism means parents themselves have had an experience of racism; Racism is hidden means parents believe racism is to be found but not clearly visible in society; and Knows racists means parents are aware of individuals or groups that they perceived as racist.

* Non-response is not included.

† Percentages may not total 100% because of multiple responses and non-response.

Table 7:2: Parental Use of Language Linked to Race in Interviews

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Uses racial terms*	50%	38%	20%	60%	38%
Used racism	*33%*	*38%*	*20%*	*60%*	*34%*
Uses racial descriptions	50%	38%	50%	40%	45%
Used white†	*50%*	*38%*	*40%*	*40%*	*41%*
Used black†	*17%*	*25%*	*20%*	*40%*	*24%*
Repeats *couleur de peau*	83%	25%	60%	40%	52%
Indicates place of origin	50%	13%	50%	60%	41%

Table does not include other category with unspecific and minor responses.

* Other racial terms and racial descriptions used because they are infrequent in responses.

† Percentages do not sum to the total percentage above because of multiple responses.

Table 7:3: Comparison of France and United States on Ethnic Avoidance

	Adherents	Assenters	Appraisers	Avoiders	Total
Number of Respondents	6	8	10	5	29
Percentage response to France like United States on ethnic segregation					
France is similar	67%	100%	100%	80%	90%
France is not similar	33%	0%	0%	20%	10%
Volunteered factors behind segregation*					
Social class	50%	25%	20%	60%	34%
Economic differences	33%	25%	30%	20%	28%
Public policy	17%	25%	30%	20%	24%
Religious practice	17%	13%	40%	0%	21%
Adverse behavior	67%	25%	0%	0%	21%
Outright racism	17%	25%	10%	33%	21%
Group preferences	33%	13%	10%	20%	17%
Fears about others	50%	13%	0%	0%	14%
Accumulated history	17%	0%	10%	20%	10%
Percentage response to France like United States on school segregation					
France is similar	100%	100%	90%	100%	97%
France is not similar	0%	0%	10%	0%	3%
Volunteered factors behind school segregation*					
Fleeing existing mix	50%	38%	50%	40%	45%
Local residential segregation	50%	25%	10%	20%	24%
Student social class or poverty	33%	13%	10%	20%	21%
Issues with public students	0%	0%	20%	40%	21%
School reputation or programs	0%	0%	10%	40%	14%
Private schools less mixed	33%	0%	10%	0%	10%
Effect of public policies	17%	0%	10%	20%	10%

Other categories are not shown for both place and school segregation because answers are unspecific and occur infrequently among parents.

* Percentages shown are of parents who volunteered factors. Percentages total more than 100 percent because of multiple factors cited by parents.

8   CONCLUSION

This dissertation begins with a blog post from Thomas Piketty in which the economist

descries the level of economic segregation among public middle schools in the city of Paris

(Piketty 2016b; Piketty 2016a). The maps he attaches to his post of that segregation also provide

evidence to an astute observer of the degree of ethnic segregation among Paris' public schools,

because the two forms of segregation are related. Otherwise, ethnic segregation is difficult to get

at and quantify in France. The education ministry and the census agency collect and release

limited data on ethnicity and none on race. Nevertheless, as this dissertation shows, the parents I

interview know that French schools are segregated, and they readily agree that when it comes to

ethnic segregation at least, French and U.S. schools are comparable.

While getting ethnic data on school segregation is problematic, getting racial data is

impossible. France bans the collection of racial data. Nevertheless, racial segregation cannot but

accompany ethnic (or class) segregation given the source countries of France's many immigrants

from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Focused on the role of race in school choice, the

research question of this study is thus not easy to address. Official prohibitions, the prevailing

cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology, restrict the availability of

empirical data. For individuals, too, conventions and ideology strongly direct how social

distinctions and outcomes are to be understood, including among these parents, and that is not

usually by race.

To address that question, this dissertation has proceeded step-by-step, integrating

literature, theory, data, and discussions chapter-by-chapter to establish the necessary context in

which to examine French school choice and race, as well as to address related topics as it drives

toward this, the capstone chapter. I find that among these parents, for example, the effect of

class anxiety on school choice is not consequential, though the middle-class parents act as they

can to advantage their children through schools they attend and the programs in which they are

enrolled. When it comes to race, I confront a clouded picture. Parents point to social class as

primarily determinate of social outcomes, impacting schools and teaching because of justifiable

gaps in parenting and family socialization. A complex scenario surfaces in which "red flags"

around changes in policy, mix, and principals signal to these public-school parents through their

social networks that the reputation of a school, always precarious in the suburbs, is in danger, and middle-class flight is possible. They become the means by which institutional policies and individual practices come together to create segregation.

This capstone chapter presents a conceptual model that explains the role of race in French school choice. I describe in the chapter the three societal strata within which parents engage with schooling, those of individual dispositions, social structure, and ideology, and on which events have had a marginal effect. I then trace the ties between these strata, as well as that of cultural conventions, and explain the tie between race as a concept and the social structure. I make concluding comments on the role of race in French schooling, explain the import of this study and the potential for further research, and finally, discuss the limitations of this study.

8.1   The Conceptual Model

This study draws on the accounts of 29 middle-class parents of public middle-school children in the Paris suburbs. I interviewed these parents during the fall and spring of 2016 and 2017, a troubled time in France. Shook by repeated, traumatic terrorism, immersed in a racially tinged political campaign, and witness to a massive wave of refugees from Africa and the Near East, the country confronted circumstances in which issues of racism were potentially at the fore. I contend this is an incipient situation that parallels what Swidler (1986) refers to as an unsettled cultural period in which ideology and action becomes more apparent. It was a period, too, in which global risk would appear to be highly salient in France, in line with Beck (1992; 2002), with an impact on schooling decisions in line with Ball (2003). Never originally planned as an element of the study design, this national situation inescapably became part of the study, driving it theoretically, empirically, and analytically.

Though this qualitative study does not test Swidler's thesis, or those of Ball and Beck,

which qualitative studies cannot do, they are the starting point for the conceptual model, as

Figure 8 illustrates. Bertossi (2012a) claims that France is frequently misidentified as having a

dense set of values that govern social life, but the reality is that French values do compete

discursively in complex ways that outside scholars often ignore. Drawing on Swidler (1986), I

hold that the cauldron of events in which France was immersed during the time of this study

create a period in which the processes of social and ideological reformation becomes evident.

I contend that the evidence here is that the events are tied to the displacement of

individual dispositions, manifested among these parents as spectrums between the philosophical

and the psychological, collectivistic and individualistic, and resolute and uncertain. These

dispositions are formed through social and political ideology, as the line indicates between

IDEOLOGY and INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS, but events intercede with the individual

dispositions, as the line between UNSETTLED PERIOD (the dotted rectangular box) and

INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS shows, impelling individuals from the philosophical,

collectivistic, and resolute and toward the psychological, individualistic, and uncertain. The

evidence of this movement lies in the accounts of the parents who largely claim the effects of

events was personal in that they avoid places, dim lights, and sort recyclables, though some are

moved toward activism and collective engagement.

I posit that a cultural convention, *resilience*, intercedes between events and dispositions,

as have Evans and Sewell Jr. (2013), Hall and Lamont (2013b), and Hall and Lamont (2013a) on

the spread of neoliberalism,. That intercession is neither satisfactorily supported nor contradicted

in parental accounts and is shown here as dotted. Though the same diagram could be drawn that

aligns with Beck and Ball with changed names (Global Risk rather than Cultural Period), the

next sequence in the model conforms more to the model of Swidler than to that of Beck and Ball.

The three solid rectangular boxes in Figure 8 represent three societal strata with which parents engage with schooling. The first is INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS and the third is IDEOLOGY, as already described. Between them is SOCIAL STRUCTURE. In this case, the social structure includes how schooling is realized politically, economically, and socially and the processes and criteria by which parents engage in school choice. The conceptual types which emerge from this study are a product of that social structure. Both INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS and IDEOLOGY interact with SOCIAL STRUCTURE, shaping not only the formation of the institution but also the actions and attitudes of the parents, as evident in the four types. An additional effect that intercedes between INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS and SOCIAL STRUCTURE is a cultural convention, *parenting*, in which French culture directs the formation and expected outcomes of children, educationally and vocationally. For these middle-class parents that often means preparation for and expectation of a satisfactory life. Proper parenting and socialization are important in preparation for school, too, which then drives the ability of schools to create desired educational outcomes. Ideology also frames the process of schooling in which schooling is about social formation, to be a good citizen or a knowledgeable person, as parental accounts make evident, not an anxious struggle for class closure. This is where the parental accounts fit into the models of Beck and Ball less well.

As a social concept, Race is off to the side. Its effect on the social structure (school) is intervened through Ideology in which race is not a legitimate distinction, limiting its conceptualization and examination, and through a cultural convention, *Language*, in which the description and articulation of race are circumscribed and measured. I maintain that the concept of race is largely inoperative among these parents in school choice because ideologically it is a collective fiction and the conventions of language that legitimately describes social distinctions

nearly always default to social class (though sometimes ethnicity). Here and there, it is glimpsed but without much social implication. That is not to say it is without effect, as I later address.

8.2   Concluding Remarks

I conclude here with nine points. First, the four conceptual types of the parents that arise from the accounts are grounded in agency, as I induce in Chapter 4, which focuses on processes of school choice. The aspects of agency include not only action, but also parental reasoning along two dimensions, ideology and attitudes. Their ideological and attitudinal values vary from the collectivistic, what is good for society, as with Adherents and Assenters, to the individualistic, what is good for children, as with Appraisers and Avoiders. In addition, the ideologies and attitudes are tied to other entrenched social and political ideology that override the predicted effects of the types on criteria, such as on mix and teaching, in which longstanding ideological commitments to equality and political stances about teachers come into play. While predictive of school choice processes, no straight-line predictive effect always emerges for the conceptual types on other items, except for anxiety over events, notably on which Adherents are resolved and Avoiders are disconcerted.

Second, the social structure in which the parents act inhibits their ability to pursue individual goals for schooling, firmly encased as schooling is in the Republican model. Adherents are adamant, for example, in their resolve to stick with the school sector, denying school choice is possible, as I note in Chapter 4. Parents also embrace cultural conventions on child-raising and life satisfaction that define and refine schooling goals away from being purely instrumental in which children are guided into proper goals and careers, as is evident in Chapter 6, which focuses on risk and anxiety. Schooling is important among these middle-class parents, but it is not out of elevated anxiety over class reproduction or from a need for social closure, as

in Ball's thesis. Nevertheless, these public-school parents have leveraged their middle-class capital differentially to enroll their children in schools with "good" students, such as Legacy in Rivièreville, or with tracked classes that are selective of students, such as Arche in Petiteville.

Third, though French schools are supposedly equal in resources, their ability to deliver a level of education acceptable to middle-class parents is unequal when it comes to attracting and retaining experienced, quality teachers because of the classroom conditions which those teachers face in suburban schools, which emerges in Chapter 7 that focuses on race. Whether the school becomes, stays, or stops being "good" is dependent on what other parents "like us" do, not unlike the middle class in the U.S. literature, though parents there have much more power over the local school (Posey-Maddox et al. 2014). Here, their children attend schools whose academic reputations are potentially precarious. Middle-class parents must watch for "red flags" that signal if the school's reputation and what it can deliver are in trouble. The "red flags" include policy changes, principal rotations, and student mix, all of which are related to and affected by each other. Without much power, the parents are sometimes fatalistic, as evident with Mme. Devereaux in Chapter 6, whose child attends Legacy, a traditional school with good results in the well-off town of Rivièreville. In the Republican system, they cannot control schools, or even learn much information, the latter only through their social networks and contacts they find.

Fourth, these parents appear to have social networks operationally different from U.S. parents, where middle-class parents are known to assemble networks to gain school information and to create a "critical" mass to manipulate school officials. To a degree, that may be the case in Petiteville where Arche resembles a "colonized" school which van Zanten (2007a) considers a middle-class parental activity meant to bring about desired schooling and a form of school choice. This dearth of official information should not be read as an argument to have more of it,

however. Middle-class parents would still turn to networks for information on schools rather than to official "cold" information, even when that information is plentiful and easily available, of which the United States is a prime example. In addition, the French networks have a strong cultural base, rather than are transactional, as I discuss later in the contributions of this study.

Fifth, the parents exhibit little in the way of explicit racism, many avoiding any language linked to race. Some say it is present in France and comment on instances of racial thinking and discrimination they know. In Chapter 7, which focuses on race, a few parents point to hiring practices, parental conversations, and experiences of friends as evidence of racial thinking and discrimination. Many also hold France and the United States to be on the same level when it comes attitudes around the color of the skin. Nevertheless, parents nearly always redirect the discussion from race, or the color of the skin, toward issues of social class, as to what is most salient in French society in conformity with cultural conventions and national ideology. Nearly all the parents are aware of place and school segregation in France, holding it up in fact at a level equivalent to that in the United States. They do not consider mix necessarily as a social "good" in itself, but then they do not consider it necessarily as social "bad." Additionally, some parents freely admit that the actions they take in schooling, certainly when "red flags" do go up on school reputation, serves to promote that place and school segregation.

Sixth, despite the emphasis on social class, what even constitutes mix to these parents is not entirely clear. Mix is just mix. It is generalized. When particularized, mix is seen largely through the lens of social class, in which there are the rich and the poor, even when I refer to it as ethnic in a question about school and place segregation, as in Chapter 7. Notably, few parents volunteer mix as a criterion when asked about criteria for their decisions, as evident in Chapter 5. A few understand mix as ethnic and immigrant mix, but rarely as racial. I contend that these

parental accounts are much more in line with the Lamont and Molnár (2002). Though the theory explains the responses of subjugated groups, it also explains the boundary-making and opportunity hoarding of the potential perpetrators of that racism and discrimination. Furthermore, in matters of race among these parents, as evident in the ideas, language, and effects reflected in their accounts, the problem is of perception, not obscurity as in the United States. The issue of race and school choice is clouded among these parents. For them, Bonilla-Silva's "now you see it, now you don't" becomes "how you see it, how you don't."

Seventh, what mix implies is not also always straightforward. For some parents, mix is necessary because schools should reflect the society, and for others, mix is good because it builds contacts and brings experiences, as the parents contend in Chapter 5. Within the national ideology, mix is not a value itself, as is diversity is among some U.S. parents, but is a situation in which schools must act to ensure equality and to forge French citizenship, and in which students are to build commonality, or *fraternité*. For that set of parents who not value it as much as others, mix raises potential problems. However constituted, mix is a signal, a red flag, that a school's always precarious reputation and its ability to educate middle-class children acceptably may be in doubt, causing middle-class parents to take flight with their children, as evident in Chapter 7.

Eighth, the middle-class parents do not as much directly blame the victim as they name the victim when it comes to problems of mix, though they engage in what is close to blaming the victim as is evident in and integral to U.S. society (Ryan 1976). Naming is benign, a recognition of the social conditions that poor and immigrant families face that then lead justifiably to problems unconducive to good school results, evident in parental accounts, including their largely appreciative comments on refugees. This explanation could not be—and should never be—acceptable in the United States, given that the minorities there are regularly reproached for

supposed failings, blamed as undeserving, and that viewpoint is integral to its class-bound national ideology (Ryan 1976). Racial socialization through political and social institutions there remains intense (Winant 2009; Bonilla-Silva 2013). The parents here do not appear to attach defective intrinsic cultural qualities to poor and immigrant children to any consequential degree, as much as they acknowledge that immigrants are culturally different, and thus less amenable to the French style of schooling, as evident in Chapter 7. Yet, some of these middle-class parents feel that their own children are victims, too, forced to pay the price as problems of student behavior and academic readiness divert attention away from their children.

Ninth, parental actions nevertheless encourage segregation and inequality by social class, ethnicity, and buried within it, by race. It is not of course explicit racism at work among these parents. But the effect of their actions is racist. Two sides exist to the racial coin. On one side of the coin are the actions of middle-class parents who navigate pragmatically the Republican model of schooling to produce beneficial educational results for their children, as all parents would do if they had the means. On the other face of the coin are poor and immigrant families, who given their origins cannot but perceive racism at work when largely French middle-class parents (and teachers) desert schools as a result of institutional policies and individual practices. Aside from Wacquant (2008), the effects of race are easy to read into the periodic riots, police profiling, housing allocation, political campaigns, media coverage, and school tracking (Stoler 2002; Murray 2006; Tissot 2006; Pager 2008; Schneider 2008; Soumahoro 2008; Duprez 2009; Hamel et al. 2014). As Lewis (2011) states, "Indeed, the very insistence that the Republic knows no differences within its citizenry has contributed to the frustrations of citizens from minority populations whose everyday experiences tell them otherwise" (240).

8.3   Limitations of the Study

This study has five limitations. First, qualitative research is of course not generalizable. The study is restricted to the inner Paris suburbs because that is the place where most activity related to school choice is presumed located. To capture different dynamics in school choice, the study drew its sample from three towns typical of the inner Parisian suburbs, Riviereville, Petiteville, and Centreville, and three middle schools typical of public schools found there, Legacy, Arche, and Haven. The resulting sample of parents is by no means representative.

A second limitation is that though the study is successful in recruiting a methodologically sufficient sample of middle-class parents at two schools, Legacy and Arche, 24 in all, the study was unable to recruit as many at a third school, Haven. That school has a magnet program, classical music, which requires most middle-class parents to win exemptions for their children to enroll there. The less fruitful recruitment there because of several obstacles reduced the sample of parents with exemptions.

Third, the recruitment process by word-of-mouth itself has limitations, a means of recruitment necessitated because French privacy laws ban use of lists and directories unless the individuals involved grant their prior permission. That potentially affects the diversity and completeness of the sample and opens the possibility that institutional gatekeepers may direct or restrict access to potential respondents, for example. I therefore made a concentrated effort to recruit a variety of parents though four sources of contacts.

Likewise, and fourth, prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology limit how I could approach the topic of race in the study and interviews. That includes what I could ask and the language I could use as they pertain to racial topics in the interview guide. Trespassing those bounds with respondents puts the study at risk. Even with its

deliberate care, the approach I take in the interview guide, referring to the *couleur de peau* (color the skin), instead of race, took some parents aback. Nevertheless, the study overall has produced useful and telling information on the role of race in school choice.

Finally, the study design did not include parents whose children attend private schools, which make up about a fifth of all children in France. All parents that I interview have children in public school, though several once had children in private school. They frequently made about how private school parents are deliberately avoiding mix and sometimes blame public school segregation on them. Their motivations may be distinct from parents who have retained their children in public school. The reason for excluding private schools is practical. Researcher access to private schools is difficult to acquire, especially for an outsider, and parents are spread over larger areas, making them harder to interview, even if access is secured. However, at least eight parents in this study have considered private school or once had children in private school.

8.4   Contributions and Further Research

This study makes five important contributions. First, this study substitutes the prevailing rational choice model of school choice with a model built on Ball (2003) that accommodates the role of culture within such choice. As evident in this study, this substitute model of school choice is valuable to understanding the processes and criteria of school choice, in which culture plays a role, in line with Felouzis et al. (2013), and with what Weber (1978) termed "axiological rationality." Within the processes of school choice, I find that ideology and attitudes have a role. Criteria is likewise affected by other deep-rooted social and political ideology. As is, the parental accounts here are more in line with Felouzis et al. (2013) than they are with a pure cost and benefit calculation. This substitute model applies not only to French middle-class parents but potentially to the U.S. middle class. As with Felouzis et al. (2013), I agree that school choice

theory is underdeveloped in the U.S. case.

Second, as a product of that model, the process of school choice among these parents sits on a fulcrum between ideological ideas of what is best for society and individual attitudes of what is best for children. The study uncovers numerous, overlapping, and sometimes conflictive packages of criteria that parents employ in deciding about schools as they balance those ideologies and attitudes. The packages intertwine criteria related to academic quality and school context, which do not exist in opposition, as might be imputed from the literature. It is not a one-way street that must be either academics or context. The packages are both/and rather than either/or, a topic which, too, merits further research, given their importance to school selection.

Third, the study provides insight into how parental social networks operate within national contexts. Though the preponderance of the research evidence is that the information that parents acquire about schools comes largely through social networks (Schneider et al. 1997; Ball and Vincent 1998; Holme 2002; van Zanten 2009; Felouzis et al. 2013), not enough qualitative work has been done on the construction and constitution of parental school networks, given the large role networks play in how schools become segregated and unequal. Among these parents, they appear to be both vital and closely held among the parents, in a country which provides the barest of official information on schools. In the United States, where official information is bountiful, school parents purposely build networks that not only supply "hot" information but provide a "critical mass" that allows the parents to gain leverage over schools (Posey 2012; Stillman 2012; Billingham and Kimelberg 2013; Cucchiara 2013; Roberts and Lakes 2014). Among the parents I interview, the case here appears different from that in the United States both in network construction and constitution. Moreover, the evidence here is that social networks have a cultural interactionist base rather than are purely hierarchical, transactional systems as

economic theory contends (Lin 2002). That cultural base is what Bourdieu (1980) appears to be pointing us to in his original writings on social capital.

Fourth, the study expands our knowledge of the role of race in French school choice, which no known qualitative research in that country addresses directly. The picture that emerges, however, is clouded by prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology and is mounted in a historical, social, and political frame distinctive from that of the United States. As such, and finally, the study expands our knowledge globally of the linkage between the middle-class agency and racial effects. It asks that social scientists in such studies peer deeply into the circumstances of a society, and not to flatten the society with the brute weight of theory fabricated from the situations of another society.

8.5 Final Comments

The study of the role of race in school choice across national societies requires careful attention to the particularities of the national case in which we study it. Drawing on the national cases in which the circumstances of race (and anxiety) are exceptional, as they are in the United States, does not provide a solid platform on which to examine or build theory on other societies on race or anxiety. The diffusion of ideas, whether of race or risk, is not a given. Little in parental accounts is in correspondence to the idea that racial concepts have crept across national boundaries, in line with Omi and Winant (2015), much less to ideas of global risk and parental anxiety in line with Beck (1992) and Ball (2003). The picture that emerges on race in France is clouded. As evident in the conceptual model, prevailing cultural conventions and the dominant social and political ideology bear heavily on how race is understood and the ability to discover its role in school choice. By paying attention to ideas, language, and outcomes, as Bonilla-Silva (2013) pushes racial study to do, the perception of race in France that parental accounts provide

is best termed as "how you see it, how you don't" rather than as Bonilla-Silva terms for the United States, "now you see it, now you don't."

Finally, race may be cloudy among middle-class actors in a society, but for the poor and the immigrants, the picture may not be so cloudy. The racial coin has two sides. The middle class and their actions to benefit society and their children are on one side of the coin. But the coin has another side. On the first page of this dissertation, I describe the 2014 report of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) which holds that social disparity is responsible for gaps in mathematics scores in France (OECD 2013; Mons 2016), a finding confirmed in the 2015 round of PISA testing (Ramos 2016). That effect is evidently racial, hidden behind the language that is legitimate. I argue that infused with their own perspectives on race from the former colonial countries in which race was a ready tool for exploitation, the individuals on the other face of the coin, the acted-upon, may perceive the engraving of what to them may only be racism, the result of the supposedly blameless school choices of middle-class parents. Institutional policies and individual practices deliver a result that only may be understood as racial. The evidence from outside this study that I cite earlier is that racism is felt, and it raises anger. Despite the many differences that exist between France and the United States, it still comes down to racism in the role of race in French school choice.

UNSETTLED PERIOD
(Events)

CULTURAL
CONVENTION
(*Resilience*)

INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS
(Three spectrums)

CULTURAL
CONVENTION
(*Parenting*)

SOCIAL STRUCTURE
(Schools)

RACE
(Concept)

IDEOLOGY
(Social and political)
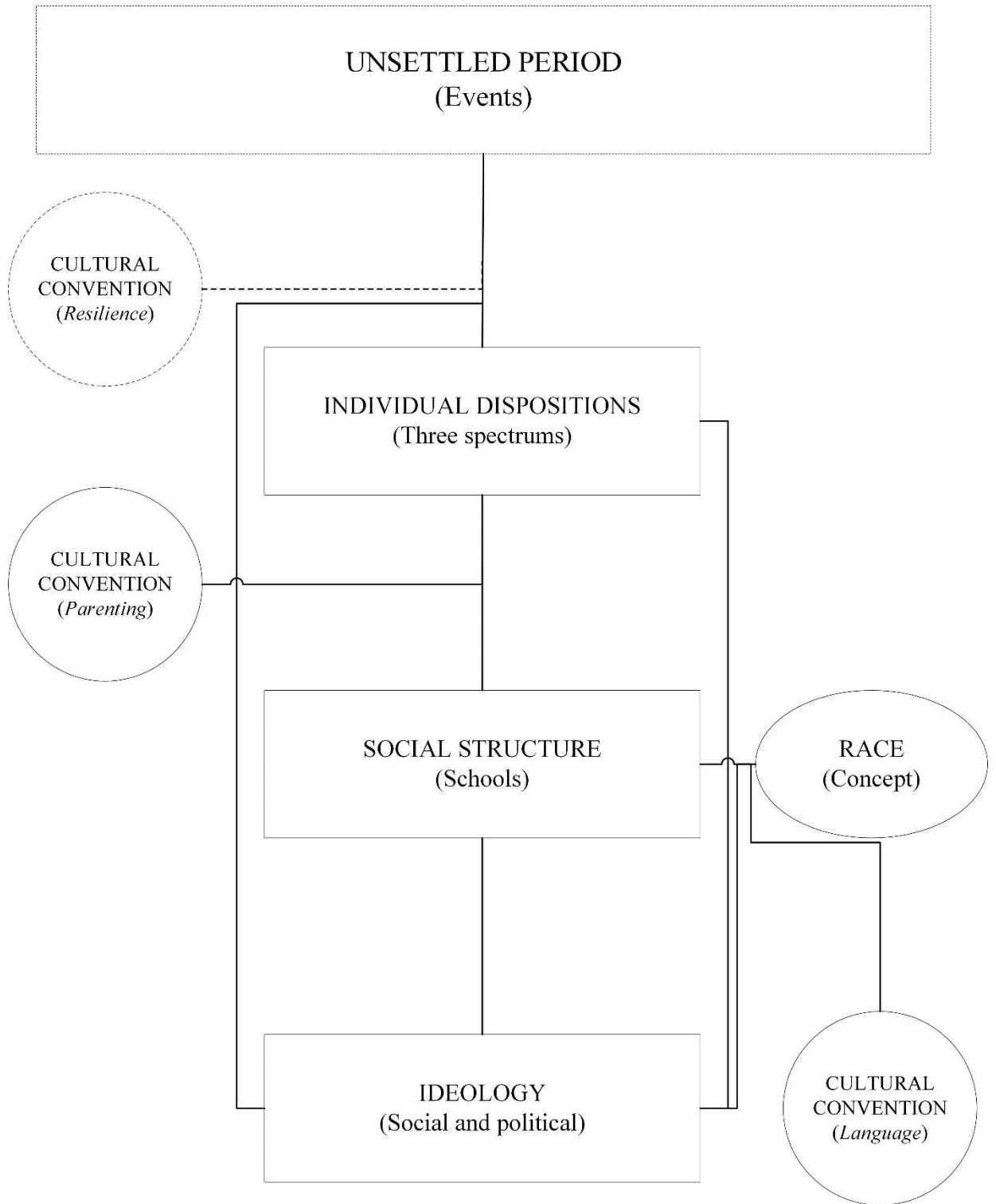
CULTURAL
CONVENTION
(*Language*)

Figure 8:1: Conceptual Model

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APPENDICES

Appendix A : Interview Guides

Appendix A.1: GUIDE D'ENTRETIEN

1. Votre enfant fréquente ce collège, qu'est-ce qui vous a amené à l'inscrire ici ?

2. Avant que votre enfant fréquente ce collège, quelles informations positives et négatives aviez-vous sur cet établissement ?

3. En fonction des informations que vous pu récolter sur cet établissement, quels sont les critères les plus importants pour vous ?

4. Quelles ont été les sources par lesquelles vous avez obtenu les informations sur ce collège ?

5. Aviez-vous envisagé d'autres possibilités comme de l'inscrire dans une école privée, obtenir une dérogation ou déménager ? (Pourquoi les aviez-vous envisagées ? Pourquoi ne l'avez-vous pas fait ?)

6. Maintenant que votre enfant fréquente ce collège, comment évaluez-vous cet établissement ?

7. Pensez-vous que vous avez dû faire des compromis pour que votre enfant fréquente cet établissement ?

8. Sur une échelle de 1 à 10 quelle importance accordez-vous à la mixité sociale, culturelle ou ethnique dans l'établissement que fréquente votre enfant ? (Pourquoi ?)

9. Sur une échelle de 1 à 10, quelle importance accordez-vous au comportement des élèves au sein du collège ? (Pourquoi ?)

10. Sur une échelle de 1 à 10, quelle importance accordez-vous à la qualité de l'enseignement et de la pédagogie ? (Pourquoi ?)

11. On entend beaucoup parler d'évènements mondiaux, Européens, nationaux et locaux. Certains événements vous angoissent ils ? (Si oui lesquels ?)

12. De tels événements ont-ils affectés la manière dont vous vivez ? (Par exemple ? Pourquoi ?)

13. Dans quelle mesure ces événements influencent-ils les ambitions scolaires que vous avez pour vos enfants ? (Par exemple ? Pourquoi ?)

Dans les trois prochaines questions nous aimerions avoir vos impressions sur la différence entre la France et les États Unis.

14. Aux États Unis les gens accordent de l'importance à la couleur de peau, pensez-vous que c'est le cas autour de vous ? (Par exemple ? Pensez-vous que cela est en train de changer ?

15. Aux États Unis, les gens évitent d'habiter dans des endroits où il y a une forte mixité ethnique, pensez-vous que c'est le cas en France ? Dans votre environnement, les voisons, le quartier ? Pensez-vous que cela est en train de changer ?

16. Aux États Unis les gens évitent d'envoyer leurs enfants dans des écoles à forte mixité ethniques. Pensez-vous que c'est le cas en France ? Pensez-vous que cela est en train de changer ?

Appendix A.2: INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

1. How is it you came to enroll your child at this school?

2. Before your child attended this school, what positive and negative information did you have beforehand?

3. From the information you knew about the school, what are the criteria that were most important to you?

4. From what sources did you obtain information about this middle school?

5. Did you consider other possibilities, such as enrolling in a private school, seeking an exemption, or moving? (Why did you consider them? Why did you not act on them?)

6. Now that your child attends this middle school, how do you evaluate the school?

7. Do you think you made any compromises for your child to be at this school?

8. On a scale of 1 to 10, what importance do you give to the social, cultural, mix of the school your child attends? (Why?)

9. On a scale of 1 to 10, what importance do you give to the behavior of the students in the middle school? (Why?)

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, what importance do you given to the quality of the teachers and pedagogy? (Why?)

11. One hears much about world, European, national, and local events. Do certain events make you anxious? (If so, why?)

12. Do such events affect the way you live your life? (Give an example? Why?)

13. To what extent do events affect your educational ambitions for your children? (Give an example? Why?)

The next three questions ask about your impressions on differences between France and the United States.

14. In the United States, people give importance to the color of the skin. Do you think that this is the case around you? (Give an example? Do you think that this changing?

15. In the United States, people avoid living in places where there is strong ethnic diversity. Do you think that this is the case in France? In your environment, the neighbors, the neighborhood? Do you think that this is changing?

16. In the United States, people avoid sending their children to schools with strong ethnic diversity. Do you think that this is the case in France? Do you think it is changing?

Appendix B: Post-Interview Questionnaires

Appendix B.1: QUESTIONNAIRE DE POST-INTERVIEW

Cette questionnaire demande des informations supplémentaires sur vous et votre ménage. Répond-s'il vous plaît le mieux que vous pouvez en vérifiant les boîtes des réponses appropriées.

◄►

► Quel est votre sexe ? □ **Femme** □ **Homme**

◄►

► Quel est votre âge ?
□ **24 ou plus jeune** □ **25 - 34** □ **35 - 44** □ **45 - 54** □ **54 ou plus vieux**

◄►

► Combien d'enfants vivent dans votre ménage ? □ **1** □ **2** □ **3 ou plus**

◄►

► Combien sont à l'école primaire ? □ **1** □ **2** □ **3 ou plus**
► Combien sont au collège ? □ **1** □ **2** □ **3 ou plus**
► Combien sont au lycée ? □ **1** □ **2** □ **3 ou plus**

◄►

► Travaillez-vous actuellement ?
□ **Je travaille** □ **Je suis au chômage**
□ **Je suis un parent de foyer** □ **Je suis mis à la retraite**

◄►

► Si vous travaillez, comment décririez-vous votre travail ? Vérifiez la catégorie au-dessous de ce mieux le décrit.
□ **Cadre supérieur ou profession intellectuel** □ **Employée**
□ **Profession intermédiaire** □ **Ouvrier manuel ou travailleur de service**
□ **Autre catégorie, non-illustré**

◄►

► Votre conjoint ou partenaire travaille il ou elle actuellement ?
□ **Il ou elle travaille** □ **Il ou elle est au chômage**

□ Il ou elle est un parent restant à la maison   □ Il ou elle est mis à la retraite

◄►

► Si lui ou elle travaille, comment décririez-vous son travail ? Vérifiez la catégorie au-dessous de ce mieux le décrit.

□ Cadre supérieur ou profession intellectuel   □ Employée

□ Profession intermédiaire   □ Ouvrier manuel ou travailleur de service

□ Autre catégorie, non-illustré

◄►

► Quel est votre niveau le plus haut d'enseignement ?

□ Secondaire ou moins   □ Un certain enseignement supérieur

□ Diplôme d'université (licence)   □ Autre diplôme (maîtrise, médecine, commerce)

◄►

► Quel est le niveau d'études le plus haut de votre conjoint ou partenaire ?

□ Secondaire ou moins   □ Un certain enseignement supérieur

□ Diplôme d'université (licence)   □ Autre diplôme (maîtrise, médecine, commerce) ◄►

► Depuis combien d'années vivez-vous à votre adresse présente ?

□ Moins de 1 an   □ 1-5 ans   □ 6-10 ans   □ 10 ou plus ans

◄►

► Si vous vous êtes déplacés, où avez-vous vécu auparavant ?

□ Même ville   □ Ville de Paris   □ D'autre partie d'Île de France

□ À l'extérieur d'Île de France

◄►

► Où était votre place de naissance ?

□ La France (métropole ou DOM)   □ D'autre pays européen

□ D'autre pays non-européen

◄►

► En politique les gens parfois parlent « de gauche » et « de droite ». Où situeriez-vous sur cette échelle, où 01 est l'extrême gauche et 10 est l'extrême droite ? Indiquez en encerclant le chiffre approprié. Si vous ne savez pas ou ne voulez pas dire, vérifiez la boîte au-dessous de l'échelle.

Gauche   □ 01   □ 02   □ 03   □ 04   □ 05   □ 06   □ 07   □ 08   □ 09   □ 10   Droite

□ Je ne sais pas ; je ne veux pas dire

Appendix B.2 : POSTINTERVIEW QUESTIONAIRE (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

This questionnaire asks additional information about you and your household. Give the best answer that you are able by checking the appropriate boxes.

► What is your sex?   □   Female   □   Male

► What is your age?

□ 24 or younger   □ 25 - 34   □ 35 - 44   □ 45 - 54   □ 54 or older

   ► How many children live in your household?   □ 1   □ 2   □ 3 or more

     ► How many are in primary school?   □ 1   □ 2   □ 3 or more
     ► How many are in middle school?   □ 1   □ 2   □ 3 or more
     ► How many are in high school?   □ 1   □ 2   □ 3 or more

► Are you employed?

□ I am employed   □ I am unemployed
□ I am a stay-at-home parent   □ I am retired

► If you are employed, how do you describe your work? Check the category that best describes it.

□ Executive or professional   □ Employee
□ Middle-level professional or manager   □ Manual laborer or service worker
        □ Other category, not shown

► Is your mate or partner employed?

□ He or she is employed   □ He or she is unemployed
□ He or she is a stay-at-home parent   □ He or she is retired

► If she or he is employed, how would you describe their work? Check the category that best describes it.

□ Executive or professional   □ Employee
□ Middle-level professional or manager   □ Manual laborer or service worker
        □ Other category, not shown

► What is your highest level of education?

□ Secondary school or less   □ Other type of college diploma
□ College diploma   □ Other graduate diploma (masters, medical, business)

► What is the highest level of education of your mate or partner?

□ Secondary school or less   □ Other type of college diploma
□ College diploma   □ Other graduate diploma (masters, medical, business)

► How many years have you lived at your present address?

□ Less than 1 year   □ 1-5 years   □ 6-10 years   □ 10 or more years

► If you have moved, where did you live before?

□ Same town   □ Paris city   □ Other part of Île de France
□ Outside the Île de France

► Where is your place of birth?

□ France (interior or territory)   □ Another European country
□ Another country, non-European

► In politics people speak of the left and the right. Where do you situate yourself on this scale, where 1 is extreme left and 10 is the extreme right? Indicate by circling the appropriate number. If you do not know or want to say, check the box below.

Left   01   02   03   04   05   06   07   08   09   10   Right
□ I do not know; I do not want to say