HAL
open science

Subjective racism, objective racism: the French case

Nonna Mayer, Guy Michelat

To cite this version:

Nonna Mayer, Guy Michelat. Subjective racism, objective racism: the French case. Patterns of Prejudice, 2001, 35 (4), pp.6 - 18. 10.1080/003132201128811250 . hal-03458526

HAL Id: hal-03458526

https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03458526v1

Submitted on 30 Nov 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

NONNA MAYER AND GUY MICHELAT

Subjective racism, objective racism: the French case

ABSTRACT Drawing on a recent survey on xenophobia and racism in France (autumn 2000), Mayer and Michelat compare answers to questions about minorities (measuring *objective racism*) with answers to a question on a respondent's own feeling as to his or her own racism (*subjective racism*), and to an open question about what it means to be 'racist'. The results show that, for three-quarters of the sample, the objective and subjective dimensions overlap: the level of subjective racism goes up with scores on the objective racism scale. But there are two deviant groups. The *scrupulous* (10 per cent), often to be found among principled Catholics or Communists, feel themselves to be racist in spite of their low scores on the objective scale, while the *deniers* (14 per cent) do not think of themselves as being racist in spite of their high scores. In line with theories of 'subtle racism', members of this latter group seem to be aware of an anti-racist norm and do not consider themselves to be racist, in contradistinction to *racists*, who admit being so, and are even proud to transgress the norm.

KEYWORDS *ethnocentrism, France, objective racism, questionnaires, racism, subjective racism, surveys, xenophobia*

There are many ways to measure racism using surveys. One way is to ask interviewees directly whether or not they consider themselves to be racist, and rely on their judgement. For instance, the following question was used in a recent Eurobarometer opinion poll on racism and xenophobia in Europe:[1]

> Some people feel they are not at all racist. Others feel they are very racist. Would you look at this list and tell me the number that shows your own feeling about this? If you feel you are not at all racist you choose 1. If you feel you are very racist you choose 10. The scores between 1 and 10 allow you to say how close you are to either pole.

As a result, one-third of the total sample claimed to feel 'not at all racist' (a score of 1 on the scale), one-third 'a little racist' (a score of 2–3), and the last third 'quite' or even 'very racist' (scores of 4–10). In Belgium, France and

1 Eurobarometer opinion poll no. 47.1, 26 March–29 April 1997, conducted in the 15 member states of the European Union, on a total multi-stage random sample of 16,154 people aged 15 and over.

SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi) 0031-322X/6–18/020863

Austria—three countries with a strong extreme right that obviously encourages the open expression of such feelings—the numbers of self-declared racists were even higher (55, 48 and 42 per cent, respectively). How reliable, though, are these answers, taking into account how many different meanings the word 'racist' can have, and how difficult it is to admit to being racist in a democratic society where anti-racism is the norm?

Another way to measure racism is to ask indirect questions, testing the respondents' feelings about minorities, and deduce from their answers whether or not they are racist. But this approach is also based on an a priori definition of 'racism' that is not necessarily universally shared.

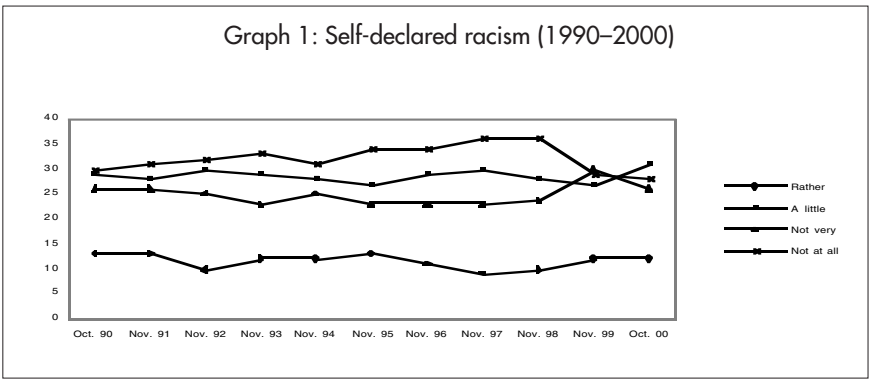
We will try here to compare both methods, using data from the survey on racism and xenophobia in France conducted for the Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme (CNCDH) in the autumn of 2000.[2] This survey has the advantage of having combined classical questions about perceptions of minorities and their rights, with a question asking respondents to evaluate the degree of their own racism and an open question asking what being racist means to them.

Subjective racism

In every annual survey conducted for the CNCDH since 1990, the same question has been used to tap for self-declared or 'subjective racism': 'In your own opinion, would you say you are rather racist, a little racist, not very racist or not at all racist?' To facilitate the expression of racist feelings, the term 'rather racist' was preferred to 'very' or even 'quite racist'. In 2000, 12 per cent of the sample declared themselves to be 'rather racist', 31 per cent 'a little racist', 26 per cent 'not very racist' and 28 per cent 'not at all racist'. The proportions have remained virtually unchanged over the last ten years, save for a slight increase in the number of respondents declaring themselves 'a little racist', and a slight drop in the number of those who feel themselves to be 'not very racist' (see graph 1 overleaf).

At first glance, however, the differences between the four categories proposed might seem somewhat fuzzy. To test whether or not they really held distinct meanings for the respondents, we looked at the answers each of the four groups gave to the open question: 'What does being racist mean to you?' These answers show that the respondents did indeed recognize a hierarchy in the categories: 'not at all racist' was perceived as the lowest level of self-declared racism and, at the other end, 'rather racist' as the highest. The dividing line ran between those who declared themselves 'rather' or 'a little' racist (43 per cent of the sample) and those who said they were 'not very' or

2 Survey conducted by the Institut Louis Harris, 2–14 October 2000, on a national sample of 1,000 people representative of the population, living in metropolitan France and aged 18 and over, using face-to-face interviews and quota sampling. The authors of this article were involved in the preparation of the questionnaire. For a detailed presentation of the results, see Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme (CNCDH), *2000. La Lutte contre le racisme et la xénophobie. Rapport d'activité* (Paris: Documentation française 2001).



'not at all' racist (54 per cent). In all four groups, being racist was defined as not liking, or not accepting, foreigners and people seen as different,[3] and most of the answers to the open question were neutral (56 per cent of the sample). However, 14 per cent of respondents added a comment justifying being racist, a proportion that climbed to 28 per cent among the 'rather' or 'a little' racist group. Furthermore, 14 per cent offered some of their personal feelings about foreigners—such as 'they bother us', 'they are violent', 'they do not respect our way of life' and so on—a proportion that rose to 30 per cent among the 'rather racist' and 28 per cent among the 'a little racist' group. Conversely, those who felt 'not very' or 'not at all' racist were more likely to include a condemnation of such attitudes on moral grounds.[4] Box 1 gives a selection of the most significant comments in each of the groups.[5]

The four categories, then, made sense to the respondents, and do indeed measure different degrees of 'subjective racism'. Furthermore, the level of subjective racism varies in relation to the classical factors used to explain racism, mainly age, socio-economic insecurity, lack of education and far-right orientations.[6] Those who are 'rather' or 'a little racist' are: 53 per cent of those educated only to primary school level and 25 per cent of those who attended university; 34 per cent of those under 25 and 46 per cent of those over 64; 39 per cent of those who felt very confident about their futures and 63 per cent of those who felt very insecure. But the decisive factor is political: the number

3 The words most frequently used by respondents for the object(s) of racism—leaving aside the negative formulations ('not x')—were, first, 'foreigner(s)' (300), followed by 'different' or 'difference(s)' (277), 'race(s)' (194) and 'colour' (139). It is interesting to note that references to 'immigrants' (35) or 'Arabs' (50) or 'Maghrebins' (13) trailed far behind.

4 Opinion poll '"Xénophobie, racisme et antiracisme en France: attitudes et perceptions": Présentation de l'Institut Louis Harris', in CNCDH, 72–3.

5 We owe special thanks to Ludovic Lebart who helped us analyse the answers to the open question on racism using his programme (SPAD-T) for lexicometric analysis. The programme selects the words most frequently used in each group of respondents (Khi^2 statistic test), the respondents who use those words most frequently and their characteristic phrases (which include the largest number of these same words).

6 See Nonna Mayer and Guy Michelat, 'Sondages, mode d'emploi. Xénophobie, racisme et antiracisme en France: attitudes et pereceptions', in CNCDH, 87–102.

Box 1: Characteristic answers to the question 'What does being racist mean to you?', according to degree of self-declared racism

For the 'rather racist' group, being racist means:

- not liking people who are not French, whose skin colour is different, who are dirty and liars, who think they can do anything they like and who get everything, and, above all, not wanting to mix with them
- as far as unemployment is concerned, fewer foreigners would mean less unemployment, although one needs foreigners too, as they are the ones who do the hard jobs and, if they did not do them, the French would have to, not liking foreigners
- not tolerating the fact that foreigners welcomed on French soil want to impose their culture and their religion at all cost, and won't adapt to our way of life

For the 'a little racist' group, it means:

- not accepting foreigners in one's country, not accepting their way of life
- not liking the fact that there are too many foreigners in France, not wanting to hurt them, but wanting them to return where they came from, there is not enough for everyone in France
- not tolerating foreigners, maybe because they can't adapt, their ways of life are so different from ours
- their languages are obtrusive, we are quiet, they speak loudly

For the 'not very racist' group, it means:

- not wanting to accept foreigners who do not have the same culture and the same skin colour as ours
- not liking or being against people who do not have the same colour of skin as ours, who do not practise the same religion we do, even if they are French
- not accepting people with a different skin colour

For the 'not at all racist' group, it means:

- rejecting people of a different race, religion or skin colour to one's own, judging people according to their religion, race, skin colour
- not accepting the difference of the Other
- going no further than someone's skin colour or different culture

For the group that did not answer, it means:

- not liking foreigners exploiting our generosity and upsetting the French, because they think they are entitled to everything
- for me, it means nothing at all, for the French, although I am also French, commit as many acts of stupidity as foreigners, such as stealing cars or robbing shops
- not being able to accept foreigners coming to our country because they disturb us and destabilize France

of self-declared racists goes up as one moves to the right of the left–right continuum, and peaks with those who either voted for Front national (FN) candidates in the first round of the 1997 parliamentary or sympathized with Le Pen's anti-immigration party: 80 and 88 per cent, respectively, compared with 11 and 20 per cent of those who voted for or supported the extreme left.

Objective racism

The survey also included some forty questions that tested not only 'racism', or the rejection of people on racial grounds, but more generally 'ethnocentrism', in the sense used first by W. G. Sumner and later by Theodor Adorno and his colleagues: namely, the tendency to reject groups seen as being 'unlike us' and accept those seen as being 'like us', whether on grounds of nationality, religion, culture, language, skin colour or any other criterion.[7] Defined accordingly, 'ethnocentrism' is the underlying concept that gives a coherence to the answers to these forty questions. Indeed, one can construct a scale of ethnocentrism using nine of the questions on the survey that were highly inter-correlated: they asked respondents for an evaluation of the part played by immigrants in the French economy and culture, their way of life, their religions, their ability to integrate into French society and their responsibility for rising insecurity; they also asked whether immigrants had come to France to take advantage of the welfare state, whether respondents no longer felt at home in their own country and even whether they felt that the behaviour of some immigrants sometimes justified racist reactions. These questions measure 'objective' racism in that they do not rely on the respondents' own evaluation of their answers; we can infer racism from the answers to these questions. Box 2 shows these nine questions and the 'racist' answers to them.

These nine 'racist' answers form an attitudinal scale. They display a specific pattern, a hierarchy ordering them according to the degree of ethnocentrism they reveal. The least frequent of the nine, given by only 12 per cent of the sample—those strongly disagreeing that France should be considered the home of immigrant workers since they contribute to the French economy—is also the most discriminatory. It represents the highest point on the scale, the most significant marker of discriminatory attitudes. Those who gave that answer were likely to give the ethnocentric answer to all the other questions. Conversely, 90 per cent of the sample did not utterly reject the idea that the behaviour of some immigrants sometimes justified racist reactions. This answer constitutes the lowest point on the scale, the least indicative of discriminatory attitudes.[8]

7 W. G. Sumner, *Folkways* (Boston: Ginn and Co. 1906); T .W. Adorno, Else Frenkel Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Norton 1950), especially the chapter by Levinson, 'The study of ethnocentric ideology', 102–50.

8 There are different ways to build attitudinal scales. The one used here is an adaptation of Guttmann scaling techniques, using Loevinger's statistical coefficient (h). See Guy Michelat and Eric Kerrouche, 'Les échelles d'attitude', *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, vol. 6, no. 2, summer 1999, 463–512.

Box 2: Questions measuring objective racism

1 *Immigrant workers should be considered at home here because they contribute to the French economy.*

12 per cent chose 'strongly disagree' (strongly agree/ somewhat agree/ somewhat disagree/ no answer)

2 *The presence of immigrants enriches French cultural life.*

17 per cent chose 'strongly disagree' (strongly agree/ somewhat agree/ somewhat disagree/ no answer)

3 *Some people are bothered by the opinions, habits and mores of people different from themselves. In your daily life, do you personally feel bothered by the presence of people from non-European countries?*

30 per cent felt 'somewhat' bothered (not very/ no answer)

4 *Muslim religious worship in France should be made easier.*

32 per cent chose 'strongly disagree' (strongly agree/ somewhat agree/ somewhat disagree/ no answer)

5 *Immigration is the main cause of insecurity.*

51 per cent chose either 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree' (somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree/ no answer)

6 *Today one does not feel as at home in France as one used to.*

56 per cent chose either 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree' (somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree/ no answer)

7 *The culture and way of life of most immigrants are too different to be integrated in France society.*

62 per cent chose either 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree' (somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree/ no answer)

8 *Many immigrants come to France only to exploit the welfare state.*

72 per cent chose 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree' (somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree/ no answer)

9 *The way some immigrants behave sometimes justifies racist reactions.*

90 per cent chose 'strongly agree', 'somewhat agree' or 'somewhat disagree' (strongly disagree/ no answer)

This attitudinal scale provides a synthetic measure of 'objective racism'. Each respondent received a score based on the number of ethnocentric answers given. The scores thus vary between 0, for those who never gave such an answer (5 per cent of the sample), and 9, for those who gave them systematically (4 per cent). The respondents can be classified in three groups of equivalent weight: the 'not racist' group, with scores between 0 and 2, representing 31 per cent of the sample; the 'moderately racist' group, with scores between 3 and 5 (34 per cent); and the 'very racist' group, with scores between 6 and 9 (35 per cent). Here, again, there is a strong relationship between the level of racism revealed and the answers to the open question about the meaning of 'racism'. Respondents with low scores clearly condemned racism on moral grounds while respondents with high scores justified it or claimed to be its victims (see box 3).

Objective racism, as measured by the attitudinal scale, varies according to exactly the same factors as subjective racism. Of the youngest group of respondents, 29 per cent were 'very racist', as were 40 per cent of the oldest, 28 per cent of those who were most confident about their futures and 64 per cent of the most insecure, and, finally, 50 per cent of those who were educated only to primary school level and 22 per cent of those who went to university. And, as is the case with subjective racism, the level of objective racism increases regularly as one moves to the right along the left–right political continuum and reaches a peak among FN voters (82 per cent of those who voted FN in 1997, compared to 17 per cent of those who voted for the extreme left) and sympathizers (88 per cent, compared to 25 per cent of extreme left sympathizers).

Subjective racism by objective racism

If one combines our two measures, they appear to be tightly correlated.[9] Self-declared racism rises in tandem with respondents' scores on the objective racism scale. One finds the largest proportion of those who felt 'not at all racist' among those who scored 0, the largest proportion of those who felt 'not very racist' among those who scored 2, the largest proportion of those who felt 'a little racist' among those who scored 6, and the largest proportion of those who felt 'rather racist' among those who had the maximum score of 9 (see graph 2 overleaf). The results confirm the proximity between groups 1 and 2 on the one side, and 3 and 4 on the other. Conversely, the proportion of self-declared racists ('rather' or 'a little') rises from 0 per cent of those who score 0 on our scale to 64 per cent of those who scored 9 (see graph 3 overleaf).

The cross-tabulation of our two indicators (table 1)—each boiled down to just two categories: low and high subjective racism versus low and high objective racism—shows that, for nearly three-quarters of the sample (adding the 41 per cent objectively and subjectively racist to the 32 per cent subjectively and objectively not racist), there is a perfect correspondence between

9 Measured by Pearson's R: .58, Kramer's V: .44.

Box 3: Characteristic answers to the question 'What does being racist mean to you?', according to degree of objective racism

For the 'not racist' group (scores 0–2), being racist means:

- thinking that races exist, when there is only one race, the human race; thinking that one culture is superior to another when they are complementary; thinking oneself superior to someone else because he is different, whether he is homosexual, red-haired or handicapped
- thinking there is a superior race, that people of another race, that is, of another colour, are different; it means feeling a certain fear or hatred of foreigners, thinking that what really matters is where a man comes from, rather than his soul
- intolerance of someone who happens not to have the same colour of skin, I think there is only one race, the human race: racism cannot exist
- refusing the difference between races, cultures. This is true in two senses: thinking that one race is or can be superior to another; and depriving immigrants of the means of keeping in touch with their culture and its resources, imposing a culture upon them
- refusing to accept the difference of the Other

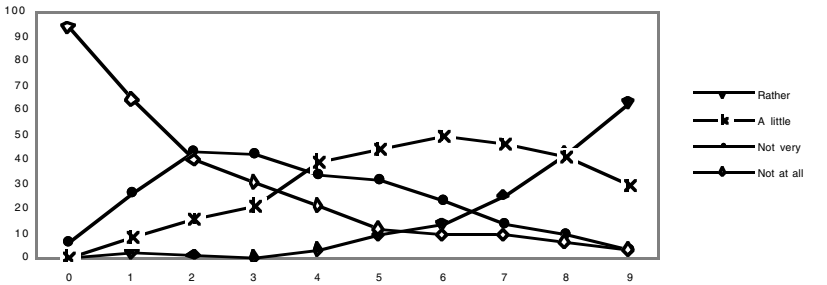
For the 'moderately racist' group (scores 3–5), it means:

- not putting up with people who have a different skin colour or culture
- not wanting to live with people different from me, who come from another country, with another culture
- for me, the problem is people who come from abroad and do not make an effort to integrate and do not take into account the laws of the country in which they settle
- not liking or being against people who do not have the same skin colour we have or do not practise the same religion we do, even if they are French
- being racist is to dislike foreigners who do not comply with French laws and want to be the boss

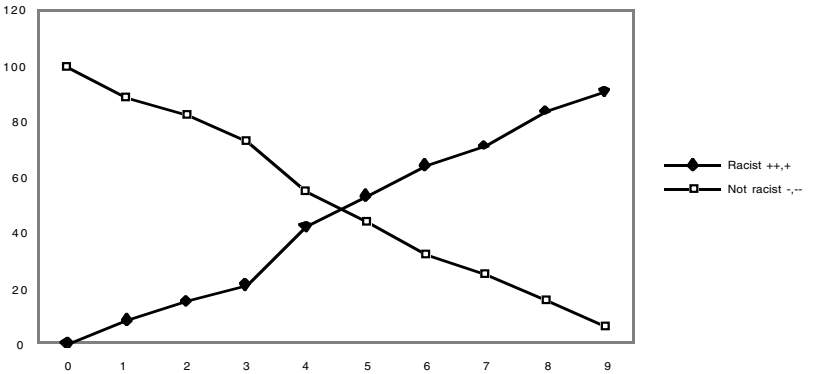
For the 'very racist' group (scores 6–9), it means:

- not accepting any foreigner; if Italians, Spaniards, Americans and many others are accepted, it is for the good reason that they live as we do, but Algerians are assisted people who, from the word go, do not love us, and come to exploit all the advantages of France. What's more, no one says anything if an immigrant hurts a French person but there's a great fuss if it happens the other way round: there's the difference
- not agreeing that foreigners should have more rights than the French, that they should arrive in France acting all high and mighty
- no longer accepting that foreigners arriving in France have the right to everything and that we, the French, should just shut up
- I love my country and others do not interest me. We had two wars to stay French and free, not to be invaded as we are. And don't forget that we were kicked out of Algeria.
- I am a little racist. As a rule foreigners do not comply with the customs of the country that hosts them, do not live the same way, and, all things being equal, foreigners receive more than we do, the native French.

Graph 2: Self-declared racism by score on objective racism scale



Graph 3: Self-declared racism by score on objective racism scale



what they are and what they think, or at least say, they are. But for one-quarter of the sample this is not the case: 10 per cent felt racist in spite of low scores on the objective racism scale, and 14 per cent did not feel racist in spite of high scores on the same scale. Drawing a detailed portrait of these four groups can help us to understand the meaning of these apparent discrepancies.

The 32 per cent who are subjectively and objectively racist are the most intolerant of all. Not only did they have the highest scores on our objective racism scale, they also systematically gave the most extreme answer to all the other questions, open or closed, that have to do with group perceptions. They are, for instance, the only ones that believed to any significant degree that some races are inferior to others and that had high scores on an antisemitism scale that included belief in excessive Jewish power and in a Jewish inability to be assimilated.[10] They were also the proudest of their French nationality

10 The scale is built according to the same principles as the objective racism scale and includes three items: the belief that 'Jews in France have too much power' (strongly/ somewhat agree), that there are 'too many' Jews (somewhat agree), and that 'Jews are as French as the other French' (somewhat or strongly disagree).

Table 1 Subjective racism by objective racism

Subjective racism	Objective racism (%) low (0–4)	high (5–9)	Total
low (not very, not at all)	41	14	55
high (rather, a little)	10	32	42
no answer	1	2	3
Total	52	48	100

and the strongest defenders of a French way of life to which foreigners should conform. And they were the least in favour of recognizing minority rights, such as the right to immigrate or the right to vote. In line with the findings of Adorno's classic study, *The Authoritarian Personality*, their ethnocentrism was part of a larger authoritarian syndrome, including attachment to tradition, submission to authority and social conformism, as demonstrated by their concern for law and order, their hostility to adoption by homosexual couples and their conception of women as housewives. Such attitudes were more common among people with little education, those who felt economically insecure and exhibited far-right ideological leanings. If these high scorers, who admitted to being racist, were but one-third of the sample, they accounted for the largest group of those who went only to primary school (43 per cent), who felt 'very concerned' about their own future (51 per cent), and who supported the FN (82 per cent). We will call them 'racists'.

Those that are both subjectively and objectively not racist systematically gave the most tolerant, permissive, anti-authoritarian and non-conformist answers (see table 2 overleaf). We will call them 'anti-racists'. While they make up 41 per cent of the sample, they account for 46 per cent of those who were not concerned about their future or afraid of unemployment, the majority of the educated respondents (59 per cent of those who went to university), of people with no religious affiliation (58 per cent) and of left-wingers (51 per cent of those close to the Socialist Party, 55 per cent of those close to the Greens and 65 per cent of those close to the extreme left).

The 10 per cent who admitted being racist in spite of a low score on the objective racism scale, for the most part (94 per cent) declared themselves to be 'a little racist' (see table 2). And, indeed, they are not totally free of racism, as measured on our scale, as their most frequent score is 4 (44 per cent of the group). But most of the respondents with a score of 4 declared themselves to be 'not very racist' (55 per cent). Why did the former tend to overstate their racism? The fact that one finds them more often amongst two sectors of the population that for different reasons might have stronger principles—either because of their religious background or because of their political commitment—suggests they were merely more scrupulous. These 'not racist racists' represent only 10 per cent of the total sample, but this figure rises to 22 per

Table 2. A typology of racists

	anti-racist	scrupulous	denying	racist
Objective racism (most frequent score)	1	4	5	6
Self-declared racism	not at all	a little	not very	rather
A strong fight against racism is necessary in France (% scores 5–10)	84	80	75	69
Some races are inferior to others (% strongly disagree)	75	56	51	32
High scores on antisemitism scale (% scores 2–3)	14	27	44	53
Does it matter if you refuse to let a flat to a Black or an Arab? (% not very much/ not at all)	5	21	37	52
The borders should be completely closed; France cannot accept new immigrants	4	22	39	65
Non-European foreigners living in France for some time should have the right to vote in local elections (% strongly disagree)	11	25	46	69
Today one no longer feels safe anywhere in France (% strongly/ somewhat agree)	17	28	68	82
Homosexual couples should have the right to adopt children (% strongly disagree)	22	36	45	51
A woman's place is in the home (% strongly disagree)	68	58	52	52
I am very proud of being French	25	38	50	50
It is essential that foreigners living in France adopt the French way of life	27	40	71	70
Total number	406	98	142	323

cent among the minority of Catholics who still go to church every Sunday. Similarly, it increases among the minority of respondents who identified with the Communist Party or voted for its candidates in the first round of the 1997 parliamentary elections (17 and 18 per cent, respectively).[11] As if, under the influence of the egalitarian and universalist values celebrated both by the Gospels and the *Communist Manifesto*, it is more difficult to declare oneself absolutely devoid of racist feelings. But, compared to the three other groups, the 'scrupulous' are closer to the 'anti-racists' than to the 'racists' (see table 2). Basically, they respected the rights of minorities, they rejected antisemitic and racist stereotypes and they displayed a tolerant and permissive vision of society.

Finally, the majority (68 per cent) of the 14 per cent who did not admit to being racist in spite of high scores on the scale declared themselves to be 'not very racist'. And it is true they are 'not very' racist: their most frequent score on the objective racism scale is 5 (41 per cent). But most respondents with exactly the same score (53 per cent) declared themselves to be 'a little racist'. Why did this group, in contradistinction to the 'scrupulous' group, tend to minimize its racist feelings? As opposed to the full-fledged 'racists', a majority amongst this group condemned racial discrimination and respected the basic rights of minorities—to shelter, the vote and free movement—even if the proportion is lower than among the 'anti-racists' and the 'scrupulous' (see table 2). And they have a specific profile. While they comprise 14 per cent of the sample, their number rises to 16 per cent among women, to 19 per cent among church-goers, to 20 per cent among supporters of the moderate right, and to 21 per cent among voters over the age of 65. This profile goes with a traditional and conservative view of society that is shared with the 'racists' (see table 2). They wanted women to stay at home, adoption to be restricted to heterosexual couples and minorities to respect the French way of life, of which they are proud. According to such a vision, immigrants and foreigners do not fit in, they are too different. The respondents in this group, which we call the 'deniers', were the most eager to see foreigners adopt French ways (71 per cent), and the most likely to claim that the behaviour of certain foreigners can justify racist attitudes, even though they condemned racism and thought one should fight against it.[12] Their attitude is very close to the 'symbolic' or 'subtle' racism analysed by Thomas Pettigrew and R. W. Meertens—charac-

11 One should be cautious of course because the numbers are very small (Catholics going to church every Sunday: 37; Communist Party voters and sympathizers: 34 and 35). But the data are consistent. For instance, one also finds the same proportion of 'scrupulous' among those who say that 'religion' is what best defines them.

12 As the question is part of our scale of objective racism, and conditions the construction of our four groups, one can reconstruct the objective racism scale without this item—actually the least discriminatory question of the scale which was massively approved by our sample—and reconstitute four groups by cross-tabulating the scale with our measure of subjective racism. The structure of the groups is the same, it is only their size that changes. The proportion of respondents who 'strongly agree' with the idea, 'The behaviour of some immigrants sometimes justify racist reactions', then ranges from 19 per cent of the anti-racists, 49 per cent of the scrupulous, 69 per cent of the racists and peaks at 75 per cent of the 'deniers'.

teristic of democracies in which anti-racism is the norm—that consists of the expression of racism, in non-racist terms, based on cultural differences.[13] In such expressions, outgroups are not necessarily described as inferior or bad, only as different, as not conforming to 'our' values. On the whole, in spite of their denial, the 'deniers' are closer to the 'racists' than to the 'scrupulous'. But they are different: they are aware of the anti-racist norm and they do not feel, or at least do not want to be considered, racist, whereas the 'racists' admit to being so and are often, as among FN supporters, proud to transgress the norm.

Thus the combination of our objective and subjective measures, while showing the complexity of 'racism' and its many contradictions, provides us with a more precise tool. Despite coming from different segments of the population and having different visions of the world and society, our sample can be broken down into four distinctive groups. They can be clearly ranked according to increasing levels of the same ethnocentric-authoritarian attitude, from the most tolerant, the 'antiracists', to the most intolerant, the 'racists'.

NONNA MAYER is research director at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and works at the Centre d'étude de la vie politique française (CEVIPOF). She is also in charge of the political sociology programme in the graduate school of Sciences Po (Institute for Political Studies) in Paris. She has published widely on the issue of racism in France, and is the author of *Ces Français qui votent FN* (Flammarion 1999).

GUY MICHELAT is research director at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and works at the Centre d'étude de la vie politique française (CEVIPOF). He launched (with Jean Pierre Thomas) a pioneering survey on racism and nationalism in France (*Dimensions du nationalisme. Enquête par questionnaire*, 1966) and has for some time been studying political and cultural attitudes.

13 Thomas F. Pettigrew and R. W. Meertens, 'Subtle and blatant prejudice in Western Europe', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 25, 1995, 57–75. On symbolic racism, see D. D. Sears, 'Symbolic racism', in P. A. Katz and D. A. Taylor (eds), *Eliminating Racism: Profile in Controversy* (New York: Plenum 1988), 53–84.